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**NEW WAVE: CINEMATOGRAPHIC NEW TENDENCIES
IN THE SOVIET UNION, FRANCE AND THE UNITED STATES
DURING THE 1950s AND 1960s**



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On the front page, stills from the following movies (from the left to the right):
The Cranes Are Flying (1957) by Mikhail Kalatozov, *Les Cousins* (1959) by Claude Chabrol,
Shadows (1959) by John Cassavetes

Introduction

“Tell me, what is the meaning of life?”
Veronika in *The Cranes Are Flying* by Mikhail Kalatozov (1957)

In 1958, the movie *The Cranes Are Flying*, by Soviet director Mikhail Kalatozov won the prestigious Golden Palm at the festival de Cannes and received a warm welcome by French critics. Large audiences went to watch the movie in theatres. They were moved to tears by the story of the young Veronika who parted from her fiancé when he volunteered for the war and came to marry his cousin while still vainly expecting the return of the loved one. The Western press praised the movie as one of the best Soviet productions since a long time. *The Cranes* intrigued the critics as being surprisingly “non-Soviet”, in its narrative and aesthetics. It was indeed one of the first movies which revealed the freedom of expression of the late 1950s. Three years after the death of Stalin in 1953, Khrushchev’s secret speech, held during the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist Party in 1956, marked the beginning of this period of temporary relaxation called the Thaw.¹ Khrushchev criticized the cult of personality instituted by Stalin, as being “alien to the spirit of Marxism-Leninism” and as separating the leader from the masses. While the speech was only intended for the political elite, the Party officials and newspapers spread its main ideas in their editorials, so that this critical stance on the Stalin era permeated the whole of Soviet society. At the same time, after the period of harsh confrontation between East and West characteristic of the early Cold War, the Soviet Union decided to initiate exchanges with the West and signed a series of cultural agreements with western countries.² This new politics of opening towards the Western world and the start of a “peaceful coexistence” with the United States encouraged the relatively relaxed mood of the time. The Thaw was not a period of total freedom, as strict resurgences of the ideological orthodoxy regularly occurred, but it was sufficient to allow a revival of the cinematographic production of the Soviet Union after the Stalin period. In the late 1940s, during the peak of the totalitarian regime of Stalin and the period of strict censorship, only ten to fifteen films per year were approved, mainly national epics and biographical movies

¹ The term “Thaw” was employed after a novel by Ilya Ehrenburg published in 1954 in which he depicted a totalitarian working environment, obviously similar to the Stalin situation.

² RICHMOND Yale, *Cultural exchange & the Cold War: raising the iron curtain*, University Park, Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003, p.14-20: The Soviet Union signed cultural agreements with Norway and Belgium in 1956, and with France and the UK in 1957. The Lacy-Zarubin agreement with the United States were signed in 1958.

glorifying Stalin.³ The cinematographic production of the Thaw witnessed a huge increase and did not encounter major problems with censorship.⁴ In the late 1950s, about one hundred films were produced every year, and the production stabilized at around 150 films per year in the mid-1960s.

If this exceptional development is specific for the case of the Soviet Union, the new tone of the movies produced during the Thaw is not specifically Soviet. The warm reception granted to *The Cranes* in Europe and the United States shows that Western audiences were sensitive to a certain message conveyed by these movies. Moreover, it is intriguing to observe that about at the same time, innovative movies also appeared in the West. In France and the United States in particular, audiences during the 1950s witnessed the release of movies that offered a new perspective on life. Breaking with the standardized conventions of the national cinematographic production, some movies presented a realistic aesthetics and adopted a personal tone that gave room for emotions, doubts and ambiguities. In the United States where the cinematographic industry was ruled by the powerful Hollywood studios, a more independent cinema progressively emerged during the 1950s. Film directors such as Nicholas Ray, Elia Kazan and John Cassavetes decided to film the other side of the glamorous America and to reveal its downsides and subcultures. Hollywood was under tight control since the Second World War, when authorities became fully aware of the ideological power of pictures on the masses. During Senator McCarthy's anti-communist campaign, Hollywood studios had soon become one of the main targets that needed to be purified from the Communist evil. Refusing employment to suspected left-wing artists, the Hollywood studios would then release a number of movies which fitted the American ideals and displayed the fervent patriotic engagement of the heroes.⁵ However, the tireless witch-hunt that marked the first decade of the Cold War, progressively softened during the 1950s, in particular after Joseph McCarthy

³ This glorifying cinema was best illustrated in movies from the trilogy by Mikhail Chiaureli, *The Vow* (1946), *The Fall of Berlin* (1949), and *The Unforgettable 1919* (1951). The censorship exerted by Stalin was extremely strict. An undeniable sign of the relaxation brought by the Thaw is for example the release of the second part of *Ivan the Terrible* by Sergei Eisenstein in 1958 after having been forbidden during 12 years.

⁴ GODET Martine, *La pellicule et les ciseaux : la censure dans la cinéma soviétique du Dégel à la Perestroïka*, Paris, CNRS, 2010

⁵ SHAW Tony, YOUNGBLOOD Denise J., *Cinematic Cold War: The American and Soviet struggle for hearts and minds*, Lawrence (Kansas), University Press of Kansas, 2010, p.20: five organizations played an important role in ensuring Hollywood acted in the national interest: the Catholic Legion of Decency, the Production Code Administration (PCA), the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals, the American Legion, the FBI; NEVE Brian, *Film and politics in America: A social tradition*, London, New-York, Routledge, 1992, p.171: over two hundred Hollywood artists were denied employment by the studios linked to the Motion Pictures Association of America, the trade association representing the six major Hollywood studios.

was censored by the Senate in 1954, and provided more freedom of expression to the independent film directors who reacted against the excesses of McCarthyism and the rapid changes of American capitalist society. In France, the Nouvelle Vague was officially launched in 1958 with the release of *Le Beau Serge* by Claude Chabrol, and is often presented as one of the most radical ruptures in the history of French cinema. The expression was first employed in an article by the sociologist Françoise Giroud published in 1957 in which she tried to study the generation of the mid-1950s, living in a time of economic growth after postwar reconstruction, and confronted with the issues of decolonization, especially with the painful case of Algeria.⁶ The expression would then be used to describe the new generation of film directors that appeared at the end of the decade, including among others Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut and Claude Chabrol.⁷ They reacted against what Truffaut called the “Tradition of Quality”, praised by French political leaders as a mark of their country’s artistic superiority.⁸ These quality movies, produced in French studios by experienced film directors, displayed adaptations of French literary monuments such as *Les Misérables* and *Notre-Dame-de-Paris* by Victor Hugo, swashbucklers and comedies.⁹ Showing little attempt to be creative, traditional French movies were designed so to be as profitable as possible. The Nouvelle Vague tried to regenerate the creativity of this dying cinema, and introduced new actors, fresh stories and stylistic innovations.

This short outline shows that parallel attempts to renew the national cinematographic production emerged during the 1950s. Movies that broke with the established conventions offered a new vision of the world. Borrowing the term from the French case, I contend that these movies show the simultaneous emergence of a cinematographic New Wave in all three countries. In this essay, I offer to analyze these movies and to figure out how they present striking common points that reveal parallel tendencies. Thus, what are the similarities between the New Wave movies produced in the Soviet Union, France and the United States, and how can we explain them?

⁶ GIROUD Françoise, « Nouvelle Vague », *L'Express*, n°328, 3 octobre 1957. The vast survey commissioned by the journal *L'Express* intended to study the generation that was between 18 and 30 years old, considered as the generation that would handle the future of France.

⁷ The term Nouvelle Vague was used as soon as 1958 in the journal *Cinema*, by the critic Pierre Billard. See BILLARD Pierre, « Editorial – Une Situation Critique », *Cinema* n° 58, juillet 1961, p. 1

⁸ This quality cinema was in particular used as an argument during the negotiation against the Blum-Byrnes Agreements imposed by the United States after the war as a compensation for the American war effort.

⁹ MARIE Michel, *The French New Wave: an artistic school*, transl. by Richard Neupert, Malden, Blackwell, 2003, p.18: From 1945 to 1957, 20% of France’s total film production output were shot by only nine directors, for an average of 18 films each.

Cinema is an intensively studied field that has become an academic discipline. However, the historiography shows that research on cinematographic production in the context of the Cold War has often focused on the competition between Communism and Capitalism transposed on the screen. The functioning of the Hollywood machine and of the Soviet propaganda is a well-explored topic. The work *The Inquisition in Hollywood* (1983) by Ceplair and Englund investigates the effects of the anti-communist purge directed against the left-wing artists until 1960.¹⁰ The authors try to show how the life – the artistic life, but also daily life – of those “blacklisted” suffered multiple impediments, and thus emphasize the idea of a frontal clash in the cinema world, based on political grounds. In the same way, the movie competition between the two blocs of the Cold War have been studied in different works, one of the latest being *The Cinematic Cold War* (2010) by Tony Shaw and Denise Youngblood which covers the period from 1945 to 1990.¹¹ Regarding the independent cinema external to the ideological competition, the emergence of new tendencies has been mainly studied from a national perspective. Brian Neve and, more recently, Peter Lev have studied the history of American cinema and highlighted the production of more critical movies since the 1950s.¹² The Soviet cinema of the Thaw, underestimated for a long time at the benefit of Russian avant-gardist cinema of the 1920s, has received new attention in the last fifteen years with the contributions of Josephine Woll and Alexander Prokhorov.¹³ The Nouvelle Vague in France and its directors has been studied in numerous scholar contributions since the 1960s.¹⁴ Apart from these national monographs, the only attempts to compare international New Wave movies remain rather descriptive, or try to figure out how the different movements influenced each other. For instance, Michel Marie points to a common “chauvinism” in French scholar cinematographic studies, which gives French cinema credit for all the international

¹⁰ CEPLAIR Larry, ENGLUND Steven, *The inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community: 1930-1960*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, University of California press, 1983

¹¹ SHAW, YOUNGBLOOD, *Cinematic Cold War*, *op. cit.*

¹² NEVE Brian, *Film and politics in America: a social tradition*, London, New-York, Routledge, 1992; LEV Peter, HARPOLE Charles (dir.), *History of the American cinema . 7, Transforming the screen: 1950-1959*, New York, C. Scribner's sons, 2003

¹³ WOLL Josephine, *Real images: Soviet cinema and the thaw*, London, New York, I.B. Tauris, 2000; PROKHOROV Alexander (ed.), *Springtime for Soviet Cinema. Re/Viewing the 1960s*, Russian Film Symposium, Pittsburgh, 2001

¹⁴ Among other works: DOUCHET Jean, ANGER Cédric, *Nouvelle Vague*, Paris : Cinémathèque française, Hazan, 1998 ; MARIE Michel, *The French New Wave: an artistic school*, transl. by Richard Neupert, Malden, Blackwell, 2003

experimentations occurring in the 1960s.¹⁵ In this essay, without denying the mutual influence between film directors of different countries, I want to transcend the level of mere description by arguing that we can explain the similarities perceptible in the production of the new waves by the intellectual, social and political context of the period. This comparison can help to understand certain social trends and ideas that emerge in the post-war societies and to overcome the oversimplified perspective of the divided world of the Cold War. This perspective builds on the recent approach which tries to avoid the essentialist conception of East and West, to de-construct the static binary categories of the Cold War, and to disclose the multiple cross-border cultural exchanges that defied the iron wall. Works such as *The Dancer Defect* (2003) by David Caute, and *Divided Dreamworlds?* (2012) by Giles Scott-Smith and Joes Segal have contributed to the development of this new approach.¹⁶

I focus my study on the decades of the 1950s and 1960s, as it is not relevant to establish a specific starting date for analyzing the emergence of artistic trends. However, the time period is limited to the year 1968, which marks a strong change in the national context of each of the three countries. I plan to identify New Wave movies and to find out their similarities by using four criteria:

- The formal aspects and the aesthetics: use of the camera in a static or flexible way, lightning conditions, black & white or colours, montage techniques.
- The narrative: duration of the plot, epoch, general setting in studio or on location, outcome of the plot as a happy end, tragic end or open end, level of transparency of the plot and possibilities of interpretation, possible ambiguities included.
- The themes: traditional or contemporary themes, presence of social, political and economic issues, individual or collective themes, ideological themes.
- The characters: age, origin, sex, social class, education, strengths and weaknesses, values and ambitions of the protagonists.

The analysis of movies with these four criteria allows grasping the main topics addressed by directors, and putting movies in perspective with the conventional cinema of the time. A rigorous methodology would include the comparison of the New Wave movies with the mainstream cinematographic production within each country in order to confirm the novelty

¹⁵MARIE Michel, *The French New Wave: an artistic school*, transl. by Richard Neupert, Malden, Blackwell, 2003, p.128

¹⁶CAUTE David, *The dancer defects: the struggle for cultural supremacy during the Cold War*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2003; ROMIJN Peter, SCOTT-SMITH Giles, SEGAL Joes, *Divided dreamworlds? The cultural Cold War in East and West*, Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2012

brought by the New Wave.¹⁷ The limited size of this essay does not allow completing this first methodological step, and leads me to identify the New Wave movies by contrast with the general acknowledged features of the mainstream cinema of the time (among others: cause-to-effect narratives, transparent plot, “real” heroes, ideological tone). Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that movies totally embodying the spirit of the New Wave are scarce, and that independent movies often display a mix of tradition and novelty. For instance, a movie such as *The Wild One* (1954) by László Benedek was the first one to display juvenile rebellion on the American screens, but was still drenched in Hollywood aesthetics as the clean studio settings and the rather conventional characters prove it. Yet the novelty brought by such pictures contributed to the emergence of the New Wave and should be taken into account in this study. The four criteria here defined help to overcome the obvious differences between the movies. It can be surprising to compare the works which are totally different pictures at first sight, rooted in specific cultures. But I want to show that the analysis of the aesthetics, the themes, the narratives and the characters of these movies reveals obvious parallels that unveil common expectations in the Soviet, French and American societies and invite to reconsider the value of human beings in a time of rapid changes. I develop my argument in four chapters based on specific similarities: after proving in the first chapter that in opposition to the positivist atmosphere of the mainstream cinema, the New Wave conveys the anxiety of the new generations, I assert in the second chapter that the movies focus on the individual and neglect the collective dimension. The third chapter shows that the New Wave film directors distrusted or at least did not support the ideological discourses that submerged the Cold War period and called for a preservation of human values. Finally, in the fourth chapter I contend that the movies reveal a reflection on the role and place of the artist in society. The question of the reception of the movies in each country or abroad is let apart as I only consider the outbreak of the New Wave. While some national specificities can be underlined when possible, it is delicate to compare national schools within the New Wave, because of the lack of unity in national productions, and it is not the core objective of this research. The similarities between the New Wave movies reveal a critical stance on the postwar world and a yearning for individual expression that do not fit national borders.

¹⁷ Indeed, the cinematographic production in each country was not monolithic before the New Wave. Some genres also offered a critical point of view on society and displayed social ills. The *film noir* and the thriller for instance, especially in the United States and to a certain extent in France, displayed gloomy characters inspired from the daily tragic events, and experimented stylistic innovations. But I argue that these genres nurtured the thirst for suspense and scaring stories of the audience. They pertained to a highly fictional realm, while the New Wave strived to face the reality of life.

I- The concerns of post-war generations

In this first chapter, I intend to show that New Wave movies conveyed the concerns of the post-war generations in a period of official optimism. While traditional cinema was pervaded by this positive mood and transmitted to the audience the faith in a bright future, the New Wave movies tried to expose the reality of life without embellishment, condemned the necessity of war and the military escalation of the Cold War, and displayed the increased anxiety of the new generations in a time of rapid changes.

1) *After the war, life as it is*

The end of the war had no direct influence on the cinematographic productions of the different countries, except in Italy, where neo-realism emerged directly after the war with in particular *The Bicycle Thief* by Vittorio de Sica (1948) and prevailed during the whole second half of the 1940s in movies that were concerned to show the reality of life after the war. A similar realistic aesthetics pervaded the movies of other countries from the 1950s on. If the influence of Italian movies that were generally known and appreciated abroad seems undeniable, most historians point to the responses of film directors to their national cinematographic traditions, and to a sudden desire to display life as it really is. The mainstream movies in each of the countries since the pre-war period were most of the time displaying characters in fancy environments that seemed remote from the reality of the time. Comedies, musicals, espionage movies, theatrical drama and historical epic movies were among the most popular genres. The musicals were maybe the genre that best combined entertainment and ideology. After its flourishing in the 1930s, American musicals observed a second Golden Age in the 1950s and brought prosperity to the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios, with quickly iconic movies featuring the glamorous stars Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra or Marilyn Monroe. Joyful episodes of dancing and singing accompanying happy-ending love stories displayed the American *way of life*. Musical were also produced in the Soviet Union,

to the point that Mosfilm was considered as a sort of “Soviet Hollywood”.¹ Richard Taylor showed that they were developed in the 1930s and expressed the spirit of the dominant Stalinist slogan of the time on the screen: “life has become happier, comrades, life has become more joyous”.² Here again, the musicals, especially the “Kolkhoz musicals” taking place in collective farms, were the perfect means to display a blissful Soviet society grateful of its prodigious leader. The thesis that these movies were far remote from the reality of Soviet life can seem paradoxical with the official style of “Socialist realism” imposed by the regime. However, as Anatolii Lunacharskii, the first people’s commissar for popular enlightenment from 1917 until 1929, made clear: the Socialist Realist “does not accept reality as it really is. He accepts it as it will be [...] The Socialist Realist is not obliged to stick to the limits of realism in the sense of verisimilitude”.³ These instructions opened the way to a distorted approach of the Soviet world, that later on led to the unabashed transformation of reality in movies in order to comply with the utopian vision of Stalin. Maybe less obvious, the embellishment of reality in cinema was also common in France. Prosperous since the 1940s, French cinema was produced by a rigid system which only allowed experienced film directors. The adaptations from French literary monuments, praised as a means to assert French cultural supremacy in front of the post-war invasion of Hollywood movies, displayed theatrical characters in picturesque environments that seemed to offer series of nostalgic post cards of the traditional “Vieille France”.

