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JEAN-PIERRE LÉAUD

STAR OF THE FRENCH CINEMA

SONALI JOSHI

PhD, University of Glasgow, Department of French [June 2004]

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JEAN-PIERRE LÉAUD

STAR OF THE FRENCH CINEMA

This study is intended to examine the star persona of French actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud. By inquiring into both the character on and off screen I have analysed the career and performances of an actor who has laid a significant mark on contemporary French cinema. Whilst Léaud's *nouvelle vague* image has become an enduring symbol within French cinema, little is known about Léaud from written texts alone. Moreover, he has not been readily accepted as a star in the same way as many of his male contemporaries. Using star studies as a theoretical approach, I am exploring the various characters Léaud has incarnated on screen, his performances, and the strong relationships he has forged with various directors throughout his career in seeking to conceptualise his star image. Looking at Léaud the person and Léaud the actor I hope to establish wherein lies the mythology surrounding this unique actor.

By looking at stardom and spectatorship theory, I have explored the ways in which we can perceive Léaud as actor and star. The central question to this is: how do subjectivity and spectatorship shape our perceptions of what makes a star? Underlying this question are the various ambiguities and sites of contradiction that make up his star image. In examining such contradictions I have taken Richard Dyer's *Stars* and Edgar Morin's *Les Stars* as a starting point. This leads to a consideration of Dyer's formulation of "alternative or subversive types" (Dyer 1979: 52) together with questions of gender representations and sexuality. The types embodied by Léaud's characters are not idealised males as seen in the star personae of Jean Gabin, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Alain Delon, and Gérard Depardieu among other French stars. Yet even within these more conventional star images, sites of contradiction are present that help qualify the ambiguities presented by Léaud's star status. What is important

here is Dyer's notion that stars hold the capacity to bring together the 'ordinary' within sites of contradiction. This is presented by Léaud's androgynous figure, the unlikely occupations undertaken by many of his characters, their awkward attempts to seduce women and subsequent unsatisfactory relationships, the concept of the *flâneur*, and a certain quirky comic side to these characters.

Emphasis has often been placed upon the significance of the unique actor-director relationship forged between Léaud and François Truffaut. The Doinel cycle calls for consideration of the relationship between Léaud and Truffaut, and by extension, the parentage of André Bazin and Henri Langlois and the *Cahiers* family, as well as raising thematic concerns over relationships between fragile males and strong females, cinema and literature, and politics within the context of May 1968. Léaud's *nouvelle vague* persona is integral to this image which epitomised this period of contemporary French history concerned with representations of youth and the nation within a growing climate of disenchantment with the power structures and institutions of de Gaulle's Fifth Republic. This was termed by Jean-Luc Godard himself as "les enfants de Marx et de Coca-cola" in *Masculin-Féminin* (1965). Léaud was very much a part of this, progressing from adolescence into adulthood in tandem with his screen roles. Whilst the Doinel cycle continued, Léaud collaborated with other influential filmmakers during this period, most notably Godard and Jean Eustache.

Many characters inhabited by Léaud are positioned against strong female characters, which in turn help define Léaud's characters. This is epitomised in *La Nuit américaine* (1972) in which Alphonse incessantly asks: "Est-ce que les femmes sont magiques?" Gender becomes a central issue in studying Léaud's performances. Moreover, his androgynous nature calls into question conventional notions of the male hero. However, this troubled, fragile male gave rise to a new kind of hero that emerged during *la nouvelle vague* and came to the fore in post-1968 French cinema. Eustache's *La Maman et la putain* (1972) is his most significant role in this context, seeing the

anti-hero, Alexandre, positioned between two defining female archetypes - the 'mother' and the 'whore'. Such roles spoke of a re-evaluation of love and relationships within the context of pre- and post-1968 France. Discontent with relationships was epitomised in Antoine Doinel's 'memoirs', *Les Salades de l'amour*, which has resonances with the many other troubled characters inhabited by Léaud. This is often symptomatic of the desire to be mothered which carries the subtext: "Where is the father?" (*Les Quatre Cents Coups*, François Truffaut, 1958).

For an actor so precise and expressive with language it is not surprising that literature plays a significant role, from Balzac in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (1958), Antoine's own writing, *Les Salades de l'amour* in *L'Amour en fuite* (1978) to his new-found 'occupation' of reading for a living in *La Maman et la putain* as well as various other roles which see writing, literature and communication as integral to his characters. Whilst playing into Léaud's unique expressive performance style, punctuated by words and gestures, this also feeds into the dialectic of the body and the mind. This leads to interesting comparisons drawn from the 19th century literary tradition of the French romantic hero from the works of Balzac, Flaubert and Stendhal reflected in many of Léaud's characters.