Thus, the cinematographic conditions that pertained to different national ideologies, although specific to each country, interestingly led to the same reaction: some Soviet, American and French film directors of the 1950s refused the artificial reality displayed in the mainstream movies and wished to shoot real life. In the Soviet Union, this reaction was favored by Khrushchev himself who criticized the embellished images of the movies in his speech of 1956 and pointed at the ignorance of Stalin for the reality of the countryside:

[Stalin] knew the countryside and agriculture only from films. And these films dressed up and beautified the existing situation in agriculture. Many films pictured kolkhoz life such that [farmhouse] tables groaned from the weight of turkeys and geese. Evidently, Stalin thought that it was actually so.⁴

¹ TAYLOR Richard, “Singing on the Steppes for Stalin: Ivan Pyr’ev and the Kolkhoz Musical in Soviet Cinema”, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 58, No. 1 (Spring, 1999), pp. 143-159

² Quoted in: TAYLOR, “Singing on the Steppes for Stalin”, op. cit., p.145

³ Quoted in: TAYLOR, “Singing on the Steppes for Stalin”, op. cit., p.145

⁴ KHRUSHCHEV Nikita, Speech to 20th Congress of the C.P.S.U, delivered on February 24-25 1956, available on: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/khrushchev/1956/02/24.htm> [consulted on July 2014]

This direct statement from the new First Secretary from the Party undoubtedly encouraged Soviet film directors to film their country and their fellows in a new way. In the United States, new production studios opened outside Hollywood, in New York in particular, and developed a new style of film direction. Elia Kazan joined this emerging trend. Tired of the Hollywood studios that were cut from real life, he enjoyed being in New York in the middle of things: “I see twenty things every day that remind me of the fate of the world [...] I didn’t want to be like the others there, more and more attenuated, more and more abstracted, less and less ‘in things’”.⁵ The same impulse to leave the confined space of the studios for the outdoor life and to film people in their original environment affected the French directors of the Nouvelle Vague in France. Reacting against what François Truffaut called “the Tradition of Quality”, a new generation of film-makers decided to make low-budget movies and took over the streets, the cities, the villages and beaches of France, filmed actors in their daily environment and invented tricks to follow them everywhere.⁶

It is interesting to observe that in the three countries New Wave movies tended to focus more often on contemporary life and to neglect historical topics and epics tales. Woll informs us that from 1956 on, “viewers, especially younger ones, hungered for films about contemporary life”.⁷ Likewise in the West, a large part of New Wave movies responded to the same interest for topical themes inscribed in contemporary conditions. *Shadows* (1959) by John Cassavetes, *Breathless* (1960) by Jean-Luc Godard and *Illich’s Gate* (1962) by Marlen Khutsiev could be taken as American, French and Soviet version of a same topic: the wandering of young characters in New York, Paris or Moscow. *Shadows* presented young people from the alternative American youth pervaded with jazz and black culture. It was extremely innovative by its cheap means and hasty style. Cassavettes confessed that the movie team had to shoot quickly in the streets and would frequently hide from the police.⁸ In *Breathless*, the viewer follows the love story of Michel and Patricia. The long sequence filming Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg walking down the Champs Elysées and capturing the intrigued passers-by looking directly into the camera, and the sequences of free

⁵ CIMENT Michel, *Kazan on Kazan*, New York, The Viking Press, 1974, p.103

⁶ Raoul Coutard, one of the best cameramen of the Nouvelle Vague contributed a lot to the development of new ways of shooting, trying to free the camera from its cumbersome prop and to find improvised solution to shoot in any location.

⁷ WOLL, *Real images, op. cit.*, p.42

⁸ FINE Marshall, *Accidental genius : how John Cassavetes invented American independent film*, New York, Miramax Books, 2005

rides across Paris have become hallmarks of the Nouvelle Vague's specific aesthetics. The cities often became a "character" of the movies that the viewer discovered along the wanderings of the protagonists. In *Illich's Gate* which followed the evolution of three friends after one of them has returned from his army service, the Moscow of the 1960s is the background of the whole film. Thus Paris, New York and Moscow were filmed in new ways and the true faces of the capitals were revealed to their audiences. Intimate settings also appeared on the screen: characters were filmed in their houses, in their beds, in their bathrooms, in every location of their daily lives. The realistic mood of the New Wave encouraged directors to shoot on location and not in the studios or in artificial settings anymore, which represented a real innovation. Indeed, the three countries here considered could boast about major national cinematographic production and had huge studios available for their film industry. Mosfilm studios, Hollywood studios or the studios of Boulogne offered numerous stages and technical means to film directors who could access them. The fact that a main part of the New Wave movies preferred real settings points to a major rupture with the cinematographic tradition in each country, be it for aesthetics or financial motivations. Moreover, the choice of many directors from the three countries to shoot in black and white also indicates a rupture with the colourful aesthetics of the convention movies. Deprived of the appealing and embellishing effects of colour, black and white aesthetics seemed more truthful.



Shadows, (1959) by John Cassavetes, *Breathless* (1960) by Jean-Luc Godard,
Illich's Gate (1962) by Marlen Khutsiev

The three movies feature characters wandering in town. They reflect the desire of film directors to shoot on location, in contemporary settings. Jazz music is employed in many sequences, revealing the musical taste of these American, French and Soviet generations.

The wish to shoot on location and on real places induced a need to focus on real people. The analysis of the movies protagonists reveals that there is a striking absence of both monumentalized heroes and all-despicable villains in the three countries. Instead, New Wave

movies favored 'normal' people and investigated their mundane life. Tired of the successful heroes of the conventional movies, film directors turned the camera towards characters of daily life, revealing the reality of their lives. When focused on contemporary world, the New Wave movies seemed especially willing to reveal the part of society hidden in the traditional movies. To do so, a similar plot trick was used in movies of the three countries: a well educated and idealist person enters a community facing various problems. The Soviet movie *Spring on Zarechnaya Street* (1956) by Marlen Khutsiev relates the arrival of a young teacher in a small industrial town deprived of all the appealing aspects of big cities, after her predecessor quitted as "it seemed uncivilized for her here". She enters this micro-world of the town and discovers all its downsides: jealousy, cupidity and rivalry punctuate the banal life of the town. In the same way, *Le Beau Serge* (1958) by French director Claude Chabrol, focuses on the life of a small village of France disrupted by the return of François who come to take some rest after a disease. François is struck by the evolution of the village where he spent his youth, especially by the situation of his old friend Serge who became addicted to alcohol and abuses his wife. We find the same situation in the American movie *Blackboard Jungle* (1955) by Richard Brooks, where a young English teacher is assigned a position in a sensitive high school in a poor area of New York. The teacher is immediately confronted to the difficulty of his undisciplined students. Thus, in each case, the arrival of a more conventional protagonist in a new environment is a pretext to emphasize the reality of its society, to disclose its daily difficulties, at the expense of the protagonist's misfortune.

Finally, the attempt to depict real life is perceptible by the conscious differentiation between fictions and real life expressed in the movies of the three countries. In *Shadows* by John Cassavetes, Tony who tries to seduce Lelia confesses: "I'm not one of these storybook characters that are supposed to be all noble and righteous". In *Pierrot Le Fou* (1965) by Godard about the escape of Marianne and Ferdinand after they killed someone, Marianne laments: "what makes me sad, is that life and novels are different". The Soviet movie *A Person is Born* (1956) by Vasilii Ordynskii shows the struggle of Nadia with her new-born baby, that she got from a youth love affair. Nadia's friend asserts: "In books it's all fine. In reality it's not like that".⁹ It is asserted again in *The Letter Never Sent* (1959) by Kalatozov about the expedition of the geologist team looking for diamonds. Arguing with his colleague about their love for the woman of the team Sergey gets irritated: "I don't give a damn about

⁹ Quoted in WOLL, *Real images, op. cit.*, p.44

your morals that come from books". Among other examples, these quotations show that film directors locate their movies on the side of reality. They express the same increasing distrust regarding the book morals that do not fit the necessities of times anymore and the same desire to open eyes on real life.

2) *Anti-war trend*

One common feature of the New Wave movies is their criticism of the disastrous effects of war. The theme of war pervaded a certain amount of films in the United States, France and the Soviet Union, be it the recent Second World War, or previous wars. But contrary to many movies highlighting the brave actions of their national heroes, the New Wave intended to approach this historical topic in a more critical way.¹⁰ Film directors dealt with historical themes with the obvious will to break with the triumphalist tone of the official national version.

First, a new depiction of the reality of life during war time stemmed from the realistic approach described above. Displaying characters either at the front or in their country, the New Wave movies revealed the fear and the reluctance of the soldiers sent to the front, and showed the daily adaptations of the people at the home front and their often un-extraordinary responses to the extraordinary situation. Inner troubles within countries, but also cases of betrayal and of ungratefulness were suddenly displayed on the screens of the three countries. In *Jules and Jim*, (1962) by François Truffaut, about a love triangle, Catherine takes different lovers when the First World War erupts. The German Jules and the French Jim are both unwilling to fight, by fear of killing each other. Some Soviet movies showed similar cases of unpatriotic or unfaithful behaviour. In *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959) by Grigori Chukrai, Alyosha is rewarded by his superior for having destroyed two German tanks. Embarrassed, the young soldier confesses that he felt only fear when shooting the tanks, and thus implicitly admits that he was not moved by the expected patriotic fever. Allowed a four-day leave to go back to his mother, he meets different civilians during his journey, who are confronted in various ways to the difficulty of war and try to get along with life: wounded soldiers, women

¹⁰ For example, *La Bataille du Rail* (1946) by René Clément or *Air Force* (1943) by Howard Hawks offered heroic war movies and praised the patriotic involvement of its heroes.

left alone, parents deprived of their sons, orphans, unfaithful fiancées. *The Cranes* also offers a new depiction of the reality of daily life in the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War. Veronika marries Mark and therefore publicly betrays her fiancé. Mark has corrupted a friend of his uncle in order to be exempted, and frequents a group of artists that insolently enjoy good food and entertainment. This presentation of the home front appears rather at odds with the official ideal of a patriotic people all devoted to the common cause. Similar consequences of war are presented in Elia Kazan's movie *East of Eden* (1955), which focuses on the life of a father and his two sons in a small village of California in 1917 when the United States entered World War I. Elia Kazan shows the reluctance of the older son Aron to go to the front and reveals the opportunism of some people that find new ways to benefit from the war in order to make money. These different movies, even if focused on different periods and countries, all presented similar facts: the human reactions to war, be it expressions of fear and sadness, needs for love and social relations, or greedy ambitions. Far from the conventional glorifying tone of the mainstream cinema, the first step of the New Wave film directors was to approach the theme of war in a more realistic way and to encourage moderate and careful judgments.

The issue of the memory of the Second World War haunted some movies in France and the Soviet Union, where the number of victims was dramatically important in proportion to the population.¹¹ In the Soviet Union, the revision of the official history of the Second World War emerged during the Thaw. In his 1956 speech at the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev held Stalin responsible for millions of deaths during the war, and opened the way for a new reading of the Great Patriotic War. Memoirs and personal accounts appeared at that time. In the same way, the reaction to the official national discourse was encouraged in the West by the progressive revelation of individual experiences that contradicted the official collective memory. Movies were obviously influenced by these remembrances. It is interesting to note that these critical movies appeared more than a decade after the end of the Second World War, thus after a time period necessary for memory work. *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959) by Alain Resnais, based on a novel by Marguerite Duras, was maybe the best example in France of this attempt to tackle the painful memory of the events of the war. The female protagonist falls in love with a Japanese man in Hiroshima and comes to remember her first youth love with a German soldier which brought her in public disgrace at the liberation.

¹¹ The number of victims of the Second World War were of 27.000.000 in the Soviet Union, around 560.000 in France, more than 400.000 in the United States (0,32% of the population, so by far the lowest ratio).

After fourteen years, she speaks about this trauma for the first time. Fourteen years were necessary to express it. The Soviet movie *Fate of a man* (1959) by Sergueï Bondartchouk also addressed the burden of war memories through the story of Andreï Sokolov, back from the front but haunted by memories and unable to adapt to society. These themes of the collective and individual memory and of the war traumas were addressed by Soviet and French directors more directly than by American directors. In the United States, the human cost of the two world wars had been much less important and the daily reality of the battlefield was more remote. The Secession War was still the favorite war topic for movies, especially in the Western genre, and was generally treated in a rather conventional way.

We can observe in some movies of the New Wave a strong statement against war. Several film directors from the New Wave protested against the use of war which contradicts human values, emphasizing the illegitimacy and absurdity of the war. Soviet movies tended to lament the huge loss that war represents. When the young Alyosha from *Ballad* only has time to kiss his mother before going back to the front, the voice-over informs us that it is the last time that her mother sees him: “so that is everything we wanted to tell you about our friend Alesh. He might have become a wonderful citizen, beautifying our land with gardens, and he will forever remain in our minds a Russian soldier”. While glorifying the Russian soldier, the movie insisted above all on what had been lost in this war: millions of young men such as Alyosha had been sacrificed. In the same vein, *Two Fiodors* (1958) by Khutsiev relates the story of two men, one old, the other young, both called Fiodor, that meet and help each other. The two characters are alienated to their post-war societies: they are lost in a peaceful but chaotic environment that contrasts sharply with the cold rationality of the army world where they come from. How could these generations who learned to deal with the war, cope with the new order? War alienates men from their original environment.¹² Andrei Tarkovsky made what is maybe one of the most critical movies about war with *Ivan’s Childhood*, released in 1962, which shows the resolute and even frightening determination of the young Ivan, a child, to help fighting the war. The contrast between the innocent Ivan of the past and the warrior Ivan is shown through dream sequences that bring Ivan back to his parents’ house. All the innocence and joy natural to a child of his age have been lost with the outburst of the war.

¹² WOLL Josephine, *The Cranes Are Flying*, London, Tauris, 2003, p.87: Woll mentions the writer Viktor Nekrasov, who defended the film as a good document about the war generation, about those boys who learned “two skills in their seventeen to eighteen years – how to kill and how not to be killed. And how are they to live now, when such skills are not needed?”

Sartre interpreted the movie as showing that “war kills those who make it even if they survive”.¹³ While these three Soviet movies held war responsible for the loss of their Soviet young people and of their joyful minds, French and American movies adopted a more sarcastic tone. *Paths of Glory* (1957) by Stanley Kubrick takes place during the First World War and shows the ambitious and highly arrogant General Mireau deciding to shoot three men of his army after the failure of an impossible and pointless mission that he ordered. Kubrick expressed in his movie the whole absurdity of war, where human ambition leads to pure insanity. The deep irony of Kubrick pervades the whole picture and turns it into a tragic farce.¹⁴ In 1963, Godard released *Les Carabiniers* (1963), pretending to praise war in an ironical way and revealing the moral violence of men. In a fictive country in war, two young brothers from a small village are recruited to fight and are attracted by the promises of wealth and glory, and by all the transgressions possible in war: thief, rape, murder, gratuitous violence... The war negates all human values and transgresses moral frontiers. Thus, when condemning the absurd and pointless consequences of war, it seems that the Soviet movies adopted a more nostalgic tone, compared to the sarcastic examples of the French and American pictures here considered.

When not dealing with the Second World War, many movies conveyed a strong concern for the tense climate of the Cold War which led the two blocks to engage in the escalation of military dissuasion. Revealing to the audience the reality of the research centers for nuclear weapons, the movies also gave voice the collective fear that grew in the early 1960s as the prospect of a nuclear world war which would be fatal for the whole world appeared more probable. In 1960, France performed its first nuclear test in Algeria. De Gaulle was then in charge of developing the military nuclear program and of placing France in a good position within the nuclear competition. In 1961, both the Soviet Union and the United States resumed nuclear tests, thus breaking a three-year moratorium period. The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 brought the world very close to the eruption of a nuclear war. The fear of a nuclear war was especially expressed in American movies. In 1959, *On the Beach* by Stanley Kramer offers a very pessimistic vision of the devastating consequences of a nuclear war simply launched by a man pressing a button. Emphasizing this absurd act of auto-destruction, the scientist Julian

¹³ SARTRE, Jean-Paul, “Discussion sur la critique à propos de l’Enfance d’Ivan”, *Les lettres françaises*, December 26, 1963 – January 1, 1964, Reprinted in Sartre’s own collection *Situations VII*, Paris, Gallimard, 1965, pp.332-42

¹⁴ The movie was censored in France as it was considered as an indictment against France. It was only released in 1975.

Osborn, played by Fred Astaire, laments: “who would ever have believed that human beings would be stupid enough to blow themselves off the surface of the Earth?”. In the early 1960s, the threat of a nuclear war got stronger. *Dr Strangelove* (1964) by Stanley Kubrick reflected on the absurdity of the nuclear dissuasive strategy between the United States and the Soviet Union, offering again a highly sarcastic picture. In France, the innovative short film *La Jetée* (1962) by Chris Marker, entirely made of a sequence of photographs, showed the aftermath of a nuclear war and the attempts of men to establish connections with other time periods in order to save the human survivors of the war. Regarding the Soviet Union, the film historian Oksana Bulgakowa points out the absence of a Soviet equivalent of *On The Beach* until 1986, and attributes this absence to the resolute Soviet optimism and unshaken faith in scientific progress.¹⁵ While it may be true that Soviet science-fiction movies were more inclined towards friendly relations with extraterrestrial creatures than the American movies adopting a colonialist tone, this statement over the blatant scientific optimism may be incorrect if we consider some critical movies. Marko Dumancic analyzes the evolution of post-Stalinist attitudes towards science through two movies, *Nine Days of One Year* (1961) by Mikhail Romm and *Into the Storm* (1965) by Sergei Mikaelian. He shows that if these movies did not openly criticize the Party’s monopoly over scientific affairs, they did question the relation between science and politics, and showed the emergence of an ethical concern in the scientific field.¹⁶ *Nine Days* relates nine days in the life of Gusev, a nuclear physicist devoting his life to the creation of a thermonuclear reaction, even after receiving an important dose of radiation. The invisible nuclear radiation that slowly kills the main character evokes the distrust of its director towards modern science and its dangerous steps in the world nuclear competition. The incapacity of Gusev to get away from his research symbolizes the impulse of men to conduct scientific research that leads to fatal outcome, and emphasizes here again the terrible human tendency towards self-destruction. *Into the Storm* (1965) by Sergei Mikaelian, by showing scientists trying to understand storms’ dynamics in order to control electromagnetic fields, also questions the threatening consequences of submitting science to social and political imperatives. Therefore, contrary to what first appeared to Bulgakowa, it seems that Soviet directors shared similar concerns as the French and American directors about the

¹⁵ BULGAKOWA Oksana, “Cine-Weathers: Soviet Thaw Cinema in the International Context”, in: KOZLOV Denis, GILBURD Eleonory (eds.), *The Thaw: Soviet society and culture during the 1950s and 1960s*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013, pp.436-481, p.450

¹⁶ DUMANČIĆ Marko, “De Stalinizing Soviet science: rethinking the moral implications of scientific progress in Khrushchev era film”, *Studies in Russian and Soviet Cinema*, Volume 6, Issue 1, 2012

results of a technological race that is motivated by political goals, but expressed them more implicitly, probably because of a restricted freedom of expression.