For these characters, Paris often holds a central place, if not an accompanying role. The concept of '*flânerie*' plays into this. We often see Léaud's characters whiling away time in cafés, watching passers-by and in particular women, absorbing their surroundings. It is an extension of the dandy model in that the very essence of such characters is defined and dependent upon aestheticisation and intellectualisation of the everyday, as exemplified in *La Maman et la putain*.

Myth, irony and the idea of '*l'acteur fétiche*' are central aspects to Léaud's star image. His unique acting style as well as active choice to take on such roles has only added a sense of marginality to his characters. Fundamental to this is the cross-over between life and art, reality and illusion and indeed the on and off-screen star image.

FILM STILLS

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Jean-Pierre Léaud receiving the César d'honneur in February 2000. [INA]
- 2 Jean-Pierre Léaud in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001). [INA]
- 3 Jean-Pierre Léaud in *Un Homme marche dans la ville* (Marcel Pagliero, 1949). [INA]
- 4 Jean-Pierre Léaud with his mother, Jacqueline Pierreux, shown in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001). [INA]
- 5 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (François Truffaut, 1958). [BFI]
- 6 Delphine Seyrig as Fabienne Tabard in *Baisers volés* (François Truffaut, 1968). [INA]
- 7 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel reading from Honoré de Balzac's *Le Lys dans la vallée* in the army prison in *Baisers volés* (François Truffaut, 1968). [INA]

CHAPTER ONE

- 8 Final freeze-frame shot of Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (François Truffaut, 1958). [INA]
- 9 Jean Marais as La Tour and Jean-Pierre Léaud as Pierrot in *La Tour, prends garde* (Georges Lampin, 1957). [INA]
- 10 Jean-Pierre Léaud and Agnès Varda at Cannes 2000 in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001). [INA]
- 11 Jean-Pierre Léaud as 'the man in the phone booth' in *Week-end* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967). [INA]
- 12 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Alexandre and Françoise Lebrun as Véronika in *La Maman et la putain* (Jean Eustache, 1972). [INA]
- 13 Jean-Pierre Léaud in *Dialóg 20-40-60* (Jerzy Skolimowski, 1968). [INA]

14 Jean-Pierre Léaud as François Marcorelle in *L’Affaire Marcorelle* (Serge Le Péron, 1999). [INA]

15 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel at the Jeunesses Musicales de France in *Antoine et Colette* (François Truffaut, 1961). [INA]

16 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Alphonse at the go karting track in *La Nuit américaine* (François Truffaut, 1972). [INA]

17 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel sat at his mother’s dressing table in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (François Truffaut, 1958). [INA]

18 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel in *Baisers volés* (François Truffaut, 1968). [INA]

19 Jean-Pierre Léaud as ‘the man in the phone booth’ in *Week-end* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967). [INA]

20 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Colin in *Out 1* (Jacques Rivette, 1970). [INA]

21 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel being interviewed by the psychologist at the reform centre in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (François Truffaut, 1958). [INA]

22 Jean-Pierre Léaud as François Marcorelle and Philippe Khorsand as Georges in *L’Affaire Marcorelle* (Serge Le Péron, 1999). [INA]

23 Jean-Pierre Léaud quoting Jean-Luc Godard in *Léaud l’unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001): “J’aime bien quand tu cherches.” [INA]

24 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Alphonse and François Truffaut as Ferrand in *La Nuit américaine* (François Truffaut, 1972). [INA]

25 Jean Eustache. [INA]

26 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* (Jean Eustache, 1972). [INA]

CHAPTER TWO

27 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel seen through snapshots of various stages of the

Doinel cycle in *L'Amour en fuite* (François Truffaut, 1978). [BFI]

28 Jean-Pierre Léaud in front of posters of the Doinel cycle at the Cannes Film Festival 2000. [INA]

29 Jean-Pierre Léaud in conversation with François Truffaut during the screen tests for *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (1958): "Vous voulez un mec qui soit gouaillieur." [INA]

30 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel and Claire Maurier as Madame Doinel in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (François Truffaut, 1958). [INA]

31 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel being interrogated about his excuse by Guy Decombe as 'Petite Feuille' in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (François Truffaut, 1958): "Elle est morte !" [INA]

32 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel in the rotor scene in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (François Truffaut, 1958). [INA]

33 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel as his mugshot is taken at the detention centre in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (François Truffaut, 1958). [INA]

34 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel, disappointed at René's refused entry to the detention centre where he has gone to visit Antoine in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (François Truffaut, 1958). [INA]

CHAPTER THREE

35 Jean-Pierre Léaud aged fifteen being held up in triumph following the success of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* at the Cannes Film Festival in 1959. [INA]

36 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel at the detention centre in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (François Truffaut, 1958). [INA]

37 François Truffaut. [INA]

38 Jean-Luc Godard. [INA]

39 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Guillaume and Anne Wiazemsky as Véronique in *La Chinoise* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967). [BFI]

40 'La fille sur le banc' - one of the improvised scenes in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* (Jean Eustache, 1966). [INA]

41 The young people in the café - one of the improvised scenes in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* (Jean Eustache, 1966). [INA]

42 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Daniel in his Father Christmas disguise in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* (Jean Eustache, 1966). [INA]

43 Jean-Pierre Léaud the protests in support of Henri Langlois in Paris 1968. [INA]

44 François Truffaut during the protests in support of Henri Langlois in Paris 1968. [INA]

45 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel in *Les quatre cents coups* (François Truffaut, 1959). [BFI]

CHAPTER FOUR

46 Jean-Pierre Léaud as René Vidal and Maggie Cheung as herself in *Irma Vep* (Olivier Assayas, 1996). [INA]

47 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel and Delphine Seyrig as Fabienne Tabard in *Baisers volés* (François Truffaut, 1968). [INA]

48 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Alphonse and Jacqueline Bisset as Julie Baker in *La nuit américaine* (François Truffaut, 1972). [INA]

49 Jean-Pierre Léaud as François Marcorelle and Irène Jacob as Agnieszka in *L'affaire Marcorelle* (Serge Le Péron, 2001). [INA]

50 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Nicolas in *Pour rire !* (Lucas Belvaux, 1996). [INA]

51 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Hugo in *Le Journal du séducteur* (Daniele Dubroux, 1996). [INA]

52 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Claude Roc and Kika Markham as Anne Brown in *Les deux Anglaises et le continent* (François Truffaut, 1971). [INA]

53 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Frédéric Moreau and Françoise Fabian as Madame Arnoux in

L'Éducation Sentimentale (Marc Cravenne, 1971). [INA]

54 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Frédéric Moreau and Edmonda Aldini as Madame Dambreuse in *L'Éducation Sentimentale* (Marc Cravenne, 1971). [INA]

55 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Frédéric Moreau and Catherine Rouvel as Rosanette in *L'Éducation sentimentale* (Marc Cravenne, 1971). [INA]

56 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Alphonse in *La Nuit américaine* (François Truffaut, 1972):
"Personne peut me passer dix mille balles pour aller au bordel ?" [INA]

57 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Antoine Doinel as he heads straight for "un hôtel de passé" on being discharged from the army in *Baisers volés* (François Truffaut, 1968). [INA]

58 The closing scene of *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* (Jean Eustache, 1966): "Au bordel ! Au bordel ! Au bordel !" [INA]

59 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Alexandre and Françoise Lebrun as Véronika in *La Maman et la putain* (Jean Eustache, 1972). [INA]

60 Françoise Lebrun as Véronika in *La Maman et la putain* (Jean Eustache, 1972). [INA]

61 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Alexandre in the first mirror scene in *La Maman et la putain* (Jean Eustache, 1972). [INA]

62 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Daniel as he first tries on his Father Christmas outfit before a mirror in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* (Jean Eustache, 1966). [INA]

63 Jean-Pierre Léaud as himself and Jane Birkin as herself in *Jane B par Agnès V* (Agnès Varda, 1987). [INA]

CONCLUSION

64 *Et là-bas, quelle heure est-il ?* (Tsai Ming-liang, 2000). [INA]

65 Jean-Pierre Léaud as Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* (Jean Eustache, 1972).
[BFI]

66 Jean-Pierre Léaud at the Cannes Film Festival 2000. [INA]

67 Jean-Pierre Léaud in conversation with Serge Le Péron in *Léaud l'unique*: "Ma vie est

une gifle.” (Serge Le Péron, 2001). [INA]