3) *Existential angst*

The criticism of war was followed by the will to display the anxiety that emerged in society during the 1950s. The end of the war had brought a real relief, but also the urge to find a new order after this major historic disruption. Indeed, if war prevented happiness, the end of the war did not bring happiness per se. One decade after the end of the war, while each of the three countries could witness industrial revival and economic growth, people could feel the general failure to reach personal happiness and stability. This anxiety mostly appeared in the new generations which reacted against the old conservatism of their parents. New generations were not molded in pre-existing patterns and only had loose ties with the references system of their parents. In many movies, these young people were shown constantly on the move, wandering in towns (*Illich's Gate*, *Les Cousins* by Chabrol, which tells the arrival of Charles in Paris where he joins his cousin Paul, *Shadows*), using their cars, their bikes or running (*The Cranes*, *Breathless*, *The Wild One*), travelling around or escaping (*The Letter Never Sent*, *Pierrot Le Fou*, *East of Eden*). Mobility was not a sign of determination anymore – a travel necessary to accomplish some mission for example – but was a common mark of instability in the three countries. *Illich's Gate* showed the wandering of the three friends deprived of old ideals and influenced by Western culture. The new generation had lost its innocence and illusions. Soviet movies attempted to answer the questions of post-war generations of “how to live?” regarding private and professional life, as in *A Person is Born* which focused on the troubles of the young Nadia on the threshold of her young adult life. American movies were often concerned about the fate of the familial cell. The disintegration of the family unit, which was considered as the basis of the national unity, was one recurrent theme of American cinema in the 1950s.¹⁷ In *Rebel without a Cause* (1955) by Nicholas Ray, the trio of the three teenagers Jim, Judy and Plato have confrontational difficulties with their parents. In the first sequences at the police station, Jim and Plato are unable to express their troubles as their parents and nanny are constantly speaking for them. As for French movies, they usually displayed the gap between new and old generations. In *400 Blows* (1959) by François

¹⁷ LEV, *History of the American cinema 7*, op.cit., p.218

Truffaut, the young Antoine Doinel feels alone in a family and scholar environment that is deaf to his dreams and expectations. In *Les Cousins* the generational confrontation indirectly operates between the two cousins, as the first one is really close to his mother and full of dated conventions, and the other one is emancipated but loses himself in regular uncontrolled excesses. The emancipation of the young bourgeoisie and the mix of unabashed pleasure quest and tragic meandering that characterize their lives is indeed a favourite topic of the Nouvelle Vague. Moreover, movies of the three countries displayed the gap that increased between modern cities and retrograde hinterlands. In *Spring*, *Le Beau Serge* and *The Wild One*, young people languish in the daily routine, conscious of the discrepancy between their lives and their dreams of modernity. The boys of the biker club ask to the astonished barman of the small town in *The Wild One*: “What about TV? That new thing, television?”. Indeed, the progressive intrusion of television in houses in the West, as in the Soviet Union, first certainly contributed to that feeling of lagging behind the promises of modernity. Anxiety and frustration raised in a society where many opportunities seemed possible after the war, but where achievement was not so easy.

Beyond the anxiety of post-war world, the deterioration of social conditions was pointed at by film directors. The heavy organization in the three countries was the first problem denounced. The paradox between the freedom enjoyable at the end of the war and the constraints imposed by bureaucratic societies contributed to the feeling of absurdity and to the general anxiety. The state bureaucracy was a main impediment to free life in the Soviet Union. In *A Person is Born*, the young single mother Nadia has to face imperturbable bureaucrats, cruelly indifferent to her condition. Western directors also denounced the increasing bureaucracy as a source of dehumanization. In *Chronique d'un été* (1961), the sociologist Edgar Morin and ethnologist Jean Rouch studied the French society of the early 1960. One worker interviewed by Morin asserted: “the drama of the time is that we are less able to choose our work. We do not enter into something, we fall into something. Simply because you must have not a title, but a position, an official job, an identity card. What is a man today? He's an identity card!”. The bureaucracy, organization and extreme rationality of western and eastern societies has become oppressive. This totalitarian bureaucracy was analyzed in the science-fiction movie *Alphaville* (1965) by Godard that relates the struggle of the secret agent Lemmy in a dehumanized society controlled by a robot, where all human feelings have been abolished. *On The Beach* revealed the nonsense of a too obstinate social administration which strives to maintain itself even in the last moments of humanity. The

doctor ironically observes: “There’s a lot of bureaucracy still, you know? Even in death”. Secondly, movies decried the overwhelming materialism and hypocrisy of the social context. Marcel Martin shows that a series of Soviet movies, among them *A Person is Born*, denounced the lies, unfairness and meanness of the contemporary social context.¹⁸ In *Illich’s Gate*, the young Ania revolts against his father who gives her advices, but who himself gave up his ideals for material expectations.¹⁹ In the same way, Tarkovsky insisted on the materialism of the time and the lack of harmony between the material and spiritual condition of modern man. The Soviet director explained his inspiration by an “attempt to redress the imbalance between the material and spiritual worlds”.²⁰ In the West, the increasing corruption and greed that pervaded postwar societies was more directly pointed at. *The Big Knife* (1955) by Robert Aldrich, based on a play by Clifford Odets written in 1949, relates the failed career of the Hollywood actor Charlie Castle, trapped in materialistic ambitions. The movie presented a negative vision of a very conservative Hollywood where creative spirit and originality were not allowed. More generally, the film carried a reflection about the confrontation between art and business, and Aldrich stated that it “can apply to any sphere of business, or the arts, where man’s natural liberty of expression is squelched by unworthy, incompetent, tyrannical leaders or bosses, many of whom are not deserving their powers.”²¹ *Contempt* (1955) by Godard could be seen as a French equivalent, showing here again the ambition and hypocrisy that rules the cinema field. We see that in the three countries, directors decried the increasing materialism that spawned from the postwar economic revival, through the use of young or idealist characters confronted to ambitious and unscrupulous men. The attack was more virulent in the West where capitalism favored materialistic ambitions, but was also present in the Soviet Union.

The existential angst that pervaded the fifties and sixties followed an unsettling change of paradigms. More than ever before, everything seemed possible and people witnessed rapid changes in science (the idea of men sent into space represented a major upheaval of traditional paradigms) or in society. Consumerism brought the imperative of constant renewal, even in the Soviet Union. The period became unpredictable. The context of the Cold War where crisis

¹⁸ MARTIN Marcel, *Le cinéma soviétique : de Khrouchtchev à Gorbatchev : 1955-1992*, Lausanne, Paris, l'Age d'homme, 1993, p.23

¹⁹ WOLL, *Real Images, op. cit.*, p.143

²⁰ GREEN Peter, *Andrei Tarkovsky : the winding quest*, Houndmills, Macmillan, 1993, p.11

²¹ WILLIAMS Tony, *Body and soul: the cinematic vision of Robert Aldrich*, Lanham (Md.), Scarecrow Press, 2004, p.193

and stable periods, political propaganda and periods of relaxation followed each other contributed to this feeling. The New Wave movies showed characters shaken by the perpetual major changes of the era, unable to predict what the next day would be like. Speaking about *Breathless*, Luc Moullet asserted: “they are victims of disorder and the film is thus a point of view on disorder – both internal and external. Like *Hiroshima*, and *400 Blows*, it is a more or less successful effort to dominate this disorder”.²² The question of the place of man in the universe recurred in different movies, and showed a change of paradigm, a lost confidence in the central role of human beings. In *The Letter Never Sent* the geologist team looking for diamonds fights against the wild environment of Siberia: nature is the first opponent in their quest, and the final winner of the confrontation. According to Prokhorov, the movie conveys a severe criticism of scientific behaviour: “the quest for diamonds is reminiscent of a rape scene”, it only brings destruction.²³ Woll shows that the film contradicted the utopia of the Sputnik era in which man and cosmos were unified.²⁴ In *The Letter Never Sent*, man is not the center of the universe anymore, and on the contrary, he loses control and becomes dominated by nature. Tarkovsky also denounces the disunion between man and nature in *Ivan’s Childhood*, by showing a nature that has become gloomy and threatening, mirroring human’s atrocities. When Soviet directors seemed concerned about the lost connection with nature, the American Nicholas Ray adopted a more dramatic tone. In *Rebel*, the students listen to their teacher speaking about the scientific nature of the universe. The professor ends his discourse by pointing at the insignificance of human actions in the universe: “through the infinite reaches of space, the problems of man seem trivial and naïve indeed. And man existing alone seems himself an episode of little consequence”. This discourse terrorizes the young Plato. *400 Blows* also speaks about this shattered connection with the surrounding world. The *Time* review of *400 Blows* in 1959 rightly analyzed the sequence of the centrifuge, where Antoine is pushed against the walls: “The machine, he discovers, has repealed the natural law that keeps his feet on the ground. It has robbed him of all relationship to the true center of things. The child in the centrifuge stands for modern man in the society he has made.”²⁵ Thus, by diverse metaphors, the New Wave movies stressed the loss of references of the young generation. While a promising future seemed possible after the war, the disorder, bureaucracy and corruption that took over post-war societies threatened those promises.

²² ANDREW James Dudley, *Breathless : Jean-Luc Godard, director*, New Brunswick, Rutgers U.P., 1987, p.211

²³ PROKHOROV, *Springtime, op. cit.*, p.12

²⁴ WOLL, *The Cranes, op. cit.*, p.91

²⁵ Review “The New Pictures”, *Time*, December 14 1959

This first chapter shows how New Wave directors reacted against the all-positivist reality presented in mainstream cinema, or more generally in the official discourses of the time. The postwar prosperity, the scientific progress, the race to military dissuasion and the confident tone of politicians were thwarted by the reality of people confronted to the permanent difficulties of life, by the existence of people in the margins of society, by the disgust of war and the fear of a nuclear war and by the loss of old paradigms resulting in an existential angst. These elements were disclosed in New Wave movies through the use of a realistic aesthetics. The introduction of characters and narratives pertaining to the daily life and the occurrence of new social themes contributed to that tendency.

II- The emergence of the individual within the society

An important characteristic of New Wave movies was their focus on the individual, on his interests and values, at the expense of the collective story. I argue in this chapter that this new focus represented in the three countries the refusal of the encompassing and decisive role of the ideological group and the desire to revive personal and intense experiences of life.

1) *Claim of personal identity*

We have seen how the mainstream movies presented a lacquered and artificial reality that spawned the need to confront the reality of the postwar world. Another feature of these movies, mainly musicals, comedies and costume dramas, is that they represented society as “a static and unindividuated mass”, as Woll stated for the case of the Soviet Union.¹ Characters in the movies were reacting as expected, according to the social conventions in force in the country, and fitted specific physical criteria. New Wave movies reacted against this oppressive conformism. Considering the three categories of conformism defined by David Riesman in 1960, we can observe that while the conformism of tradition had almost vanished in the three countries because of the decline of traditions in front of a galloping modernity, societies were shaped in new molds: the Soviet Union was trapped in a conformism of inner moral defined by a totalitarian ideology, and the West was at the same time submitted to the western inner moral of capitalism and democracy and sinking in a conformism of mass media and consumer society.² This latter phenomenon is explicitly represented in the first sequence of *Pierrot le Fou*, when Ferdinand, wandering around during a chic party, is listening to conversations made of advertisement slogans. People around him have lost their individuality and have adopted the imposed language: they have absorbed the consumer ideology.

In this context, the characters presented in New Wave movies asserted their individuality. The analysis of movies heroes is particularly interesting, as they traditionally

¹ WOLL, *The Cranes*, op. cit., p.8

² RIESMAN David, *The lonely crowd: a study of the changing American character*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1960

embody the moral load of the movie. Usually devoted to the collective project, heroes represented social stereotypes with a well-defined situation in the class system of their country, and could be identified in a glimpse by the audience. This was obviously perceptible in the Soviet hero of conventional movies who was forced to bear the expected communist virtues and was entirely dedicated to the Soviet utopian project; but it was also visible in the American hero, brave and puritan, and above all highly patriotic. The classical French protagonist was maybe more qualified as he did not embody a model of ideological virtue or patriotic fidelity, but he was most of the time an exemplary character endowed with strong physical and intellectual skills. The leading roles of the major French movies after the war were played by famous actors, trapped in their image of pre-war actors and guarantors of a classical French quality. Thus the apparition of new types of protagonists in the New Wave movies contrasted the strong national models of the three countries.³ The novelty brought by the New Wave was sometimes very subtle but was perceptible by the audience through the new actors displayed in the movies. Naum Klejman, director of the cinema museum in Moscow, stresses for example the surprise brought by the atypical face of the actress Elina Bystrickaja in *Unfinished Story* (1955) by Friedrich Ermler, a movie telling the emerging love between a paralyzed architect and the female doctor who visits him every day: “what was surprising for us was the matter. [...] When I talk about the matter of the movies, it’s also the faces, the types that brought the Thaw. Such signs were so significant at that time!”⁴ Physical appearances of actors that broke with the established ideals were the first signals of the New Wave. Male actors did not possess the expected masculine strength and virility. We can even perceive some physical similarities between the actors of that time: Aleksey Batalov (in *The Cranes*), Jean-Claude Brialy (in *Les Cousins*) and Anthony Perkins (in *On the Beach*) had a certain feminine way of moving, while Yevgeni Urbansky (in *The Letter Never Sent*), Jean-Paul Belmondo (in *Breathless*) and James Dean (in *Rebel*) presented introverted and tortured expressions. Actresses did not present the confidence and tenderness expected from the archaic female figure of the mother or the wife: Tatiana Samoïlova (in *The Cranes*), Jeanne

³ We must not forget that other types of heroes have been displayed in American movies. As mentioned earlier, particular, the gangster movies and *film noir* have featured complex characters with a more or less dark past and troubled feelings. The French social movies of the 1930s and 1940s also portrayed some ambiguous characters. The novelty brought by the New Wave is that it display banal characters from “real life”, as stated in the previous chapter. However, it is interesting to observe that the *film noir* protagonist could have influenced some New Wave film directors. The French Nouvelle Vague was especially linked to the American subgenre, and Michel Poicard repetitively imitating one of Bogard’s gesture in *Breathless* is a direct reference to the American film noir.

⁴ EISENSCHITZ Bernard, *Gels et dégels : une autre histoire du cinéma soviétique, 1926-1968*, Paris, Centre Pompidou, 2002, p.139

Moreau (*Jules and Jim*, *La Baie des Anges*) or Ava Gardner (*On the Beach*) were at the same time vivid and anxious. New protagonists appeared on the screen of the New Wave: independent women, children, teenagers, colored men, persons from lower or higher classes, social misfits or ambitious businessmen. For instance, the American movie *Imitation of Life* (1959) by Douglas Sirk related the encounter between a white woman dreaming to become an actress, a black woman from modest origin, and their two young girls and followed the evolution of this female quarter. Then, these new characters of the New Wave movies did not displayed the conventional human skills. Bremond, Sullerot and Berton made a quantitative assessment of the human skills of the heroes in two representative samples of the Nouvelle Vague and of the mainstream movies, and showed that the traditional skills displayed by exemplary heroes were much rarer in New Wave heroes.⁵ In particular, what they called the “efficiency skills”, combining lucidity and energy and usually animating the conventional heroes were remarkably absent in French New Wave heroes.⁶ Similarly, the new American and Soviet protagonists were delivered from the burden of heroic virtue of their predecessors. They could experience fear as Alyosha confronted to the tanks attack in *Ballad*, depression as Veronika in *The Cranes*, or they felt misfit as Jim and Plato, rejected by their classmates in *Rebel*. New Wave heroes could doubt, they could be weak and selfish, just as human beings. The visual form of the movies emphasized this focus on the individual. In the three countries, the camera became more flexible and supple, revealing the outer world through the eyes of the protagonists.⁷ The screen offered a window on the human mind. In *The Cranes*, the movements of camera express the feelings of the characters: the camera turns with the happy couple of the beginning, or tragically spins revealing Boris’ vision when he is shot dead. The camera of Kazan is often unstable in *East of Eden*, revealing the subjective point of view of Jim who is upsetting the familial unity.

⁵ BREMOND Claude, SULLEROT Evelyne, BERTON Simone. ‘Les héros des films dits « de la Nouvelle Vague »’. in: *Communications*, 1,1961. pp. 142-177

⁶ Idem, p.152-154. Bremond, Sullerot and Berton have counted the occurrences of specific skills in the heroes of two groups of French movies, one group of New Wave movies and another “control sample” of mainstream movies, with the same number of protagonists in each group. For example, regarding the heroes displaying lucidity, perspicacity, determination and energy, they count 20 occurrences in the mainstream group, and only 4 occurrences in the New Wave group.

⁷ WOLL, *The Cranes*, op. cit, p.43, quoting ‘Evgenii Margolit, ‘Peizazh s geroem’ in Vitalii Troianovskii (ed.), *Kinematograf ottepli* (Moscow, 1996), p.106: Evgeni Margolit contrasted the static cinematography that features positive heroes embodying an artificial set of civic virtues to the lively pictures of the Thaw: once movies could explore “the inner human condition, that is, the movement of the human spirit, cinematography regained its earlier dynamism.”



East of Eden (1955) by Elia Kazan

The camera sticks to the subjective point of view of Jim. The strong angle of the shot suggests the collapse of traditional references.