68 Jean-Pierre Léaud in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001). [INA]

INTRODUCTION

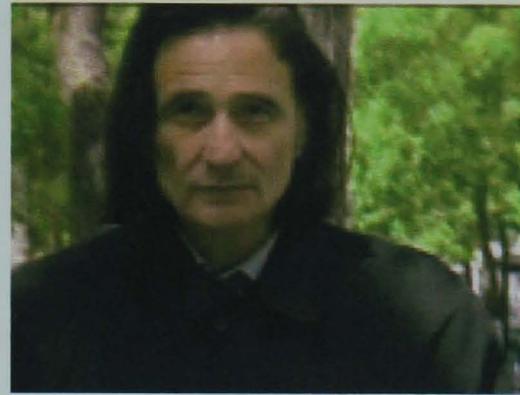
With a career spanning not far short of half a century, French actor, Jean-Pierre Léaud, has made a significant contribution to contemporary French cinema. His star image has become associated with various thematic concerns and contexts that have developed over time whilst remaining rooted within the non-mainstream domain of *art et essai* cinema. Arguably most well-known for the role of Antoine Doinel carried through five films made over a twenty year time scale, Léaud was seen to have incarnated a sort of alter-ego of the director, François Truffaut. His star image also came to be associated with *la nouvelle vague* in a wider sense, having worked consistently with Jean-Luc Godard during this period as well as collaborating with a variety of other directors. The politically motivated, revolutionary characters that Léaud inhabited in his films with Godard epitomised a so-called generation of 'Marx and Coca-cola'¹. This image together with his own active political involvement in the support for Henri Langlois and the filmmakers' protest at Cannes in 1968 have further established an eternal *soixante-huitard* image in both his life and his art. This was further epitomised by what is arguably the role of his career in Jean Eustache's *La Maman et la putain* (1972), which spoke of a new sexual politics and dystopia in the aftermath of the events of May 1968. This role also established the dandy-esque quality to his star persona that had already been partially explored in earlier roles such as Daniel in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* (1966), also for Eustache, Frédéric Moreau in *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1971) and Claude Roc in Truffaut's *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent* (1971). Many of these roles are of a marginal nature, the Doinel character being a prime example. Central themes within Léaud's star image of irony, the romantic hero of the literary tradition and an enduring '*fétiche*' quality have come to prominence in his most recent roles in the last few years, placing his *nouvelle vague* image within a newer, contemporary

auteur cinema. I will go on to examine these fundamental ideas within the contexts of Léaud's performances together with what is known of the man himself.

Léaud has all too often been considered primarily within the context of his work with Truffaut and the particular relationship they shared as actor and director - the child actor moulded by a 'surrogate' father, raised through the medium of the screen. This study aims to go further than this construction, positioning Léaud as star beyond the Léaud-Doinel equation. Whilst Léaud's body of work with Truffaut has been widely acclaimed, his work with other directors, particularly the likes of Eustache and more recently Serge Le Péron, have added a more distinctive nature to the roles he has inhabited. Given that Léaud has made such a contribution to contemporary French cinema, it is therefore surprising that more attention has not been focused on him both in the media and within film criticism. However, as Léaud has entered middle age and now in his sixties, a new-found recognition has emerged in the last few years paying homage to the *nouvelle vague* persona that became emblematic of this period. In February 2000, Léaud was awarded the *César d'honneur* for his contribution to French cinema. In 2001, following the making of *L'Affaire Marcorelle* (1999), Le Péron went on to make a documentary focusing on the unique career of this very unique actor, *Léaud l'unique* (2001). In Vladimir Carvalho's recent documentary, *Barra 68: Sem Perder a Ternura* (2001), Léaud is seen in archive footage from 1968 where he made a speech in front of a several hundred students at Brasilia university during the military dictatorship in Brazil at the time. An evening dedicated to Léaud was broadcast on Canal Plus on 25th October 2001 paying homage through a variety of films taken from Léaud's body of work, placing him in a wider context than simply the Truffaut alter-ego². 2002 saw two retrospectives devoted to Léaud, firstly in Paris, the MK2 "La Vague Léaud" season, followed by a season at the French Film Festival UK 2002, whilst another retrospective took place at the Forum des Images in Paris in October 2003, "Le Paris de Jean-Pierre Léaud".



1



2

Léaud's recent screen role in another documentary directed by Jacques Richard, *Léaud de hurle-dents* (2003), focuses on Léaud as he is placed in the wider context of the cinematic 'family' he was born into following the success of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (1958) as he reads from Truffaut's *Le Plaisir des yeux* (1975), evoking the impact of Langlois on the world of cinema. Richard's most recent documentary, *Le Fantôme d'Henri Langlois* (2004) which was screened at the Cannes Film Festival this year, also features Léaud as himself.

Léaud's screen roles together with his star persona give rise to a particularly interesting study of an actor. In addition to his work for Truffaut, Godard and Eustache, Léaud has also been committed to other auteur directors - Philippe Garrel, Jerzy Skolimowski, Bernard Dubois, Jacques Richard, Bernardo Bertolucci, Catherine Breillat, Aki Kaurismäki, Marion Vernoux, Olivier Assayas and most recently, Serge Le Péron. Léaud has therefore remained dedicated not only to a non-mainstream cinema but also to the close actor-director relationships he has established during the course of his career. He has himself spoken about the importance he gives to the directors he works with and the relationships he forges with them (Dawson 1973/1974: 46). His characters have encompassed various contradictions that his star image has brought together - revolutionary as well as non-revolutionary characters, silence and verbosity, the body and the mind, reality and illusion, autobiography and fiction, literary heroes as well as documentary characters, the masculine and the feminine. In analysing these

contradictions, Richard Dyer's text, *Stars* (1979), and Edgar Morin's work on stardom, *Les Stars* (1972)³ are informative.

Jean-Pierre Léaud was the son of the silent film actress, Jacqueline Pierreux and Pierre Léaud, an actor and assistant film director. He was born in Paris on 5th May 1944 and grew up in its environs. In many ways he mirrored the existence of Antoine Doinel, the character he was to incarnate in a series of five films with Truffaut spanning some twenty years of the life of both the character and the actor. During his childhood and adolescence he had a somewhat unstable upbringing, constantly moving from school to school after being sent to a boarding school at the age of six. Although his career was launched by *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, he was nevertheless already involved in the cinema. His first screen role lasting barely a minute was in Marcel Pagliero's *Un Homme marche dans la ville* (1949). He also featured in a television appearance with his mother in which he is introduced to the audience by the narrator as he feeds an elephant in a zoo.



3



4

His first major screen role came in 1957 in Georges Lampin's *La Tour, prends garde* (1957). Then at thirteen, he responded to an advertisement Truffaut had placed in the newspaper, *France-Soir*, in his search for a young boy to play the role of the young Antoine Doinel. At the time of the screen tests for *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, Truffaut said of Léaud that he was very much like Antoine in that he was quite a solitary

individual and although somewhat shy and reclusive, he was more impudent and aggressive than the young Antoine (Truffaut 1970: 10). Léaud later described the nervousness he felt during the screen tests as investing in him a certain arrogance which came across in his exuberance and supreme confidence (Monaco 1976: 18). Le Péron described Léaud's responses to Truffaut's questions in *Léaud l'unique* in the following way:

"Quand on voit le casting des *Quatre Cents Coups*, il rentre dans le champs et on a déjà l'impression là... qu'il vous raconte quelque chose d'un enfant ou d'un autre enfant éternel comme celle du cinéma... C'est très beau."

There is a certain aura around Léaud's presence in the film marked by an intensity of expression seen in close-up shots that take the spectator further into the life of the young Antoine and indeed the young Léaud. This is also reflected in the screen test as described by Le Péron.

Léaud was able to empathise with Antoine's plight - a young adolescent



neglected at home and unjustly punished at school, lacking in the maternal desire he so longs for which leads to rebellion as well as a love of literature. Truffaut explained the relationship between Léaud and Doinel in the following way:

5

"C'est justement Jean Renoir qui m'a appris que l'acteur jouant un personnage est plus important que ce personnage ou, si l'on préfère, qu'il faut toujours sacrifier l'abstrait au concret. Rien d'étonnant donc si Antoine Doinel s'est, dès le premier jour de tournage des *Quatre Cents Coups*, éloigné de moi pour se rapprocher de Jean-Pierre." (Truffaut 1970: 10)

This presents the question of whether the actor can in fact be seen as the auteur rather than merely the director himself and thus whether the actor as auteur can in fact give rise to the idea of the star as auteur.

The success of *Les quatre cents coups*, which won the best director's award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1959, saw the birth of Léaud's acting career whilst cementing a profound and long-lasting relationship with Truffaut. At the age of fourteen, Léaud became the darling of the French cinema world, and a child star who was to grow up through the medium of the screen before the eyes of the spectator, in tandem with the Doinel character. It is therefore interesting to see the influence Antoine and indeed Truffaut had upon the young Léaud in this first major role during his own formative years as an adolescent. However, whilst close analysis of the Doinel character and Truffaut's relationship with Léaud, and likewise the Truffaut-Bazin paternal relationship, is a necessary starting point, closer examination of Léaud's performances and characteristics outside of the Truffaut-Léaud construction will lead to a greater understanding of this unique actor and in the ways in which he may be considered a star. The Bazin-Truffaut-Doinel-Léaud construction provides a unique model based on a kind of surrogate paternity which mirrored Antoine's experiences and, to an extent, Léaud's own life. The desire to be 'mothered' and the subconscious questioning "Where is the father?"⁴ are central issues in this context which were further explored and extended in many of Léaud's subsequent roles.