Through these new characters displayed on the screens, New Wave film directors expressed the need to rediscover the human nature that exists behind social stereotypes. Taking distance from the classical heroes that are virtuous by their consistency and self-control, the movies depicted more instinctive characters who were sensible and often emotionally fragile. In *East of Eden*, Kate recognizes the sharp sensibility of her son Cal which gives him perceptiveness: “yeah you got sense [...] maybe you know what people are really like, what they want”. Human nature is complex and cannot be reduced to some objective features. The opposition between intellect and emotion is one recurring theme in the movies that explore the instincts, impulses and intuitions in human beings. Already in 1951, in Kazan’s movie *A Streetcar Named Desire*, adapted from Tennessee Williams’ play, the strong tension that exists between Blanche DuBois and her sister’s husband Stanley Kowalski reveals the inner impulses and sexual drives of the two protagonists. In a more reserved way, in *The Cranes*, Veronika acts impulsively, and possesses a kind of animal instinct, be it of hope or despair. The Russian scholar Evgeni Margolit stated that “Veronika signifies the intrusion of nature into the social world”.⁸ She does not carry any social or political ideal and does not seem to worry about intellectual ideas. This intrusion of nature incites characters to analyze themselves. In *The Letter Never Sent*, Konstantin questions his own instinctive feelings when searching for diamonds: “I feel it. Instinct does not lie. Why doesn’t it? It does, very often. Or maybe never? What’s instinct? It means feeling but not knowing.” Similarly,

⁸ Quoted in WOLL, *The Cranes*, op. cit., p.38

Patricia, in *Breathless*, tries to explore her own emotions after having suddenly denounced Michel to the police: “I stayed to find out if I was in love with you or if I wasn’t in love with you. And because I’m mean to you, it proves I don’t love you”. She acts out of her impulses and draws conclusions afterwards, and hints at the impossibility to rationally apprehend human behavior, especially when it has to do with love. The instinctive impulses were progressively recognized as being part of human nature. The actors themselves introduced a new way of moving. Veronika in *The Cranes* moves rapidly like a “squirrel” – the nickname given by Boris. Brigitte Bardot in *And God Created Woman* (1956) by Roger Vadim and James Dean in *Rebel* also expressed an animal way of moving. It is interesting to observe the similar resurgence of the animal part within human beings in the New Wave movies from the three countries. Intuition and instinct are not conventional skills as defy the intellect. They have a mysterious side, and even a sexual connotation which is especially underlined in the Western movies. This analysis of the human mind in New Wave movies was simultaneous with the development of psychoanalysis in the 1950s. In France, Jacques Lacan helped to regenerate psychoanalysis with the use of contemporary theories as structuralism. Freud’s influence was growing in the United States, where a number of psychoanalysts exiled during the war contributed to the thriving of the discipline.⁹ In the Soviet Union, while psychoanalysis was officially condemned as being associated with American capitalism and imperialism – the analysis of the human mind was a means to control masses by the ruling classes – Martin Miller revealed that authorities could not prevent the spread of Freudian theories and of Western works on the subject.¹⁰ A progressive reevaluation of psychoanalysis operated during the 1950s in Soviet society. In the three countries, this developing field obviously inspired artists of the New Wave, willing to discover the hidden mysteries of human beings that resisted social control and to plumb the human mind. Some movies showed a strong influence of this discipline. For instance, *Contempt* by Godard offered a psychological account of declining relations between two people. *The Fate of a Man* was an accurate analysis of an ex-soldier affected by post-trauma stress disorder.¹¹ The telling of his story to a fortuitous listener worked as a real psychoanalysis of the protagonist. Finally, *Lilith* (1964) by Rossen even took

⁹ In 1958, John Huston, famous Hollywood director, commissioned to Sartre a script on Freud, which reveals the interests of Americans for the major figure of psychoanalysis (and the appreciation of Sartre in the United States). *Freud: The Secret Passion* was released in 1962.

¹⁰ MILLER Martin, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1998, p.114-138

¹¹ BARABAN Elena, “‘The Fate of a Man’ by Sergei Bondarchuk and the Soviet Cinema of Trauma”, *The Slavic and East European Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Fall, 2007), pp. 514-534

place in a psychiatric hospital and focused on the love story between a doctor and a young schizophrenic girl.

The narratives developed in New Wave movies indicated the distance taken with the conventional collective story. In movie plots, the characters were making personal decisions and taking inner-directed paths. The focus on the individual interest was maybe most obviously observed in the Soviet Union where the weight of the collective Communist ideal was especially heavy. Soviet movies introduced a progressive liberation from this collective weight. *Unfinished Story* still presented a rigid Stalinist formal style, but expressed a new concern for individual problems, as the factories create pollution problems and the workers are confronted with the bureaucratic administration. *The Forty-First* (1955) by Grigori Chukhrai made a further step in that direction, showing the relation between a Red Army sharpshooter, Mariutka, and a captured officer of the White Army while they are trapped on a deserted island. Love transcends the political commitment for a while, before Mariutka shoots the officer – and gets her forty-first victim – when the White Army comes to deliver him. *The Forty-First* “exemplifies a central paradox of the Thaw”:¹² the new hunger for personal freedom coexisted with the still deep belief in the collectivist project, and sometimes came at odds with it. Woll notes that the same paradox is displayed different Soviet movies.¹³ Bondarchuk’s *The Fate of a Man* deals with the struggle of a former soldier after the trauma of the war, and obviously plays down the relation between his qualities as a soldier and Communism: while the hero is obviously loyal to his country, Baraban shows that his suffering is highly personal and cannot be read as part of a collective sacrifice.¹⁴ This superimposition of the personal and collective levels was maybe not so obvious in the Western movies, which tended to downside the adhesion to the collective discourse, and to favor the personal identity quest of the characters. Contesting their due place in society, in the community or in the familial cell, characters wander, explore, and challenge their situation, just as Cal, in *East of Eden*, the rejected son who discovers that the stabilizing history made up by his father is fake, impulsively cries out: “talk to me Father! I got to know who I am. I got to know who I’m like. I got to know...”. Yet, American characters usually reconnect with society after a while. In French movies, on the other hand, the characters seem to ignore the

¹² WOLL, *The Cranes*, op. cit., p.14

¹³ For example in *Pavel Korchagin* (1956) by the two young directors Alexander Alov and Vladimir Naumov, adapted from the novel *How the Steel was Tempered* by Nikolai Ostrovsky: the fiction relates the sacrifice of Korchagin, who, just as Mariutka, sticks to his positive faith in the Soviet ideal, but ends paralyzed and blind.

¹⁴ BARABAN, 'The Fate of a Man', op. cit., p. 518-519

collective project. While Soviet and American characters are usually given jobs and some social positions, French characters often sit outside the social system, deprived of any social status, and focus entirely on their own quest. Ferdinand in *Pierrot le Fou* dedicates himself to his love story. When he observes: “we should have the feeling of being unique. I feel like I am many”, he sums up the quest of the time for a personal and consistent individuality.

2) *The existentialist quest of the young generation*

The characters of the New Wave movies expressed the desire to free themselves from the social determinism dictating their behavior and values. This desire is softly voiced by the white lieutenant in *The Forty-First* when he explains to his guard: “I didn’t become a lieutenant the day I was born. Before the war, I was a student, studying philology. And I had a normal human life”. The revelation about his somehow banal past and his wish to return to the books of his student life suddenly breaks down the protagonists’ respective status of “White” and “Red”, and unmask the desire not to be determined anymore by the circumstances – here, the Russian Civil War. In *The Cranes*, this cry for independence is even stronger. We don’t understand Veronika’s behaviour flickering between betrayal and loyalty, but we observe her wild independence. The movie is not so much about the question of loyalty as it is about “the right to live one’s own life – perhaps unhappy, plundered, ravaged, but one’s own”, according to Irina Shilova, when this right has been denied to several generations.¹⁵ The young Antoine in *400 Blows* feels the same impulse to live his own life: “I cannot live with my parents anymore [...] that’s enough! I have to live my life. I’ll write them a letter to explain”, Antoine tells to his friend. Like Antoine, the characters of the 1950s and 1960s often feel themselves alone in a hostile world and strive to take their own decisions, motivated by their own values. Antoine’s claim recurred in various movies of the time. “I am what I am and nobody tells me what to do”, Lelia asserts in *Shadows*, which is echoed by the mother in *East of Eden*: “Nobody holds me [...] nobody tells me what to do”, and by Johnny in *The Wild One*.

The possibility to choose became considered as the condition of human beings. As in *East of Eden*, Cal begs his father the possibility of change: “A man has a choice. You used to

¹⁵ WOLL, *The Cranes*, op. cit, p.40, quoting Irina Shilova, ‘Pobeda I porazhenie’, *Kinovedcheskie zapiski* 17 (1993), pp.48-49

say that was where he was different from an animal. You see, I remember. A man has a choice, and the choice is what makes him a man". After having been convinced during all his childhood that he was intrinsically bad, Cal wants to have the choice and to have opportunities to prove that he can be good. John Steinbeck, the author of the original novel adapted to the cinema by Elia Kazan, had obvious affinities with the existentialist philosophy of Sartre.¹⁶ Starting to write before the war, Sartre was a famous French intellectual at the time of liberation. In 1944 he was invited to travel to the United States for the journal *Combat*, and he met many French exiles and American figures, including President Roosevelt. His reputation was established. In 1943, Sartre had published *Being and Nothingness* in which he formulated his existentialist theory. This philosophy based on the core idea of man's freedom, appealed to the society emerging from the war, embracing its re-asserted rights after the Occupation years, and willing to project into a promising future.¹⁷ David Craze also mentions that Sartre's theory was "the first media craze of the post-war period", the intellectual being covered by most intellectual as well as popular magazines.¹⁸ According to Sartre, man is terribly free. This inherent freedom automatically confers a sense of liability. Indeed, freed from social or biological determinism, man has the choice, and is therefore responsible for his choice. There is no higher perspective that can objectively assess his actions, there is no external justification for man's existence. As the teacher of *Rebel* dramatically stated, man's existence is contingent in the universe. This contingency confers a deep existential angst, but also an impulse to face one's human condition, to accept this freedom, and to take on its responsibility. As man has the choice, in every situation, he would rather choose to be sincere and authentic. These themes of freedom, authenticity and truthfulness are to be found in many movies of the New Wave. The teenagers of *Rebel* constantly insist on facing responsibilities. Jude tells she's looking for "someone who doesn't run away when you want him". Jim is the figure of the "noble savage" according to Peter Biskind.¹⁹ He strives to act according to his own values, whereas his parents persuade him not to denounce himself to the police. In *Breathless*, Michel keeps on escaping the police who

¹⁶ STEPHENS Bradley, "Jean-Paul Sartre, John Steinbeck and the liability of liberty in the post-war period", *Journal of European Studies* June 2008 vol. 38 no. 2, pp. 177-192. Stephens shows that while Steinbeck and Sartre seem to be totally opposed in their beliefs – Sartre is really critical towards American capitalism, Steinbeck is deeply opposed to the communist bloc and a great lover of America – their common point of view of human freedom bring them closer together. Stephens thus proves that strict normative political stances can cross borders and blur frontiers between the allegedly opposed right and left wing.

¹⁷ DRAKE David, *Sartre*, London, Haus Publishing, 2005, p.64

¹⁸ *Idem*

¹⁹ BISKIND Peter, "Rebel without a Cause: Nicholas Ray in the Fifties", *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (Autumn, 1974), pp. 32-38, p.35

tracks him for having murdered a policeman, and wanders in search of an ideal romance with Patricia. But when Patricia betrays him, there is no need anymore to run away: love has collapsed, Michel faces the consequences of his act.²⁰ *Ballad* expresses the same desire of truthful behaviour. When Alyosha meets different people on his way back to his mother, he always decides to help them as he can even if its delay him from achieving his goal. Hinting at some national tendencies, we can observe that Jim's sincerity is devoted to the respect of social order, Michel Poicard is totally dedicated to his love affair, and Alyosha expresses a more fraternal sincerity.

This existentialist tone was combined with a strong focus on youth. Many movies of the New Wave featured teenagers and students that were not represented in traditional movies if not approached as children or young adults. Moreover, the movies that displayed children adopted an adult point of view, and did not explore the psychology of children.²¹ Thus, in the three countries, the youth appeared progressively as an independent generation during the 1950s. Children appeared on the screens and played deep and complex characters, as in *400 Blows*, *Ivan's Childhood* or *Imitation of Life*. The teenagers in high school and the young attending university could also express their own concerns and interests in *Les Cousins*, *Spring*, or *Rebel*. Even if young movie characters were frequently played by slightly older actors (James Dean was 24 when he played the 17 year old Jim in *Rebel*), it is important to note that the actors tried to adopt teenagers point of view. Movies entered the specific world of young people. The International Youth Festival, organized for the first time in 1947, had been the occasion to develop a new "young subculture" after the war.²² Subcultures developed, leading governments to worry about new generations and to hold ambivalent discourse: young people were seen as the rebuilders of the post-war countries traumatized by the war, and were at the same time accused of deviance and subversion. The young subculture took different forms which seemed to emerge in the United States. *Shadows* and the experimental *Pull my Daisy* (1959) by Robert Frank revealed the Beat Generation that thrived from the late 1940s until the 1950s. The American hipster, defined by Norman Mailer as a

²⁰ Earlier in the movie, Michel had warned Patricia : « I already told you that the worst flaw is cowardice ». Knowing that Michel does not hesitate to kill and rob, this reply could sound ironic. But what sounds like a straight moral piece of advice, refers here to the necessity to confront life and to face one's own responsibilities.

²¹ For instance *The Kid* by Chaplin in 1921, and *Zéro de Conduite* by Jean Vigo in 1933

²² The biggest festival was the 1957 edition in Moscow, attended by 34.000 people from 131 countries, which helped spreading the awareness of being young in different countries.

“White Negro” who embraced the subculture of black Americans joined the Beat culture.²³ But American youth subculture was also shaped by new appealing actors as Marlon Brando and James Dean, and movies as *The Wild One* and *Rebel* became cornerstones of the new Greasers, wearing jeans and listening to Rock n’ Roll. The Nouvelle Vague focused on the insolent and shameless youth, living from hand to mouth. David Sterritt considers Michel Poicard in *Breathless* as a French version of the hipster defined by Norman Mailer, as he lives without planned trajectory and accepts the imminence of death.²⁴ Youth subculture developed in the Soviet Union with the *stiliagi* or “style-obsessed”, also criticized for their lack of morality and their idleness. Frederick Starr describes this typical generation of the Thaw:

The early *stiliagi* were the inverse image of the Stalinist society of their fathers’ generation. The fathers wore baggy trousers, so the sons cut theirs narrow; the fathers were careless in dress, so the sons waged a clean-cut protest; the fathers denounced the wicked West, so the sons embraced it; the fathers sacrificed for the future, so the sons indulged in the present. The *stiliagi*, in short, rebelled against the sponsored mass culture of the Soviet Union.²⁵

Illich’s Gate represents this *stiliagi* culture through the three friends who listen to jazz, enjoy dancing and like modern painting: “the whole movie is a hymn to youth”.²⁶ The protagonist Serēja Jouravlev embodies the existential questioning of this new generation in quest of new ideals. Not all young people displayed in New Wave movies belonged to subculture in the margin of society. But this phenomenon which appeared in some movies, seemed to be the visible part of a broader awakening of the youth.

New Wave movies encouraged a new consideration of young people. Of course, youth organizations existed since a long time: the *Boy Scouts of United States* founded in 1910, the *Komsomol* founded in 1917 in the Soviet Union, or *La Jeunesse Communiste* founded in 1920 in France, were organizations devoted to the education and socialization of young people. These structures aimed to transfer values and references to the young. New generations were approached in an idea of continuity, and transmission was crucial to ensure the durability of social ideals. The major change in the 1950s was the conception of youth as a rupture, as a generation with its own culture. Sociological studies focused on this specific period of life and

²³ MAILER Norman, *The White Negro*, San Francisco, City lights, 1969 [1957]

²⁴ STERRITT David, *The films of Jean-Luc Godard: seeing the invisible*, Cambridge, Cambridge university press, 1999, p.47

²⁵ STARR S. Frederick, *Red and Hot: The Fate of Jazz in the Soviet Union*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1983, p.239

²⁶ GODET Martine, ‘L’œuvre dénaturée. Un cas de censure cinématographique dans l’URSS de Khrouchtchev’, in: *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*. 51e année, N. 4, 1996. pp. 781-804, p.783-784

tried to explore its interests.²⁷ The development of leisure activities after the war favored the social development of youth. After the ban of sociology imposed by Stalin, Khrushchev allowed the creation of sociological research centers, which were crucial for the development of youth studies.²⁸ The “invention” of youth that appeared after the war was obviously linked to the transcendence of individual interests, and to the open horizon offered to the post-war generations. For the first time, it appeared possible to get free of one’s social background, to choose one’s career and objectives. But young people were confronted to a major paradox: while possibilities multiplied, it was difficult to assert one’s place in still really conservative societies. Movies usually focused on this confrontation between youth and society. In *Rebel*, Judy’s mother fails to understand her daughter’s behavior, echoing a common adult point of view: “it’s just the age when nothing fits”. Antoine Doinel in *400 Blows* is also considered as a difficult and obscure child by his parents. He is constantly confronted with the absence of listening and understanding by the adults and the school system. The Soviet movie *What if it is love?* (1962) by Youli Raizman tells the story of an emerging love between two teenagers in high school, facing the hostility of their classmates and of the adults. This hostile circle condemns their affair as being a sign of depravation, while it relies on pure and deep feelings. Thus the confrontation between youth and society appeared as a regular theme of New Wave movies, even if the reasons differed in the three countries. American directors were generally concerned by the juvenile delinquency that affected teenagers from middle-classes and even higher classes, and French directors described the idleness and search of pleasure of the youth. Soviet directors were in general more attached to the incapacity of young people to fit into a strict system. In any case, the confrontational situation was the context for the existential questioning of the young characters. Directors cancelled moral judgment on the misbehaviour of the young and displayed strong empathy for them. Veronika in *The Cranes* brought to the Soviet audience a new type of woman, independent and passionate, with whom thousands of young Soviet women would identify. Brigitte Bardot, revealed by her role of Juliette in *And God Created Woman*, immediately conquered the audience, because of her amazing beauty, but also because she “symbolized the young French woman who was finally ‘free and liberated’”.²⁹

²⁷ In the United States, James Coleman was a preeminent youth sociologist. He published *The Adolescent Society* in 1961 in which he drew a portray of youth in relation with the contemporary leisures and the school system. In France, the sociologist Edgar Morin dedicated a part of his work to the study of the youth and showed that youth influenced the mass culture.

²⁸ TAYLOR Karin, *Let's twist again: youth and leisure in socialist Bulgaria*, Wien, Lit, 2006, p.25-26

²⁹ MARIE, *The French New Wave*, *op. cit.*, p.6

3) *The experience of life*

In 1933, Walter Benjamin wrote his essay “Experience and Poverty” about the consequences of the First World War and of the modernist impulse that followed. Benjamin used the German word *Erfahrung*, that alludes to the wisdom acquired from experience and transmitted through generations - contrary to the word *Erlebnis* that is the experience of an event lived or witnessed.³⁰ He pointed out the fact that having lived “one of the most monstrous events in the history of the world”, people came back from the front in silence, unable to communicate about this trauma.³¹ Not only the war, but also the huge changes and modernist impulse that followed contributed to impoverish traditional human experience:

A generation that had gone to school in horse-drawn streetcars now stood in the open air, amid a landscape in which nothing was the same except the clouds and, at its center, in a force field of destructive torrents and explosions, the tiny, fragile human body. With this tremendous development of technology, a completely new poverty has descended on mankind.³²

It urged men to find a new start, to adopt the modernist project, to build houses and objects made of glass (as glass is the enemy of secrets and of possession) and steel, that bore no traces of the past. The poverty of the life was compensated by the make-up of dreams that display the dynamic life missing in reality. Benjamin took Mickey Mouse as the perfect embodiment of these dreams for the contemporary man, exposing a world full of miracles, where nature and technology have merged together.

After the Second World War, on the other hand, I argue that we could observe the will to assert the primacy and uniqueness of the individual experience and to embrace life after the traumas of the past. The inner spiritual life of the individual was praised again and had to be protected. The will to face life in all its complexities, with its enigmas and paradoxes, leaked out of the New Wave movies in the three countries, as an emergency, an instinctive impulse, a matter of life. The emotional charge of the character was brought to the fore, as the rational legitimacy of the narrative was downplayed. This emphasis on emotions was searched in first place through new ways of acting. American directors were the pioneers of this search for

³⁰ FERRIS David S., *The Cambridge introduction to Walter Benjamin*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, p.111

³¹ JENNINGS Michael W., EILAND Howard Eiland, SMITH Gary, *BENJAMIN Walter: Selected Writings, 1927-1934*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Belknap Press of Harvard U.P, 2005, p.731

³² *Idem*, p.732

new acting. The Actors Studio, founded in 1947 and developed in the 1950s, intended to improve the acting style. Praised by the independent film directors, the Actors Studio would train among others James Dean, Marlon Brando and Paul Newman. Their method insisted on the immersion of the actors in their characters, in the world of the fiction. Instead of working on the exterior details and on the appearance, actors had to find inspiration from their own emotions.³³ John Cassavetes went further in the experimentation and opened his own studio to develop an acting style that would be truer to real emotions. He tried to find intensity not in the dramatic plot, but in the acting of everyday stories. His first movie *Shadows* is partly the result of an improvisation of his students. In France and the Soviet Union also, film directors tended to employ non-professional actors who could not master and direct their emotions in the way the classical theatrical actors could, and thus acted more naturally.³⁴ Secondly, the aesthetics of the movie showed a strong emphasis on emotions and feelings. In most of the movies, the visual prevailed over the discourse. The power of the image was considered more accurate to convey emotions, to move the viewer directly. The Soviet movies of the Thaw privileged visual expression over narrative and sound, and the director of photography was therefore at a crucial position, sometimes at the same level of responsibility as the film director.³⁵ Sergei Urusevsky was one of the best cameramen of the Thaw. In *The Forty-First*, he managed to confer much lyricism to the picture. Emotion even pervades landscape, as the desert become sensual. Woll reveals that these initial dialogues about politics have been discarded in the movies, at the benefit of emotional dialogue.³⁶ In *The Cranes* Kalatozov and Urusevsky also paid infinite attention to the image, and the movie expresses a strong lyricism. Naum Klejman analyzed the importance of the image: “the Thaw is a liberation of the visual aspect of cinema”.³⁷ He stresses the fact that literature was of crucial importance in Russia, but literature was submitted to a more severe control than other arts and means of expression. Thus, “everything that could not be told in words was expressed in music and image”,³⁸ and Russian cinema of the Thaw came close to expressionism. The movies *The Cranes*, *Nine Days* and *The Letter Never Sent*, while favouring realistic settings, presented very elaborate images, with fore-shortened angles and sharp contrasts that created a style reminiscent of the German cinema of the 1920s. French directors of the Nouvelle Vague, and especially Godard,

³³ LEV, *History of the American cinema 7*, op. cit., p. 242

³⁴ For the Soviet Union, see BULGAKOWA in: KOZLOV, *The Thaw*, op. cit., p.444

³⁵ PROKHOROV, *Springtime*, op. cit., p.13

³⁶ WOLL, *The Cranes*, op. cit., p.14

³⁷ EISENSCHITZ *Gels et dégels*, op. cit., p.144

³⁸ *Idem*

explored the techniques of montage to create meanings and emotions. Ellipses, discontinuities, clear ruptures emphasized the anxiety and instability of the characters. American cinema of the time was not so creative regarding the pure formal aspects of the movies. I suggest that this lack of aesthetics experimentation is linked with the fact that expressionist atmospheres and stylistic pictures were considered as a hallmark of the *film noir*, a genre that had prospered since the 1940s.³⁹ But without avant-gardist techniques, the American New Wave movies also conveyed a kind of formal emotional atmosphere. *East of Eden* is maybe the best example with recurrences of symbolic images in which the two brothers are separated by other elements.



The Letter Never Sent (1959) by Mikhail Kalatozov, and *Nine Days of One Year* (1962) by Mikhail Romm

The Soviet directors paid much attention to the visual aesthetics of the pictures in these movies, as a way to emphasize the personal emotions of the characters.

The strong focus on the individual feelings and the lyricism expressed in the movies is to be linked with the revival of poetry after the war. The three countries observed a renewed interest in poetry. This trend emerged early after the war in the United States. Tennessee Williams, the “poet of the human heart”, had a major influence since the 1940s. His works focused on the conflict between repression and release, and displayed anti-heroes and losers: “Williams chronicles humanity in all its diverse and often painful complexity”.⁴⁰

³⁹ Ryan and Kellner observes that a more creative aesthetics is employed after 1967 in the American cinema, in part because of the increased importation of art movies, among them the French movies of the Nouvelle Vague. RYAN Michael, KELLNER Douglas, *Camera politica: the politics and ideology of contemporary Hollywood film*, Bloomington, Indianapolis, Indiana university press, 1990, p.6

⁴⁰ Greta Heintzelman, Alycia Smith Howard, *Critical Companion to Tennessee Williams*, Introduction, p.ix

Interestingly, the plays by Williams were adapted and performed in Russia since 1961, and were highly praised. He was adapted by the best Russian playwrights who found similarities between Williams and the traditions of Russian theatre.⁴¹ Another trend emerged in the late 1940s with the Beat Generation, with its main poets Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg who looked for an escape into jazz music and travels. In the Soviet Union the pre-revolutionary poets Maiakovski and Pasternak were re-discovered during the Thaw and contemporary poets as Anna Akhmatova became famous. Festivals and special evenings around poetry were organized in Moscow. In France, a new kind of poetry developed in the 1950s, a poetry here again focused on daily and banal matters. Finding new links with the world and new meaning in everyday life inspired poets such as Yves Bonnefoy, René Char or Jacques Prévert.

Thus, the need to live one's life intensely seemed imperative in the postwar world. Savchenko, the bad student of *Spring*, urges his young teacher, so dedicated to her duty, to enjoy life: "why do you treat you so? [...] You don't go anywhere. You sit in your room like an old woman". When the Soviet movies often display a lyric celebration of life, Western movies bear a more tragic tone. Norman Mailer explained that the American hipster emerged from the observation that one might die "as a cipher in some vast statistical operation" and one's death will stay unknown and unremarked. In that context, "death being causeless, life was causeless as well, and time deprived of cause and effect has come to a stop".⁴² The hipster embraced the existentialist cause of the Negro who lived on the margin of society.

To be an existentialist, one must be able to feel oneself – one must know one's desires, one's rages, one's anguish, one must be aware of the character of one's frustration and know what would satisfy it. To be a real existentialist, one must have one's sense of the "purpose" – whatever the purpose may be – but a life which is directed by one's faith in the necessity of action is a life committed to the notion that the substratum of existence is the search, the end meaningful but mysterious.⁴³

In *Pierrot Le Fou*, Marianne, listening to the news on the radio, expresses the same frustration: "we say 115 resistant fighters and it does not mean anything. Yet they are men. And we don't know who they are, if they love a woman, if they have kids, if they prefer going to the cinema than to the theatre. We don't know anything, we just say '115 people killed'". Due to that threat of a meaningless death implying a meaningless life, life should be deeply experienced, even if it leads to death. In *Rebel*, the chicken race where young people are

⁴¹<http://french.ruvr.ru/2011/03/26/48017944/>

⁴² MAILER Norman, *The White Negro*, San Francisco, City lights, 1969 [1957]

⁴³ *Idem*

competing to death shows this existential emergency. To win is to die. In *Chronique d'un été*: The Italian girl Marie-Lou, installed in Paris, tells to Edgar Morin about her intense boredom and her wish of a “real” life: “to get out of myself, to live or even die provided it brings me out of myself. At this moment I don't even have the right to kill me, it would be wrong, absolutely wrong”. She expresses the wish of this generation to give meaning to life, to dive deeply into it.

In this second chapter I showed how the individual emerged in New Wave movies as an independent but complex entity that escaped the uniform mold imposed by society. Displaying new types of characters breaking with traditional stereotypes, movies revealed the instinctive and unconscious part of human beings. Narratives engaged the characters into an identity quest. While Soviet movies superimposed the individual and the collective dimension, Western directors softened the collective discourse, and French directors even eliminated it quite often. Movies reaffirmed the uniqueness of the individual and his yearning for intense experiences of life. The emphasis on emotions was expressed through new ways of acting and specific aesthetics.

III- In search of a humane world

I state in this chapter that the New Wave movies conveyed a strong distrust towards the unconditional adhesion to ideologies. The context of the Cold War proved that ideals, political ideals in particular, motivated people to fight in the name of the Good and led to damaging consequences. Film directors tried to praise more ambivalent positions as a means to preserve human values.

1) *Non-ideological tone*

The movies of the New Wave did not offer the expected ideological discourse that the audience could find in the mainstream movies. As mentioned in the first chapter, entertainment movies that covered a strong ideology were massively produced in the two blocks of the post-war world. Indeed the Cold War was in part performed on the screen, through what Tony Shaw called the “Cinematic Cold War”.¹ Between 1946 and 1953, cinema went through a period of hard-line negative propaganda during which Soviet and American movies did their utmost to denounce the hypocrisy, tyranny or weakness of the other side. After 1953, a softer propaganda line was observed. The harsh denouncement of the enemy’s ills gave way to a more positivist cinema that praised the way of life of its block. In that context, audiences could be surprised to discover movies that obviously refused to enter the ideological competition. Pictures could not be easily classified as belonging to one or the other side: the striking absence of ideological elements – in particular positive heroes and evil villains – prevented any hasty political appropriation. Film directors of the New Wave displayed an obvious distrust towards ideals in general.² The overly affirmative and self-confident discourses of the political leaders raised suspicion, and above all tiredness. In *The Forty-First*, the white Lieutenant gets irritated by the unfailing faith of his guard Mariutka,

¹ SHAW, YOUNGBLOOD, *Cinematic Cold War*, *op. cit.*

² Of course, some film directors openly criticized their regime and displayed their ideological inclination, such as Joseph Losey or Cy Endfield in the United States. Under the severe control exerted by the Hollywood authorities submitted to McCarthyism, these directors were banned and forced into exile. I do not focus in this essay on the dissident cinema, but on the movies of the New Wave which occupy a more subtle and undefined place in the binary context of the Cold War.

and rejects all ideological positions, suddenly aware of the absurdity of so many contradictory view points: “Oh hell! There’s thousands of truths! German truth, Russian truth, the peasants’ truth, the owners’ truth, the Bolsheviks’ truth! To hell with it all! I don’t want any other truth but my own!”. In 1955, this challenging of the idea of a unique and absolute truth was quite precocious. American movies dealing with the prospect of a nuclear third war also pointed to the absurdity of an ideological confrontation that led everyone to a common fate. American and Soviet people are finally equal when facing global disaster. In *Dr Strangelove*, the President of the United States orders the Soviet leader to destroy all the American military planes, renouncing all patriotic ideals when foreseeing the disaster to come. Thus, on a sarcastic or on a more sincere tone, American and Soviet directors rejected this war after the war that brought censorship and social control, while political leaders praised the freedom and progress achieved by their countries.

The participation of France to this cinematic Cold War was not so evident. Even if belonging to the Western block under American influence, France had a more independent position. Besides, the country was internally torn between a powerful Communist Party affiliated to the Soviet Union, and a right wing supporting liberalism. These internal dissensions also led to the same tiredness towards ideals fight, sometimes expressed more directly due to the greater freedom of expression available in France. In *Pierrot Le Fou* Ferdinand is contemplating the moon and imagines its only inhabitant being trapped between the cosmonaut Alexeï Leonov and the astronaut Edward Higgins White:

It's the man in the moon [...] He's fed up. When he saw Leonov land on the moon, he was happy [...] But Leonov tried as hard as he could to force the entire works of Lenin into his head. So, as soon as White landed, on his trip, he went for refuge with the American. He'd not had time to say hello, before White stuffed a bottle of Coca-Cola down his throat, demanding that he said thank you beforehand. No wonder he's fed up. He's leaving the Americans and Russians to fight their battles down below. He's getting out.

This surrealistic reply caricaturing the Americans and the Russians as being totally obsessed with their own ambitions may be the strongest rejection of the confrontational situation of the Cold War. The man on the moon stands for the French people witnessing that absurd battle.

Beyond the refusal of the binary East-West divide, the danger of sticking to some ideals was then denounced. The criticism was usually expressed through characters who were convinced by some ideals or fighting for a cause, but finally unsuccessful. The blindness and

coldness resulting from a too extreme devotion was expressly decried in the Soviet movies, where the total adhesion to the Communist cause was required. In *Spring*, the young teacher wants to stay true to her model of teaching, but it keeps her away from her students. She is unable to perceive the human potential within each of them. Boris's sister in *The Cranes* is totally devoted to the Communist cause, but never expresses any feeling. Condemning Boris's behavior when he oversleeps and Veronika's betrayal when she marries Mark, she does not feel empathy for Veronika or for the young orphan they host: "clearly a patriot and a good Communist, Irina represents emotional constipation".³ In the United States as well, ideals became suspicious. Kazan attacked the ideological positions that dictated what is right and what is wrong, be it American Puritanism or the Left wing.⁴ He explained: "I was trying to show that right and wrong get mixed up, and that there are values that have to be looked at more deeply than in that absolute approval-or-disapproval syndrome of my Left friends".⁵ This desire to look behind the apparent established order is clearly readable in *East of Eden* where the initial well defined dichotomy between good and bad is eventually totally disturbed. The mother, despised as dealing with shameful business, gives money to Cal so that he can help his ruined father. On the opposite, the father, always acting in the name of good, has deeply harmed his relatives. Cal cries out: "Because of your goodness, your rightness [...] You kept on forgiving us, but you never really loved us". The extreme dedication to an ideal made the father blind and prevented him from true and deep feelings. People excessively faithful to ideals become blind and insensitive to the outside. It is interesting to note that such excessive characters were not present in French movies, which was probably due to the intermediary position of France in the Cold War. However, the confusion between good and bad was addressed in some movies. *Les Cousins* portrays Serge as a well-intentioned character, who unintentionally disturbs the life of the village, while trying to "save" it. The idea that the intention is not enough to legitimate the action was a common criticism in the three countries.

The insinuation of political ideals in society was a reason for concern. The Soviet movies *Nine Days* and *Into the Storm* addressed the danger of mixing ideology and scientific

³ CAUTE, *The dancer defect*, op. cit., p.224

⁴ Elia Kazan was involved in the ideological fight as he came to denounce left-affiliated directors which casted a lasting shadow on his reputation. But without entering that polemic, it is clear that Kazan's position was much more complex than this might suggest

⁵ CIMENT, *Kazan on Kazan*, op. cit., p.121

research.⁶ The terrifying intervention of the German Dr Strangelove in the movie by Kubrick about the stunning easiness of building a “doomsday device”, even if fictional, also pointed to the extreme danger of submitting science to political and military purposes. Moreover, the question of social alienation became a generalized theme in the sociological research of the 1950s and 1960s. Herbert Marcuse for example elaborated his theory of the “one-dimensional man”, unable to think critically about the conditions of his own existence, and socially controlled by those who have power.⁷ This system of thought control was illustrated in *Alphaville* by Godard: the inhabitants of Alphaville have lost freedom of choice and are totally guided in their lives by a meticulous mental indoctrination. More generally, the emerging theories of structuralism in the 1950s, developed in France by intellectuals as the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and the philosopher Roland Barthes, opened new reflections on questions of power and social constraints. Contradicting the existentialist theory that granted total freedom to the subject, structuralists considered the individual as influenced by social and familial structures and analyzed the cultural codes and rules that governed those structures. Probably influenced by these news paradigms, movies in France and the United States often tackled the question of social alienation in democratic societies where familial units conditioned individuals and where the ideology of power, money and glory increasingly ruled human behaviours, serving the benefits of capitalism. Manipulation of social symbols by the dominant class encouraged consumption. *Imitation of Life* shows precisely how those dreams guide the choice of the protagonist Lora, and take her away from her love, her friends and her daughter. The race for glory seems endless as soon as someone has adopted those illusory ideals. Movies such as *The Hustler* and *La Baie des Anges* by Jacques Demy focused on the addiction for the game that spread in society. While being frequent in Western movies, those themes were also addressed in Soviet movies where materialistic ambitions spread in the post-war Soviet society. Indeed, Susan Reid shows that even if production still prevailed over consumption, a “management of consumption” developed under Khrushchev.⁸ Besides, structuralism rapidly spread in the Soviet Union – causing harsh debates between traditionalists and structuralists⁹ – and could raise questions about the individual in society.

⁶ DUMANČIĆ, “De Stalinizing Soviet science”, *op. cit.*, p.76

⁷ MARCUSE Herbert, *One-dimensional man: studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964

⁸ REID Susan, “Gender and Destalinization of Consumer Taste in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev”, in: CASEY Emma (ed.), MARTENS Lydia (ed.), *Gender and consumption: domestic cultures and the commercialisation of everyday life*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2007, p.49-78

⁹ SCHOENENBERGER Margarita, La linguistique soviétique après N. Marr : linguistes, structuralisme et « révolution scientifique et technologique », *Cahiers de l'ILSL*, N° 26, 2009, pp. 159-174

In *What if it is Love*, the young couple is victim of the codes of the community that condemn their love. The global social structure takes hold of their personal story. It is interesting to note the paradigmatic paradox of the time: while existentialism praised the total freedom of the subject, structuralism that emerged in the wake of Sartrean theories denied this freedom, showing how rules and cultural codes determined individuals.¹⁰ The New Wave movies often reveal that contradictory mood of the time.

The attempt to question the credibility of ideological positions is perceptible through a specific formal characteristic of the movies: the use of the look into the camera. Mentioned earlier as a statement of individuality, I contend that this trick is also employed as a means to deconstruct the discourse. Indeed, the traditional convention requires the cinematic discourse to be transparent and to present a consistent and fluid world without ever alluding to the technical means employed to create the fiction. This taboo of cinema, already challenged a couple of times before, became frequently transgressed in the movies of the New Wave. It suppresses the illusion of the movie and reminds the viewer that the fiction is constructed. The artificiality of the movie is temporarily revealed to the viewer. The most obvious disruption of the illusion is provided in *Pierrot le Fou*, when Ferdinand directly replies “to the viewers!”. Used by many directors of the Nouvelle Vague, the look into the camera was also quite frequent in Soviet movies, and was used among others by Chukhrai in *Ballad* and Tarkovsky in *Ivan’s Childhood*. We can note that American directors almost never used that formal trick, confirming again the more conventional aesthetics of the American movies. Moreover, the French Nouvelle Vague exploited the possibilities of montage techniques to contest the artificial consistence of fiction. Breaking with the “invisible montage” that created the illusion of filming reality as being linear and logical, directors, and especially Godard, introduced ruptures and inconsistencies within sequences. After the Holocaust, no consistent story could be told again.¹¹ The modern montage used by the Nouvelle Vague showed that reality was not the perfectly ordered world presented in official discourses.