Dyer's work on stars is informative in seeking to conceptualise the screen star. Dyer considers stars to be a social phenomenon, produced through production and consumption whilst the spectator's own position is constructed through the ideological significance of stars. Stars are iconic images that are constructed through the projection-identification process negotiated by the spectator. They are fabulous and special representing consumption and decadence. Yet they can also be 'ordinary', in

that the spectator is able to identify with the star (Dyer 1979: 42). In this sense what is ordinary can also be seen to be what is special. Stars possess an elevated position in society, yet they are also individuals, portraying characters which the spectator is invited to identify with. One important element to Dyer's construction of stars is the notion of stars as social types. There is not one universal construction of a star that allows the spectator to conceptualise the star. Léaud does not, in many ways, conform to a 'traditional' type of star, but perhaps a different kind of hero, as suggested by Anne Gillain as "un nouveau type de héros masculin" (Gillain 1991: 23) which was seen to emerge within the context of *la nouvelle vague*. Truffaut himself justified Léaud as a star by explaining the appeal and fascination of a figure such as Léaud and why on the other hand he does not have a more conventional appeal in the sense of a hero:

"Je viens de faire ici le portrait de Jean-Pierre Léaud et d'expliquer pourquoi il ne plaît pas à tout le monde et pourquoi il plaît si fort à ceux à qui il plaît. Jean-Pierre Léaud est un acteur anti-documentaire. Même quand il dit bonjours nous basculons dans la fiction..." (Truffaut 1987: 206)

Dyer suggests that we may also consider stars in terms of "alternative or subversive types" (Dyer 1979: 57) which raises problematic issues of gender and sexuality. We may therefore ask the question: what is typical of stars? In this light, analogies to other established stars of the cinema will help to establish some sense of the star in Léaud. He does not represent all masculine heroes whilst at the same time his star image does bear some similarities to other emerging stars born out of *la nouvelle vague* and that period of French cinema, Jean-Paul Belmondo, Gérard Blain, Jean-Claude Brialy, Alain Delon, Jean-Louis Trintignant, and in the post-1968 era, Gérard Depardieu. Interesting comparisons are also to be drawn from French male stars of the *pre-nouvelle vague* era, notably Jean Gabin, Gérard Philipe, Robert Le Vigan and Jean Marais. He often

portrays anti-heroes who exist on the margins of society. Yet in other ways his characters embody the very masculine notion of voyeur and adorer of women. Maureen Turim describes Léaud in *Antoine et Colette* (1961) as "a curious romantic lead" as opposed to more traditional misogynistic characters that prevail within Hollywood cinema (Turim 1972/1973: 43). On the other hand, the presence and existence of his characters are in many ways controlled by the women around them. By seeking to assert masculinity, gender representations of these characters are often destabilised through Léaud's own androgynous and somewhat fragile physique as well as the powerful female images alongside, exerting a feminising force upon these characters. Turim goes on to suggest that this kind of role is only accounted for by comedy roles of the likes of Charlie Chaplin or Buster Keaton within the Hollywood system. Morin talks of how the comedy type of star often embodies a kind of naivety and clumsiness with women, contrary to the more conventional hero (Morin 1972: 173). Yet, Ginette Vincendeau in *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema* (2001), identifies comic roles almost as a pre-requisite in determining the popularity of the most successful male stars in the French cinema (Vincendeau 2001: 217).

The subjectivity of the star lends itself to the study of the spectator through the way in which one is positioned in relation to the film narrative. The screen provides a mechanism by which the spectator is able to identify with the star image which is analogous to the 'mirror'. Conventionally, male protagonists are attributed the subject viewpoint of the spectator, placing woman as 'other'. Jacques Lacan's analysis of the mirror phase is central to this analysis. The screen provides the ideal mechanism by which the spectator is able to project the ideal ego and thus his or her own subjectivity onto the screen, whilst the star is invested with the very idea of the ideal ego. Many of Truffaut's men, and indeed other leading males in films of *la nouvelle vague*, are not conventional heroes, being juxtaposed against strong female characters both physically and emotionally, who in turn feminise these male characters, thus

problematizing such a convention. Whilst Truffaut fetishises the female body, particularly through the camera's focus on women's legs, this often affirms a patriarchal domination and the male gaze which follows Laura Mulvey's assertion in "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975) that the gaze is inherently male. The position of Léaud's characters in relation to women around him becomes objectified by the spectator and his accompanying female characters, while rendering them weak, nervous, troubled and fragile, further empowering these female characters. In *La Nuit américaine* (1972), Alphonse continuously poses the question, "Est-ce que les femmes sont magiques?" Annette Insdorf takes up this very idea in her study of Truffaut's cinema in analysing what makes these women in Truffaut's universe such powerful and enigmatic figures.