¹⁰ DOSSE François, « Le sujet captif : entre existentialisme et structuralisme. » in: *L’Homme et la société*, n°101, 1991. Théorie du sujet et théorie sociale. pp. 17-39

¹¹ NASSE David, *Evolution du montage : De Griffith à Godard*, WebTV, University Rennes 2 http://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/webtv/appel_film.php?lienFilm=172 (consulted in July 2014)



The Letter Never Sent (1959) by Mikhail Kalatozov, *Les Cousins* (1959) by Claude Chabrol, *The Cranes are Flying* (1957) by Mikhail Kalatozov, *La Baie des Anges* (1963) by Jacques Demy, *Ballad of a Soldier* (1959) by Grigori Chukhrai, *Breathless* (1960) by Jean-Luc Godard, *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) by Andrei Tarkovsky, *Contempt* (1963) by Jean-Luc Godard

The “look into the camera” is a way to assert the individuality of the character, but also to deconstruct the artificiality of the fiction.

The movies of the New Wave were non-ideological but not anti-ideological. They presented a critical stance over some aspects of society, but usually did not convey a revolutionary message, and kept distance from the social and political debates of the time. The alternative youth displayed on the screens do not call for revolt, even when related to subversive tendencies. The *stiliagi* were not so much a dissident group than the expression of a more diffuse social spirit.¹² Frederick Starr states that the evolution of the Komsomol after the war towards a bureaucratic association organizing boring meetings had contributed to

¹² JOHNSTON Timothy, *Being Soviet: identity, rumour, and everyday life under Stalin, 1939-1953*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, p.203

“depoliticize the young”.¹³ Khutsiev’s movie *Illich’s Gate* offers an example of the misunderstanding that could occur between authorities and film directors: the movie was censored by Khrushchev but Martine Godet informs us that this was a misreading of the director’s intentions, as Khutsiev was a convinced Communist.¹⁴ In the West, the youth of the 1950s and early 1960s appeared in the same way rather de-politicized, disinterested in the political stakes of the time.¹⁵ Jean-Pierre Esquénazi considers that Godard expressed “the guilty and unavowed troubles of a generation repelled by the « great problems » of the time, colonial wars or political uncertainties”.¹⁶ Thus, while the movies of the Nouvelle Vague have been criticized for their superficiality, Esquénazi claims that this superficiality is to be understood as a refusal of depth, of great ideas and serious themes, and that it is deeply experienced by the characters.¹⁷ Moreover, the characters of the Nouvelle Vague do not revolt against their lives conditions, and they even enjoy the big cities, the cars and their carefree freedom. Similarly, American youth in the movie is most of the time not deeply rebellious. Peter Biskind argues that while *Rebel* has often been read as a subversive representation of middle-class American society, the movie did not really challenge its founding principles.¹⁸ Being provocative on purpose, Biskind even considers the *Rebel* as “a profoundly conservative film”,¹⁹ as it reasserted the traditional value of the family and of the male dominant role.

However, the disillusioned youth refused one specific myth: the myth of youth that tended to describe them in all positive and promising terms. In the documentary *Chronique d’un été* realized by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin in 1961, Rouch blames the young generation for not playing their part in the Algerian War. A student replies vividly to this reproach: “you’re speaking about the myth of the youth: the rising youth, the glorious youth, the combative youth, the aggressive youth... Why? Because at 20 years old we can do

¹³ STARR S. Frederick, *Red and hot: the fate of jazz in the Soviet Union, 1917-1991: with a new chapter on the final years*, New York, Limelight Editions, 1994, p.240

¹⁴ GODET, *La pellicule et les ciseaux*, *op. cit.*, p.37

¹⁵ The political awareness would increase in the 1960s and lead to the youth rebellion of 1968

¹⁶ ESQUENAZI Jean-Pierre, *Les cinémas européens des années 50, A bout de souffle et la société de la « nouvelle vague* , in :BERTIN-MAGHIT Jean-Pierre (dir.), *Les cinémas européens des années cinquante*, Paris, Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma, 2000, p.299

¹⁷ *Idem*, p.312

¹⁸ BISKIND, “Rebel without a Cause”, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ *Idem*, p.37

anything, we are available? That's not true!".²⁰ The youth of the New Wave refused the responsibility that society conferred to them, and claimed the right to carry none of the qualities attributed to them.²¹ I argue that this rejection of the myth of the youth could be perceived, often implicitly and sometimes paradoxically, in movies of the three countries. While praising the energy and intensity of young people, movies refused to present them as the pillars of the future. The introduction of the new types of characters discussed in the second chapter was a strong statement against the traditional ideology of a powerful and ambitious youth handling the future of their countries. Set in the context of school, where education intends to train the builders of America, *Blackboard Jungle* relates the confrontation between students and their idealistic teacher and shows the students at odds with the ideal picture of youth. *Illich's Gate* stresses the social passivity of the young characters. The young friends distrust their parents' ideals, but they do not engage in the construction of something new. They dramatically lack the optimism normally expected in young people, while the title ironically suggests that they are the warrant of Lenin's legacy – Illich being the second first name of Lenin. Thus, after the Second World War which has requested the involvement – and the sacrifice – of thousands of young people, it seems that the post-war generations did not want to accept the burden of being the architects of the promising future, and refused to be part of a great History. The myth of the youth would progressively reappear in the 1960s with the revival of a political consciousness.

2) *Praise of ambivalence*

The movies of the New Wave generally brought more questions than answers. Questions were left open, plots remained unresolved, old certainties were shattered. The directors felt unwilling to bring clear-cut answers. The more traditional movies usually followed a narrative that presented a dominant point of view and allowed a clear understanding of the story, of the reasons and outcomes of the plot. An initial situation

²⁰ This discussion reminds the viewer of the disappointment felt by Sartre towards the youth of the 1950s and 1960s, the "Génération des appelés" that went to Algeria and did not protest. Sartre supported even more the revolted youth of 1968 in which he could see the renewal of the myth of the youth, and the resurgence of the existentialist fever that had been contradicted by the structuralist movement. 1968 marked the return of History.

²¹ In another part of *Chronique d'un été*, the same student expresses his opinion about the time and confesses that beyond the intellectual reasons he gives for the inadequacy of his actual life with his dreams, there is in fact "a lack of courage", a certain weariness.

shattered by a disturbing event gave room to multiple twists, and the ending brought a final stable situation. Specific causes had logical effects in a strict referential system. New Wave directors strayed from these unilateral and artificial fictions and favored narratives that mixed different sub-stories and points of view. Narratives were therefore closer to lived reality, as life itself consists of a multitude of vantage points that can compete or complete each other. The movies offered what Ray Carney called a “democratic narrative” or “multi-stranded narrative” when analyzing *Shadows*.²² Cassevetes’ movie floats between the different characters and never sticks to one specific point of view. The influence of structuralism that decried the great totalizing History and considered a plurality of partial histories is here again to be noted. The same multi-stranded narrative operates in *Le Beau Serge*. Different stances are exposed which have all a specific opinion on the state of the village: François who just returned in the village, his friend Serge who always lived there, the old people witnessing the evolution along the years, and the priest feeling helpless. Chabrol does not give any real explanation for the intention of François who convinces himself that he must help the whole village suggesting that personal motivations often remain obscure even to oneself. The movies of the Nouvelle Vague convey the idea that “people are a mess, and the tricks life regularly plays on them and to which they as regularly succumb are an even bigger mess”.²³ Understanding men’s reasons is obviously uneasy, and sometimes impossible. This blurring of the unilateral line can confuse the viewer. The scientist Julian in *On the Beach* seems to be the mouthpiece of Kramer when he replies to one soldier asking the reason for the third nuclear war: “The problem with you is you want a simple answer, there isn’t any”. Simple explanations are more comfortable, but movies of the New Wave refused to provide this comfort to the audience. Woll reveals that some of the most explicit statements of the original script of *The Cranes* have been relinquished by Kalatozov in the movie. The most striking example is the absence of an answer provided to Veronika’s question “what’s the meaning of life?”, when in the script Veronika was advised to go back to work and stop wondering about life.²⁴ The elimination of the conventional answer reveals the crucial message of the movie.

²² CARNEY Ray, *Shadows*, London, bfi Publishing, 2001, p.54

²³ WEBER Eugen, “An Escapist Realism”, *Film Quarterly* 13, n°2 (winter 1959), pp.9-16

²⁴ WOLL, *The Cranes*, *op. cit.* p.57. In Rozov’s play, the history teacher answers to Veronika: “Perhaps its meaning consists in what remains after us. Go to work, Veronika, don’t look for answers inside yourself, you won’t find them there. And you won’t find justification either.” On the contrary, in the movie she begins to answer: Perhaps its meaning is...’, but she is interrupted by Mark’s arrival.

As Woll puts it, “it suggests that no single answer exists, that Veronika must seek and find an answer for herself and within herself”.²⁵

The absence of an objective and unequivocal narrative let room for open interpretation. In the New Wave movies, interpretation was not provided, but partly left to the viewer. The many elements of the narratives that remained enigmatic raised interrogations in the viewer. In *The Cranes*, the behaviour of Veronika who marries another man while she still loves her fiancé remains an enigma, and stays as “the central paradox of *Cranes*, resistant to logical analysis”.²⁶ The story does not judge her action, but leaves judgment to the viewer. Thus the narratives did not submit to an external moral referent that would allow judging the action. Tarkovsky’s movies often led to a whole set of different interpretations by his viewers. Even if Tarkovsky was often critical towards these far-fetched comments, he acknowledged the necessity for the viewer to make his own interpretative contribution.²⁷ The audience became part of the meaning-production process, and was not a simple passive receiver anymore, to be fed with pre-digested messages. Ray Carney shows how *Shadows* by Cassavetes can be confusing for the viewer: “Nothing is written in stone; everything flows and changes. It’s impossible to predict the next beat in any interaction”.²⁸ The movie requires an “active viewing” from the spectator and brings him out of his accustomed passivity. The interpretative work is made more difficult by the elimination of traditional moral references. As stated previously, frontiers between good and bad, false and truth are blurred, and the complexity of reality is directly given to the viewer. Tarkovsky asserted that “hideousness and beauty are contained within each other”.²⁹ His Ivan is at the same time an angel-like boy and a terrific soldier-into-being. He is a strange creature that provokes contradictory feelings. The viewer can not immediately like or dislike him all. The complexity of human beings is thus a recurrent theme of the New Wave movies. Kazan remembered an advice that Tennessee William, who plays he adapted on the screen, gave him about the characters: “There should always be an area in a dramatic character that you don’t understand. There should always be an area of mystery, in human characters”.³⁰ Indeed, in *A Streetcar*, characters are ambivalent: Stanley is cruel and seductive at the same time, and Blanche is attracted by the one who will

²⁵ Idem, p.57

²⁶ WOLL Josephine, *The Cranes Are Flying*, London, Tauris, 2003, p.37

²⁷ GREEN, *The Winding Quest*, op. cit., p.10

²⁸ CARNEY Ray, *Shadows*, London, bfi Publishing, 2001, p.64

²⁹ GREEN, *The Winding Quest*, op. cit., p.27

³⁰ CIMENT, *Kazan on Kazan*, op. cit., p.71

kill her. Kazan could find this attraction – repulsion duality everywhere, and wanted to express this ambivalence of the human character.³¹ He did not give all keys of interpretation to the viewer, letting him using his own sensibility of human nature to penetrate the ambiguities of the story. The Nouvelle Vague in France also embraced the ambivalent nature of human beings. Its characters were most of the time torn between opposite feelings and do not act consistently. The viewer was forced to find more elements by himself, maybe in his own experience. The story between Catherine and her two lovers in *Jules and Jim* has nothing to do with the traditional love triangle from tragedies: relations are flexible, reasons and motivations are vague and changing. Ferdinand decides to commit suicide after Marianne left him in *Pierrot Le Fou*, but changes his mind at the last moment, too late though. Previously in the movie, Marianne had dedicated him a poem: “Tender and cruel, real and surreal, terrifying and funny, nocturnal and diurnal, usual and unusual, handsome as anyone, Pierrot Le Fou”. The juxtaposition of contradictory terms illustrates the ambivalence of human nature. Therefore, in the three countries movie characters presented parts of mystery and were not made transparent to the viewer.

It is striking to observe the presence of so many pending questions in the New Wave movies. I contend that the refusal of rigid ideological positions and the praise of ambivalence came from an increasing sense of fragmentation of the post-war world within the three countries considered in this essay. Deep contradictions appeared in the internal situation of each country. At the turn of the 1960s, paradoxical tendencies pervaded the Soviet Union. The country’s increasing prosperity after the rapid economic growth of the 1950s was challenged by growing tensions with the outside, especially with China.³² In the Union, authorities did not act consistently regarding censorship policy. The regime authorized the publication of some controversial texts (for example Ilia Ehrenburg’s memoirs), but banned other works, thus creating confusion. The 22nd Party Congress held in 1961 brought a new step in the de-Stalinization process while, in the same time, Khrushchev foresaw the danger of the relaxation and strived to keep control over this wind of freedom. The discovery of the reality of the Gulag, in particular with the publication in 1962 of the novel *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* by Solzhenitsyn, raised public awareness about the dangers of Communist utopia for the Soviet people itself. In France, the period of the common glorification of the resistance fighters of the Second World War gave way to a period of internal divisions about

³¹ Idem, p.72

³² WOLL, *Real Images, op. cit.*, p. 101 - 111

the future of the French colonial possessions. From 1949 on, the war in Indochina and the French defeat of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 weakened the image of the strong colonial power and encouraged the revolt of other colonies. The Algerian National Liberation Front (FLN) started the revolt in 1954, engaging into a violent war until the signature of the Evian Accords in 1962. This colonial war and the use of violence and torture by the French army constituted a main taboo in France, and led to the paradox that even if unpopular, the situation was mainly passively accepted by French public opinion. In the United States, the prosperity of the 1950s and the increased power of the country on the world stage, became increasingly challenged by internal dissent. The anti-communist hunt of the early Cold War and the increased awareness of the permanent racial discrimination raised more and more questions about the alleged American myth of the “melting pot”. “American exceptionalism” which praised the strong sense of nationhood and the reliance of democratic values became suddenly challenged. Some movies more or less directly criticized this context in the 1950s, such as *Johnny Guitar* (1954) by Nicholas Ray, in which conflicts between family and community became an allegory of the current McCarthyism.³³ In *East of Eden*, Elia Kazan also pointed to this broken unity, when Mr Albrecht, the appreciated shoemaker of the city, was suddenly bullied and assaulted by his fellow citizens for being of German origin. Therefore, in America as in France and the Soviet Union, the national myths cracked apart. The specific situation within each country led to similar reactions: the feeling that what could have been previously united was then divided. The new reality had to be approached carefully, with all its paradoxes. Ambivalence allowed a more truthful depiction of reality which did not comply with the logical, solid, unequivocal model of politicians.

3) *How to preserve one's humanity?*

The rejection of ideologies that turned out to be totalitarian and the praise of more ambivalent vantage points were submitted to a higher project: the quest for humanity. After the disaster of the Second World War, the preservation of peace and human values had been proclaimed as the main objective of the postwar world. The discovery of violent transgressions and human rights violations in each of the countries incited people to wonder

³³ PETERSON Jennifer, “The Competing Tunes of “Johnny Guitar”: Liberalism, Sexuality, Masquerade”, *Cinema Journal*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Spring, 1996), pp. 3-18

about the success of this program. The search for a more humane world became the objective of the artists by the end of the 1950s. Movies of the New Wave denounced the violation of human values and looked for valid guarantees for this jeopardized humanity.

The discourse of the New Wave film directors probably stemmed from a context of increased awareness of the importance of human rights. Human rights movements emerged in the 1950s and 1960s in the three countries. In 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States condemned racial segregation in schools. The topic of racial segregation appeared in a number of films of the time, such as *Blackboard Jungle*, *Shadows* and *Imitation of Life*. In this latter picture, the young Afro-American girl pretended to be white and rejected her mother in order to avoid discrimination. The question of racism and civil rights of black people intensified in the 1960 after the election of the democrat John Kennedy who brought a progressive mood in the conservative American society. In France, decolonization incited French people to change their gaze on “the Other”. The thriving disciplines of ethnology and anthropology, with for example the major figure Claude Levi-Strauss, brought interest in other cultures and built a new conception of what it means to be a human being. The ethnologist Jean Rouch released *Moi, Un Noir* in 1958 which, between documentary and fiction, relates the daily life of young Nigerian people in a colonial country. *Hiroshima Mon Amour* also dealt with the representation of the other and the transgression of cultural and racist frontiers. However, the theme of racism and human rights appeared rather rarely in comparison with the importance of the topic in politics and intellectual life at that time. This is hypothetical, but I suggest that this avoidance of the question could result from the fact that human rights defense was a sort of ideology reinforced in all political discourses after the war. Here again, according to artists of the New Wave, the defense of human rights was to be played on small scale, in everyday facts, and not with high principles. The same occurred in the Soviet Union, where movies were not concerned by racism, but indirectly addressed the question of human and civil rights through banal and daily events.³⁴ Analyzing the dissidence in the Soviet Union, Philip Boobbyer shows that a human right movement emerged in the 1950s that focused on conscience and gathered people from a very broad political spectrum.³⁵ Intellectuals promoted the respect of universal values rather than the blind compliance to the official ethos of the regime which would lead to moral degradation. Thus, in the *Forty-First*,

³⁴ Some movies displayed foreign people thus showing the first immigration waves towards Soviet Union. Woll, *Real Images*, p.145: In Ilich’s *Gate*, Ghanaians, Africans and Arabs appear in the movie.

³⁵ BOOBYER Philip, *Conscience, dissent and reform in Soviet Russia*, London; New York, Routledge, 2005

prisoners and convicted are treated with humanity. Set in a contemporary context, *A Person is Born* deals with the human rights of the persons in the margin of society, who do not fit in the communist ideal model. Therefore, we see that while American movies were concerned about racism towards the black people and directly tackled the problem on racial segregation on the screen, French and Soviet movies often approached the question more implicitly.

The request to act according to one's conscience was highlighted by many New Wave movies. Beyond all political and social disputes, human conscience appeared universal and legitimate. It is interesting to note that some Soviet movies set during the war did not specify the context, contrary to traditional war movies. The enemy was not shown and was barely named in *Ballad of a Soldier* or *Ivan's Childhood*. This de-contextualization allowed reaching a universal reach: war consequences on human values are similar all over the world. More generally in the three countries, the movies displaying contemporary narratives had few references to public events. While being set in modern settings and in "inclusive" backgrounds (the cities are not mere settings, but real micro-world), this permitted a sort of extraction of the fiction from the public context. The sections of the characters' lives presented in the movies were, to a certain extent, disconnected from the external political and military facts of the Cold War. For example in *Breathless*, *Shadows* and *Illich's Gate*, the characters are wandering careless of what is going on in the world. We could almost imagine inverting the characters from the movies. The focus on the individual at the expense of the group, which we discussed in the second chapter, emphasized the commonality of human beings: inner feelings and values are specific to each person, but they are not fundamentally different in each country as they are inherently human. *Contempt* operates an interesting parallel to emphasize this commonality: the protagonist Paul, who has to adapt Ulysses Odyssey to cinema reads it as the story of a man who did not want to come back home because of conflicts with his wife, and who kept extending his journey. Deprived of the pompous aura of mythology, Ulysses becomes a man like every man on earth, with domestic concerns. Avoiding any strict contextualization, the New Wave movies spoke about human beings above all. Godard mocked the people that linked his movies to one cause or the other, and stated that *Breathless* could be seen at the same time as a Catholic film dealing with questions of life and death, and as a Marxist film showing the decadence of young people in a capitalist country: "Besides, Catholicism and Marxism, they're the same thing; it's just a matter of how you are engaged in life. *Breathless* is a film about the necessity of

engagement... I wanted above all to make a film on death”.³⁶ Beyond ideals, there is life, death and human beings. Godard pointed to the superficiality and the arrogance of ideals that are only divergent interpretations of same core questions. Film directors emphasized the necessity, with all its difficulty, of understanding human nature. This could not be achieved with great ideological principles. New Wave movies had at their core this crucial question: What it is to be human? Directors looked for the answer in small facts of life. The ways men get involved in their personal affairs betray their involvement in life. By showing different approaches of physicists to a same research program, *Nine Days* reveals different conceptions of life. Gusev who dedicates himself stubbornly to the program forgets everything else including his own wife, while the ones who insolently listen to radio in the laboratory rush to the next party. Only Kulikov shows a considered and deeply human approach in his research as in life. The same process occurs in many films. *The Hustler* considers the pool game as a lens reflecting human behaviours. As in *La Baie des Anges*, the approach to the game unveils a more general conception of life. However, while French movies conveyed a self-oriented conception, Soviet and American usually embraced broader perspectives. Through the insignificant events of its narrative, *Ballad* speaks about humanity. Every single encounter made by Alyosha is more revealing of human beings than the war. Local events raise universal questions. Personal actions and intimate feelings involve humanity in general. Jim cries out: “We are all involved!”, when his parents strive to dissuade him from denouncing himself in *Rebel*. Small acts imply the whole humanity.

The “universalization” of the New Wave movies raised awareness for the necessity of a global ethics. Marko Dumančić contends that the artist of the Thaw “proposed that scientists needed to be free from state pressures, but obligated to follow a universal moral codex”.³⁷ In *Nine Days*: Gusev’s friend Kulikov points to the moral regression of human beings: “Do you think man has really become smarter in the past 30,000 years? Not by an iota [...] Genghis Khan could have never thought of concentration camps and gas chambers”. Progress and science do not contribute to the evolution of men per se, and can only benefit humanity if they are used with “an ethical compass”³⁸ in scientific research. Above all, the value of love was praised as a main shield against barbarism. In *Ballad*, the love of the two young characters appears as a response to the inhumane war. Love is pure and intense in *The Forty-First*,

³⁶ANDREW James Dudley, *Breathless: Jean-Luc Godard, director*, New Brunswick, Rutgers U.P., 1987, p.168.

³⁷DUMANČIĆ, “De Stalinizing Soviet science”, *op. cit.*, p.77

³⁸ *Idem*, p.86

before the implication of external elements – the arrival of the white army – destroys it. While the white Lieutenant was elated and dedicated to their relation, Mariutka was still too attached to her political ideals and killed him. She crushed the possibility of a true love by remaining faithful to the Red ideology. Film directors realized that love should become the only desirable ideology. In *East of Eden*, Abra begs the father's consideration for his denied son: "It's awful not to be loved. It's the worst thing in the world [...] It makes you mean and violent and cruel". In *Breathless*, the young journalist Patricia interviews a film director: "Do you think that we can still believe in love in our time?", to which the director replies: "Of course, we can only believe in love. Precisely in our time." In a time when old certainties are challenged, when ideologies are distrusted, love remains the answer. However, the nature of love slightly differs in the three countries. Characters of the French movies are obsessed with their search for love, and consider love as romance and passion. They look for the salvation in love: "it is the only chance to give meaning to life, the only testimony of dignity".³⁹ It is interesting to note that next to the films about romantic love, Soviet movies often praise fraternal love and brotherhood. Among other films, it is the case in *Ballad, Spring* and *The Fate of a Man*. In this latter film, Solokov adopts a young orphan and takes care of him: the adoption of the boy saves both Solokov and the boy. Humanism wins over the traumas caused by the war.⁴⁰ American movies are very often concerned about familial love as in *East of Eden* and *Imitation of Life*. Even romance between two people as in *Rebel* is sometimes shown as the premise for a family foundation. In all cases, the assertion of love and human values in general was the door opened on a "third way" in the binary ideological conflict: a way towards a more humane world.

I argued in this chapter that New Wave movies rejected the adhesion to ideologies. In the three countries, movies display characters that become blind and insensitive when firmly devoted to ideals or victims of social alienation. Directors intended to deconstruct the artificiality of ideologies remote from the multi-directional reality of life, and to discuss the linear conception of History. Open narratives favored ambiguities and left many interrogations to the viewer, inciting him to engage in a reflection about the main question raised by directors: what does it mean to be human? The theme of love pervaded many movies, even if oriented in different ways in each country.

³⁹ BREMOND, SULLEROT, BERTON, 'Les héros des films dits « de la Nouvelle Vague »', *op. cit.*, p. 175

⁴⁰ BARABAN, "The Fate of a Man", *op. cit.*, p. 531

IV- The role of the artist

Reacting against the submission of cinematographic industry to political and economic goals, film directors of the New Wave claimed their independence in order to preserve their artistic sensitivity. In this last chapter I want to show that the New Wave movies reveal a reflexive vision of the artist engagement in society.

1) *The film director as an explorer*

In the context of the Cold War, artists claimed the necessity of getting free from any kind of engagement in order to preserve their independent vision. Political commitment would obviously interfere with their art. Social and commercial constraints were also to be minimized in order to preserve creativity. Changes in the cinematographic production systems occurred in the three countries. In the Soviet Union, filmmakers replaced bureaucrats in the management of the industry. The establishment of the Filmmakers' Union as non-governmental organization constituted a major step towards independence.¹ Its Committee tended to protect filmmakers' interests in their relations with state agencies, and not the promotion of official ideology. Autonomous studios opened. Mikhail Romm, professor at the VGIK (the Russian cinematographic Institute) since 1949, organized workshops where a lot of promising talents that would explode during the Thaw developed - among them, Tarkovsky. He opened a mini-studio within Mosfilm in the late 1950s to encourage experimentation in movies.² In the United States, as mentioned earlier, new studios opened outside Hollywood and offered an escape to the strict conventions of the official industry and to the diktat of profitability. But even within the Hollywood machine, producers foresaw the necessity of incorporating a more independent cinema in order to regenerate the industry.³ The French Nouvelle Vague emerged from the desire to make low-budget movies and not to calculate the financial results of the production. French directors appeared as "bricoleurs"

¹ PROKHOROV, *Springtime, op. cit.*, p.9

² *Idem*, p.10

³ MARION Gilles, "James Dean et La fureur de vivre : l'anticipation d'un nouvel horizon d'attente", *Le Mouvement Social*, 2007, n° 219-220, p. 131-148

imagining improvised tricks to shoot in any place with limited means.⁴ They believed in the utopia of a pure cinema that would get rid of all conformism and join again the primitive jubilation of the early cinematographic pictures.⁵ The reconsideration of the nature of cinema is perceptible in many films, called “metafilms” by some theorists, that present a strong reflexivity.⁶ Metafilms take cinema for subject, represent the different agents of the field, and provide a critical discourse on cinema. Such movies were rather frequent during the 1950s in the West, and *Contempt* and *The Big Knife* offer two examples. Criticizing the hypocrisy ruling the cinematographic industry, these movies dreamed of better conditions respecting artistic creativity. Through the disillusion of the scenarist Paul, *Contempt* made the eulogy of a cinema that would emerge from the dreams of the artist without external constraints. More generally, a more diffuse reflexivity was also present in New Wave movies through the artifacts of cinema made visible to the viewer: look into the camera, presentations of the characters, voice-over, use of mirrors.⁷ The monologue of Lyolya in front of the mirror in *Nine Days*, as she laments that her husband ignores her, can be read as a self-reflection about the place of art in an ideologically driven society. The sensitivity and artistic leanings of the character also included some reflexive stance in the movies. Jules and Jim are two artists in Truffaut’s movie which is a celebration of love, and thus engender a consideration of the role of art in the appreciation of human values. In the same way, Rossen read *The Hustler* as a movie “about the artist in society”.⁸ The sharp sensitivity of Eddie in the movie induces the viewer to make the parallel: how to preserve the dignity of the artist in a competitive society?

The detachment from conventional imperatives permitted to access freedom of expression, and freedom of exploration. The cinema was reconsidered again as a means to explore the world. The new types of characters featured in the New Wave movies brought new perspectives on the world. But film directors also studied the formal possibilities of cinematography, and questioned its ability to respect reality and to transmit messages. Woll takes *The Cranes* as a cornerstone in the history of Soviet cinema during the Thaw and asserts

⁴ STEINLEIN Almut, *Une esthétique de l'authentique : les films de la Nouvelle Vague*, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2007, p.15-16: In 1959, 80% of the movies budgets exceeded 100 millions of old French francs, and 30% exceeded 200 millions of old francs. The budgets of the first New Wave movies were all below 50 millions of old francs.

⁵ CAPDENAT Constance, “Les enfants terribles de la Nouvelle Vague », *Vingtième Siècle*, Volume 22, 1989, Numéro 22, pp. 45-52

⁶ CERISUELO, Marc, *Hollywood à l'écran : essai de poésie historique des films : l'exemple des métafilms américains*, Paris, Presses de la Sorbonne nouvelle, 2001

⁷ *Idem*, p.10

⁸ NEVE, *Film and politics in America*, op. cit., p.219

that the film has engendered two trends in Soviet cinema: a realistic and documentary cinema, and a poetic cinema.⁹ In my view, this evolution is also to be found in the other countries, and is often mixed. Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin conducted in *Chronique d'un Été* what they called themselves “a new experiment of ‘cinema-vérité’” and claimed the influence of the Russian Dziga Vertov who elaborated theories about the documentary genre. Neither mere documentary nor fiction, *Chronique d'un Été* was an experiment to approach “real life”. *Pierrot Le Fou* by Godard is a highly poetic film which includes footages of people presenting themselves as if being interviewed for a sociological survey. *Shadows* was a kind of visual transposition of the poetry of the Beat Generation and was at the same time taken as a documentary about the underground New York of the 1950s. In *Illich's Gate*, the documentary part is again mixed with the fiction: “Imitating a hidden camera, Khutsiev observes the manner in which people smoke, sit, listen to music, and exchange a-semantic gestures that establish contact. This is motivated by the fact that his protagonists are documentarian-like observers of the life around them.”¹⁰ Khutsiev even included a documentary footage of a May Day parade that he filmed on 1 May 1961, showing all the agitation, movement, exaltation of the parade.¹¹ The poetry reading sequence, while being arranged for the movie, is really close to a documentary sequence, and conveys the authentic exaltation of the audience. This blending of fiction and documentary in movies was a way of challenging one or the other genre in the depiction of life. Is the realistic style of the pure documentary really close to reality, when dreams and imagination are also part of life?

Cinema was considered as a tool producing meaning, and not as a mere copier of life. The cinema of the New Wave was not using camera as a simple “recorder” of the outside world, but used the montage to transform the raw images shot by the camera and to produce original meaning. The modern cinema in the 1950s and 1960s became more personal; movies were an avowal made by the director.¹² The cinema of the New Wave also reconsidered the role of the film director in the movie production. While the important cinema industries of the three countries had become extremely organized and had favored a strict role partition, the film directors of the New Wave tended to shake these rigid structures and to blur the

⁹ WOLL, *The Cranes*, *op. cit.*, p.93

¹⁰ KOZLOV Denis, GILBURD Eleonory (eds.), *The Thaw: Soviet society and culture during the 1950s and 1960s*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2013, p. 447

¹¹ WOLL, *Real Images*, *op. cit.*, p.144

¹² NASSE David, *Evolution du montage : De Griffith à Godard*, WebTV, University Rennes 2 http://www.sites.univ-rennes2.fr/webtv/appel_film.php?lienFilm=172 (consulted in July 2014)

distinctions between the different positions. Film directors were sometimes also actors or scenarists. They desired to express their creativity and artistic sensibility that was stifled by the evolution of their job towards an organizational manager. Analyzing the elaboration of *Rebel*, Gilles Marion shows that Nicholas Ray had a more central role in the well-oiled production process.¹³ With independent film directors, the Hollywood studios experimented new models of collaboration between the different agents to favor their creativity. For example, some French directors of the Nouvelle Vague decided to get rid of the scriptwriter and to reconsider the role of the filmmaker: direction was asserted as a true act of writing, and not only as the transposition of words into images.¹⁴ Prokhorov asserts that Soviet directors looked for “the imprint of philosophical and artistic individuality” as their cinema’s identity.¹⁵

2) *The artistic project*

Cinema of the New Wave was steeped in a kind of romantic spirit. The different characteristics that we could observe in the movies along this essay surprisingly fit the definition of Romanticism attempted by Schueller.¹⁶ The practice of breaking social conventions, the focus on the individual with the exaltation of emotions, and the ambition to reach a universal perspective correspond to his definition. Moreover, the consideration of the creative act of the author, the praise of its subjective and personal vision confirms this suggestion. But the romanticism, or “neo-romanticism” that pervaded the New Wave seemed detached from large-scale projects and pertained to a kind of prosaic and reserved version of this exalted movement. This romantic tone implied a quest for the truth, avoiding any too intellectual approach. The distrust of obscure and unintelligible intellectual reasoning was expressed in different movies. The characters of *Shadows* denigrate the “supercilious slob professors, shooting off their mouth about something”. In *Spring*, *Blackboard Jungle* and *Les Cousins*, the dissipated students possess a kind of truth, contrary to the stiff professors or hardworking students that fail to understand the people around them or to succeed in their ambitions. By focusing on popular culture and youth, by showing behaviours of people from

¹³ MARION, “James Dean”, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ MARIE, *The French New Wave*, *op. cit.*, p.29

¹⁵ PROKHOROV, *Springtime*, *op. cit.*, p.18

¹⁶ SCHUELLER Herbert M., ‘Romanticism Reconsidered’, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer, 1962), pp. 359-368

the everyday, by revealing instincts and intuitive conducts, New Wave movies strayed from intellectualized process to favor more direct impressions. Bremond stated that the movies of the Nouvelle Vague favored the participation of the viewer based on “the deep authority of organic sensibility” over the conscious and socialized participation based on the intellect.¹⁷

The search for the truth and the quest for the meaning of life through the camera seemed to be a continual feeling in the film directors’ ambitions. Maël Renouard observes that the movies of the Nouvelle Vague display recurrent themes as time, memory, childhood and music which reflect this constant quest for meaning.¹⁸ Indeed, these themes carry notions of reminiscence, and thus convey the feeling of approaching a certain meaning of life. The same themes can be found in Soviet cinema. In particular, the notion of memory and dreams recurs many times: the memory of the other one haunts Veronika and Boris after they are parted in *The Cranes*, the geologist Konstantin dreams of his wife in *The Letter Never Sent*, Solokov gets remembrances of his past life before the war in *The Fate of a Man*, and the hero of *Illich’s Gate* dreams of his dead father. Tarkovsky offers maybe the most striking example with the numerous sequences of dreams that animate Ivan’s mind. These themes are not so present in American cinema, more interested in the tangible human behaviours. In that case, truth seems to lie directly in human actions. The aesthetics of the different movies may confirm that intuition. Indeed, Ray Carney argues that there are two kinds of film-making that represent two ways of being in the world. The stylistic film suggests an idealistic conception of meaning – pertaining to a Platonician conception – in which the visible world is the expression of deeper significances. On the other hand, films that favor the observation of the outside over the aesthetics try to find meaning in the things themselves. Studying Cassavetes’ cinema, Carney asserts that he belongs to the second category. His movie *Shadows* analyzes the practical social and verbal interaction of the characters. More generally, the lack of aesthetics innovation in American movies that was pointed at previously could pertain to this more practical approach of life.

These observations invite the viewer of New Wave movies to identify different approaches in the quest for meaning. If the New Wave conveyed the idea that universal values and a kind of human truth existed that had been oppressed by the context of war, ideology and

¹⁷ BREMOND, SULLEROT, BERTON, ‘Les héros des films dits « de la Nouvelle Vague »’, *op. cit.*, p.156

¹⁸ RENOUARD Maël, « Mélancolie de la Nouvelle Vague », journée d’études « La Nouvelle Vague dans l’œil des philosophes », organisée par Frédéric Worms et Maël Renouard, actes publiés dans *L’Art du cinéma*, n° 55-56, hiver 2007

social conformism, the different movies unveiled the conviction or hesitation of film directors to find it and to position himself in a social or artistic project. Daring to make some generalization, we can identify specific approaches that differ in the three countries. In French movies, characters strive for an absolute. In *La Baie des Anges*, Jackie is appealed by gambling because of the mystery of numbers and compares it to religion. Antoine reads “La Recherche de l’Absolu” by Balzac in *400 Blows*. In *Breathless*, Patricia tells Michel: “between grief and nothing I would take grief”, to which Michel answers: “grief is idiotic. I’d choose nothing. It’s not any better, but grief is a compromise. You’ve got to have all or nothing”. But the search for an absolute is often a failure: “The feeling of life is the feeling that life slip from any meaning”.¹⁹ This is, according to Renouard, what confers to the Nouvelle Vague a strong melancholy marked by a mix of fullness and helplessness. Ferdinand observes in *Pierrot le Fou*: “Life is this mystery never resolved”. The French characters celebrate life but feel anxious in front of its enigma and are unable to engage in a compromise. French movies often end with the death of the heroes, which is always a death for nothing: Catherine and Jim in *Jules and Jim*, Michel in *Breathless*, Ferdinand in *Pierrot le Fou*, Camille in *Contempt* and Charles in *Les Cousins* die without bringing any resolution. The movies display the impossibility of these idealistic characters, whose ideology is life and love, to adapt to the world. The world will go on without them. Besides, deprived of any social context, French characters are also living without any past or future. They live in the present time and do not engage in projects. Love stories almost never lead to familial relations. They are free, obviously freer than their Soviet and American fellows. Bremond, Sullerot and Berton assert that they are “overwhelmed by the proper excesses of their freedom”.²⁰ Ignoring all institutions, they display an obvious nihilism, that reveals the nihilism of their authors. The artists of the New Wave were engaged in the subversive mission of questioning all social pacts, but disengaged of any project for the future. In that sense they reflected the contemporary non-engagement of French structuralists such as Claude Levi-Strauss who broke with the French tradition of the politically engaged intellectual.²¹ New Wave artists embraced the freedom of the “now” and the ideal of love.