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Mulvey argues that it is this concept of fetishism in narrative cinema that idealises the female body, positioning woman as spectacle for the spectator as well as other male characters on screen. Mulvey states that this male gaze reduces the female star to a subservient position. This therefore creates a complex dialectic between fetishised female bodies and women who are strong, powerful and controlling, against the fragile, androgynous figure of Léaud, whilst his characters also exert the male gaze upon the women around them. Delphine Seyrig as Fabienne Tabard in *Baisers volés* (1968) is the embodiment of this kind of 'magic' woman. This calls into question the credibility of Léaud as a star for the spectator, since his profile contradicts traditional values of masculinity, thus going against the grain of dominant ideology of how male stars are commonly perceived by the spectator, whilst being positioned against a female character who was herself by this time an established star. Thus Mulvey argues that images on screen that are fetishised can be seen to create 'hyper-idealised' images. This notion plays on concepts

of presence and absence in the cinematic space constituted by the spectator subject and constructed through the screen and by extension the mirror, thus playing into the framing of the actor before the spectator.

Léaud is interesting as a star because he does not conform both as an actor and through the characters he has incarnated. The actor Mathieu Amalric, who played alongside Léaud in *L’Affaire Marcorelle*, describes his image as anarchistic, as does Aki Kaurismäki, director of *I Hired a Contract Killer* (1990) and *La Vie de Bohème* (1991). This often transpires through wild declarations of love and manic protestations. The pursuit of women is often fuelled by an insatiable desire for female companionship typified by Antoine in the Doinel cycle and the characters Léaud played for Eustache (Daniel in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus*, and Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain*), whilst these characters are not idealised nor adored in turn.

In Vincendeau’s study of French stars, she states that although there is and has been a star system in place within the French film industry, those actors who have become stars have done so “because of the way they react to the camera”, irrespective of what tradition they came from (Vincendeau 2001: 10). The industry shaped their careers and became instrumental in establishing the notion of stars within French cinema, often drawing them from the theatre or the music-hall into a more specific framing of the actor through the cinematic apparatus.

Whilst Léaud’s box office success does not necessarily match that of his contemporaries⁵, he is nevertheless a prominent face and figure of French cinema. Integral to this exploration is equally the analysis of gender and politics that was so inherently bound up within *la nouvelle vague*. This was certainly the period of French cinema with which Léaud’s star image is most associated. Although it did in many ways descend from much of what had gone before within French cinema as well as taking on board influences from Hollywood auteur directors (Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, John Ford) it had a fresh, youthful quality. It is this concept of youth that so defines *la*

nouvelle vague. It was a movement made up of a group of filmmakers, turning its head away from *la tradition de qualité* or *le cinéma de papa* that Truffaut so vehemently criticised in his seminal essay, "Une Certaine Tendence du cinéma français" (1954). The stars of this cinema were young and it was a newer, younger audience of cinephiles that absorbed it. Léaud was among this generation of emerging figures in French cinema, which also included Jean-Paul Belmondo, Gérard Blain, Jean-Claude Brialy, Alain Delon, Jean-Louis Trintignant, Bernadette Lafont, Anna Karina, Jeanne Moreau, Delphine Seyrig, Anne Wiazemsky. The male stars of this period are all different in certain respects, but nevertheless share similarities through the characters they portrayed and their performances. These were troubled, fragile individuals often exemplified through their relationships with women (Belmondo in *Pierrot le fou*, 1965, Blain in *Le Beau Serge*, 1957, Brialy in *Une Femme est une femme*, 1961, Trintignant in *Ma Nuit chez Maud*, 1969). The central premise of *la nouvelle vague* was to see the director as the main artistic force behind making films, while displaying a personal vision. The actors and actresses of this generation were in many ways accepted as stars and have become prominent figures in contemporary French cinema. Léaud has talked of the fact that *la politique des auteurs*, for example, within Godard's cinema turned its own politics on its head by in effect creating its own "cinéma d'acteurs" (Revault d'Allonnes 1986: 32). Vincendeau says of actors of this period:

"The New Wave employed new actors with a fresh look and performance style who crystallized its ideological and cinematic project." (Vincendeau 2001: 111)

Hence this highly stylised cinema was in effect able to create its own stars. Léaud embodies this in both appearance and performance. Why, then, has Léaud been deprived of the recognition granted to other male stars of his generation? This partly lies in the fact that his career took something of a downturn, after having worked



almost continuously during the 1960s and early 1970s. It is therefore not surprising that Léaud has all too often been considered merely in the context of *la nouvelle vague*. He embodies the quality of youth that Godard described as the generation of 'Marx and Coca-cola' (as referenced above). In an interview with de Baecque and Péron, Léaud for the first time, since the death Truffaut in 1984, spoke of his incarnation of the Doinel character and the special relationship he shared with Truffaut, and in particular, he talks of an enduring element of youthfulness that has remained both in the characters he has played since and within his own self⁶.