Soviet movies seem to convey the same failure to reach meaning of life. The absence of response to Veronika’s question in *The Cranes* is echoed by the same absence of reaction

¹⁹ *Idem*

²⁰ BREMOND, SULLEROT, BERTON, ‘Les héros des films dits « de la Nouvelle Vague »’, *op. cit.*, p.12

²¹ DOSSE, « Le sujet captif », *op. cit.*, p. 21-22

of Lyolya to Gusev's question in *Nine Days*: "What do you know about life?". However, movies convey a strong nostalgia for a past Golden Age. The many sequences of dreams and the repetitive insistence on all that has been lost convey the yearning for the idealized past. Soviet artists tried to recapture "a holistic vision of the world" after discovering the dystopia of Soviet ideology.²² Yearning for a "redeeming harmony", they considered their place in the figure of the "artist-saviour" who distrusts the intellectualist approach and favors the divine act of creation.²³ To find the lost harmony with the nature is the first step. The narrative of *Spring* is synchronized with the annual cycle of seasons, which, according to Prokhorov becomes one of the main features of the Soviet New Wave movies.²⁴ *The Forty-First* shows a visual alliance of nature and love.²⁵ The sand echoes their golden skin, the sea reflects their blue eyes and isolates them from the disruptive human world. The celebration of nature allows reaffirming the link with the Motherland. In Tarkovsky's movie, this link is symbolized by the figure of Ivan's mother. She appears only in the dreams which offer an idyllic vision of the past. Tarkovsky precisely saw the artist as a creator, as someone who recreates the lost time.²⁶ The artist of the Thaw pertained to the more general movement that attempted to revive the revolutionary utopia of the 1920s. Thus, in spite of the ambiguities included, Soviet movies remain rather positive and affirmative. Even if plagued by anxiety and uncertainties, Soviet characters still display courage and above all a strong brotherly love that is obviously absent in French characters. However, the mood changed in the 1960s when the perspective of reviving Lenin politics vanished. The second half of the Thaw is marked by a stronger pessimism and even cynicism, that can be perceptible in *Nine Days* and *What if it is Love*.

Finally, the American movies are usually the more confident in the individual ability to incorporate American society. Most of the movies have a rather positive ending. In case one character dies, it helps to restore a social order that has been lost. The tragic death of Plato in *Rebel* is sad but marks the resolution of Jim and Judy's troubles. After Sarah dies in *The Hustler*, Eddie is in despair, but realizes he has found humanity and dignity in himself and refuses the corrupted world of the pool gamers. The rebel Johnny of *The Wild One* is summoned to disappear from the city, but redeems himself before leaving by showing his

²² PROKHOROV, *Springtime, op. cit.*, p.17

²³ *Idem*, p.18

²⁴ PROKHOROV, *Springtime, op. cit.*, p.13

²⁵ WOLL, *The Cranes, op. cit.*, p.12

²⁶ GREEN, *The Winding Quest, op. cit.*, p.36

gratefulness to the girl that helped him. American movies obviously express a strong faith in the ability of the individual to evolve and get better. Contrary to French and Soviet movies, they do not display a quest for absolute. On the contrary, they look for compromise and find a solution to unite society again. According to Peter Biskind, movies as *Rebel* reflect the bad consciousness of America role as leader of the world: they show “the price of maturity”. Achieving awareness and leadership is possible but has some necessary implications as the evictions of the too extreme social misfits. American directors thus adopt a more practical approach to life and find meaning in the mere human actions. If we consider again the argument by Carney, this practical paradigm can explain in part the attention given to the actor method over the formal aesthetics of movies. However, this positive vision faded away during the 1960s. Kazan’s *America America* (1963) relates the immigration of a Greek person to America at the end of the 19th century. It shows many of the characteristics observed in this essay, but holds a much more nostalgic tone towards the original roots. This interest in origins and ethnic identity increased during the 1960s and led to a real obsession for ethnic roots.²⁷



Pierrot Le Fou (1965) by Jean-Luc Godard, *Ivan’s Childhood* (1962) by Andrei Tarkovsky, *The Hustler* (1961) by Robert Rossen

A similar praise of love and humanity pervades these three movies, but they present different perspectives regarding the engagement in reality and society.

²⁷ NEVE, *Film and politics in America*, op. cit., p.226

Thus, behind their similar quest for a meaningful and humane world, the New Wave movies adopted different approaches in the three countries. In any case, the artists had a same mission of revealing the world to the audience. Film directors tried to make the viewer aware of the beauty of life and of humanity. Here again in a romantic tone, they looked for the religious revelation in front of life that would incite the viewer to engage into the quest for meaning. When, on the verge of the vanishing of all human life, the officer of *On the Beach*, raised a toast “to a blind, blind world”, he expressed Stanley Kramer’s urgent invitation to open eyes on the world. Indeed, as *Pierrot Le Fou* cries out: “life is maybe sad but it is always beautiful”. And this beauty can bring salvation. Directors searched for an emotional “shock” that would make people aware of the real value of feelings and emotions, and above all, of the importance of love. In *Spring*, Woll argues that while Tania sincerely loves poetry and music, “both her love and her dedication are lifeless, because she has not yet felt the emotions that would give her a profound understanding of either poetry or people”.²⁸ Cinema could help providing this emotional shock. The emphasis on emotions served this objective and worked at establishing a direct sensitive contact with the viewer. The truth of art is intuitive. Paying a visit to the Moma in New York in the movie *Shadows*, Ben tells to one of his friend questioning a sculpture: “It’s not a question of understanding it. If you feel it, you feel it, stupid!”. Thus, cinema has a key role to play in that awakening of the audience.

²⁸ WOLL, *Real Images, op. cit.*, p.48

Conclusion

“Film is like a battleground. Love, Hate, Action, Violence, Death. One Word: Emotion.”

Samuel Fuller in *Pierrot Le Fou* by Godard.

I tried to reveal in this essay the similarities that exist between New Wave movies produced in the Soviet Union, France and the United States. The New Wave that emerged during the 1950s included a wide range of movies of different aesthetics, content and ambitions. The four criteria defined in the introduction (formal aspects, narrative, themes, characters) have permitted to disclose common points that may not appear at first sight. In particular, the obvious differences between Eastern and Western cinema may conceal the similarities. Tatiana Samoïlova and Brigitte Bardot looked really different, evolving in opposite worlds, but it appears that they were both breaking with the stereotyped actress presented in the Soviet Union and in France, and they were introducing a more expressive, intimate, sometimes animal, way of acting. It is not surprising then to discover that Samoïlova was compared to the European and American actress in the Western press.¹

Therefore, the analysis of New Wave movies with the four criteria shows that simultaneous changes appeared in the three countries. New types of characters were brought on the screens: they were released from their heroic load and evolved in ordinary and daily contexts. These characters contributed to the demise of the affirmative White male hero of the modern times, and gave voice to minorities such as women, social outfits and racial communities, thus revealing the diversity of society and the specificity of each individual. Above all, New Wave characters gave voice to the young people, underrepresented in the cinema until then. The narratives employed in the movies included deep ambiguities, raised questions without bringing answers, and left interpretation to the viewer, thus contrasting with the linear and pre-digested narratives of the mainstream cinema. The usual themes of hypocrisy, corruption and moral degradation were not applied to the enemy anymore, but to

¹ CHARTREUX Philippe, « La sortie du film quand passent les cigognes en France, Configuration d'un succès cinématographique soviétique en 1958 », IRICE, Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin, 2007/2 - N° 26, pages 151 à 167

the own society of the film directors willing to bring a critical vision of their current world. New themes as human rights and love revealed the desire to find new ideals in order to build a more humane world. The aesthetics of the movies also brought a rupture with the mainstream cinema favoring a stable and didactic point of view: the camera became highly subjective and directors emphasized the emotional content of the visual form.

It is striking to observe the emergence of these novelties at the same time, even if in different proportions, in the Soviet Union, France and the United States. I tried in this essay to relate these developments with the specific context of the time. I could identify three main reasons that contributed to the messages of the New Wave. First, the focus on the individual stemmed from a refusal of the collective umbrella that implied a standardization of the masses. The increase of nationalisms from the 19th century had progressively reinforced the weight of the collective group over the individual. After the war, while the dangers of nationalisms were obviously recognized, the ideological competition of the early Cold War reinforced again collective patterns that implied the adhesion of the individuals to dictated ideals. The emerging theories of structuralism in Europe and their spreading in the United States and in the Soviet Union helped to reconsider the questions of power and social alienation and to denounce them in each block. Secondly, the affirmation of minorities and above all the awakening of the youth in the 1950s combined to the ambient mood infused with existentialist theories contributed to reconsider the potentialities of personal lives. It induced an urge to understand oneself, favored by the development of psychoanalysis, and to embrace one's freedom. Finally, the reality of the Cold War while peace was proclaimed as a main objective after the Second World War, the damages provoked by strict ideologies and the fragmentation of societies for different internal reasons incited the resurgence of a humanist movement. A whole generation distrustful of the ideals and political debates of the time proclaimed love as the only ideal to fight for. Therefore, it is interesting to observe that the similarities observed can be explained by two kinds of phenomenon: the proper reactions to the specific internal situation in each country on the one hand, and the diffusion of culture and theories (youth culture, philosophical works, and so on) across borders on the other hand.

During about 15 years, some artists in the Soviet Union, France and the United States came close in their appreciation of life and men. In line with the recent studies that tried to re-interpret the history of the Cold War in cultural terms, this study helped to grasp the importance of culture in this context. The comparison of cinematographic tendencies showed

that the world of the Cold War was not a binary system, with one part totally opposed to the other one. Common concerns and expectations emerged in different parts of the world. However, I tried not to hide the complexity of the period, marked by deep paradoxes. Experiencing peace and war, progress and conservatism, choice and constraint, the societies of the 1950s and 1960s lived in a contradictory mood. Theoretical paradigms of the time also revealed this paradoxical times: between existentialism and structuralism, the subject was facing his acknowledged freedom while knowing he was inevitably included within a social system. On whatever side of the scale film directors' conceptions were leaning, they conveyed a strong humanism by praising the value of love and fraternity. By revealing the beauty of life and the intensity of human emotions, cinema was considered as a tool to awaken the audience to this new humanism.

The limitations to the conclusions drawn in this essay about the Cold War world lie in the fact that New Wave movies are only a small part of the cinematographic production of the period. More conventional or politically engaged movies still attracted large audiences. In particular, musicals and epic movies were major successes.² Moreover, the New Wave movies were often received with a lukewarm enthusiasm, when not totally rejected. The historian Valerij Fomin notes that the majority of the audience, "trained to the platitude of socialist realism and to the propaganda clichés of class struggle" rejected these movies that offered a more complex vision of the world.³ In the same way, many movies of the New Wave in France and the United States also only received a reserved welcome. But I contend that the New Wave was innovative enough to encourage broader reflections about existential issues in the postwar world.

Besides, the relative success encountered by some New Wave movies contributed to include these innovative tendencies into mainstream cinema. In cinema more than in other arts, a permanent conflict between artistic creation and profitability requirements linger over the field. For example, the emergence of the youth on the screens and in sociological studies incited producers to realize that young people were hungry of such movies. The teenage movie had juicy perspectives. The New Wave inevitably tended to be domesticated by the

² In the West, the major Hollywood productions with high budgets and huge technical means, attracted millions of people to the theaters. In France for exemple, the most attented movies in the second half of the 1950s were *War and Peace* (Vidor, 1956), *Around the World in 80 Days* (Anderson, 1957), *Bridge on the River Kwai* (Lean, 1957)

³ FOMIN, 'Le cinéma du dégel', in: EISENSCHITZ *Gels et dégels, op. cit.*, p. 154

“system”. The end of the 1960s also introduced a major rupture in the cinema of the three countries. In the Soviet Union, the success of the Soviet cinema had ambivalent consequences: while it allowed many artists to get known and to receive recognition through prizes and awards, this rapid liberalization of the cinema – more important than the development of the other arts – led the authorities to worry about the power of cinema on the people and to take concrete decisions to control this cinematographic dynamic.⁴ The KGB intervened to control the production and distribution of movies, and the relations between the directors and the foreign countries. From 1969 on, the number of censored movie decreases to an average of three each year, which proved that the preventive censorship was well active again.⁵ Contrary to the Soviet Union, the United States observed the opposite tendency regarding their national production. The number of films produced was divided by 3 during the 1950s.⁶ The movies did not consider a uniform mass audience anymore, but targeted different groups of audience. Ryan and Kellner consider that 1967 is a turning point as after this date Hollywood produced more critical movies with a radical left-wing stance.⁷ *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) by Arthur Penn, and *Easy Rider* (1969) by Peter Fonda would become the pioneers of this “New Hollywood”, where social rebellion became progressively heroized again. The liberal social movements also developed in France and contributed to the revival of myths and utopia.

A possible development of this essay would be to incorporate other New Wave movements in the comparative work. This would allow finding out possible similarities with the cinematographic production of other countries and seizing the importance of the themes expressed by the New Wave in the context of the Cold War. I already mentioned the crucial role played by Italian cinema. The Swedish cinema with Ingmar Bergman, the Polish school Movement or the national tendencies in the margins of the Soviet Union – Prokhorov notes that the Thaw benefited in particular to the cinema in Georgia and Lithuania –⁸ all presented

⁴ *Idem*, p.153: In 1967-1968, the Central Committee of the Party proposed a decree to turn Goskino into a ministry of cinema, thus part of the official administration. The decree was not edited, but concrete measures were still applied. From 1966 on, more films became censored. Directors or members of the Union considered as disturbing are excluded. It is the case of the founders of the Union, Ivan Pyr'ev and Mihail Romm.

⁵ PLAHOV Andrej, 'Les « pages blanches » du cinéma soviétique', in EISENSCHITZ *Gels et dégels*, *op. cit.*, p.159

⁶ NEVE, *Film and politics in America*, *op. cit.*, p.211. Neve indicates that the total number of films produced in the United States had fallen, from 391 in 1951 to 131 in 1961.

⁷ RYAN Michael, KELLNER Douglas, *Camera politica: the politics and ideology of contemporary Hollywood film*, Bloomington, Indianapolis, Indiana university press, 1990, p.1-6

⁸ PROKHOROV, *Springtime*, *op. cit.*, p.20-22

some existentialist questioning that would be interesting to analyze. It would also be highly interesting to look at the cinema of the 'Third-World'. In India for example the director Satyajit Ray opened the way for the "Parallel cinema" movement, with his movie *Pather Panchali* (1955). Analyzing this independent cinema of the 'Third World' in perspective with the cinema of the two blocks would allow getting a deeper understanding of the implications of the Cold War and the postmodern world in a more general context.



Ballad of a Soldier (1959) by Grigori Chukhrai

List of New Wave movies mentioned in the essay

Soviet movies

- Grigori Chukhrai, *The Forty-First*, 1955
- Friedrich Ermler, *Unfinished Story*, 1955
- Vassili Ordynski, *A Person is Born*, 1956
- Marlen Khoutsiev, *Spring on Zarechnaya Street*, 1956
- Mikhail Sholokhov, *Fate of a man*, 1957
- Mikhail Kalatozov, *The Cranes Are Flying*, 1957
- Marlen Khutsiev, *Two Fiodors*, 1958
- Grigori Chukhrai, *Ballad of a Soldier*, 1959
- Mikhail Kalatozov, *The Letter Never Sent*, 1959
- Youli Raizman, *What if it is Love?*, 1961
- Marlen Khutsiev, *Illich's Gate*, 1962
- Andrei Tarkovsky, *Ivan's Childhood*, 1962
- Mikhail Romm, *Nine Days of One Year*, 1962

French cinema

- Roger Vadim, *And God Created Woman*, 1956
- Claude Chabrol, *Le Beau Serge*, 1958
- Jean Rouch, *Moi, Un Noir*, 1958
- Alain Resnais, *Hiroshima mon amour*, 1959
- François Truffaut, *400 Blows*, 1959
- Claude Chabrol, *Les Cousins*, 1959
- Jean-Luc Godard, *Breathless*, 1960
- Jean Rouch, Edgar Morin, *Chronique d'un été*, 1961

François Truffaut, *Jules and Jim*, 1962
Chris Marker, *La Jetée*, 1962
Jean-Luc Godard, *Les Carabiniers*, 1963
Jaques Demy, *La Baie des Anges*, 1963
Jean-Luc Godard, *Contempt*, 1963
Jean-Luc Godard, *Pierrot le Fou*, 1965
Jean-Luc Godard, *Alphaville*, 1965

American cinema

Elia Kazan, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, 1951
László Benedek, *The Wild One*, 1953
Nicholas Ray, *Johnny Guitar*, 1954
Nicholas Ray, *Rebel without a Cause*, 1955
Richard Brooks, *Blackboard Jungle*, 1955
Elia Kazan, *East of Eden*, 1955
Robert Aldrich, *The Big Knife*, 1955
Stanley Kubrick, *Paths of Glory*, 1957
Robert Frank, *Pull my Daisy*, 1959
Douglas Sirk, *Imitation of Life*, 1959
John Cassavete, *Shadows*, 1959
Stanley Kramer, *On the Beach*, 1959
Robert Rossen, *The Hustler*, 1961
Elia Kazan, *America America*, 1963
Stanley Kubrick, *Dr Strangelove*, 1964
Robert Rossen, *Lilith*, 1964

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