Léaud's performances in the latter part of the 1960s became synonymous with the cultural and political climate that was for and about the youth generation. These political critiques commented on youth within the context of cultural and political significance which implicated the very notion of French national identity of this time. Turim suggested that Léaud was the embodiment of this through an eternal youth-like quality in his performances and within his characters (Turim 1972/1973: 41). The image of Léaud, slight and fresh-faced as opposed to all-masculine, strong and heroic became representative of the motifs of 1968 - a cultural and intellectual struggle as opposed to heroism. In this respect, films such as *La Chinoise* (1967) and *Le Gai Savoir* (1968) are significant, in that Léaud was indeed acting as a mouthpiece for the political sensibilities of Godard whilst his own political tendencies allowed him to empathise with these politically minded characters. During the May 1968 revolt Léaud was not directly involved in the uprisings, but had actively participated in the demonstrations in opposition to the ousting of Langlois as secretary of the Cinémathèque française and was at the Cannes Film Festival where he was involved in the filmmakers' protest that subsequently closed down the festival in May 1968. After these events, Léaud said:

"I wanted to know why I got so involved...why violence was so attractive. So I went to a psychoanalyst to see if I hated my father or what."

This statement in itself is somewhat ironic pointing further to Léaud the person which gives a further context to his screen roles of this period.

Much of Léaud's performance style is inflected with grand gestures and mannerisms, awkward and frenzied movements and often wildly manic proclamations about love. James Monaco identifies the characters in all Léaud's major roles as "essentially the products of an obsessive interest in the new sexual politics" (Monaco 1976: 19). He sees Léaud as having constructed an "ironic model" who displays "manic protestations and awkward but deeply felt reactions to pain and love" (Monaco 1976: 19) with which we as viewers can identify with, whilst epitomising Godard's so-called generation of 1960s youth. This is perhaps most evident in *La Maman et la putain* in which Alexandre is positioned between the 'mother' and the 'whore', in an exploration of new sexual mores in the aftermath of the events of May 1968. Gillain described Léaud as "l'acteur fétiche de la nouvelle vague" (Gillain 1991: 23) and having given rise to a new kind of hero. The 'political' nature of Alexandre's three-way relationship with the 'mother' and the 'whore' explores the sentimentalities and sensibilities of a thirty-something generation, an extension of the twenty-something generation of Godard's *Masculin-Féminin* (1965). Whilst it draws together styles and notions of *nouvelle vague* cinema that preceded it, it also goes beyond, taking on board a new set of political sensibilities in its form and its content, shaped by the immediate post-May 1968 years.

Turim described Léaud/Doinel as the "surviving vestige of the French romantic hero" (Turim 1972/1973: 43), a concept inherently linked to French national identity. This French romantic hero, Turim states, derives from a literary tradition that draws upon such authors as Balzac, Stendhal and Flaubert. She likens him on one hand to American stars such as Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin, but also emphasises the way in which Léaud as a recognisable figure of French cinema, has come to embody





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notions of French national identity and representations of youth in the aftermath of 1968. The notion of the French romantic hero or literary tradition of hero is a type easily associated with Léaud. The literary tradition has been readily imported into French cinema and a tradition of less

masculine heroes was not unknown to French cinema. For Antoine, this transpired through his dedication to and love of Balzac's literature. In *Baisers volés* (1968), Antoine recalls Balzac's romantic tale of *Le Lys dans la vallée*, when declaring his feelings for Fabienne Tabard. In *Le Gai Savoir*, Léaud plays the literary character of Émile Rousseau, pronouncing the possibilities of art and cinema, and the joy of learning. In *Week-end* (1967), he plays the revolutionary writer, Saint-Just, who also appears briefly in *La Chinoise*. In *L'Amour en fuite* (1978), Antoine is working towards the goal of publishing his 'memoirs'. *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent*, one of the two films Léaud made with Truffaut aside from the Doinel films, is itself a literary adaptation. Thus the literary aspect to Léaud's films and performances is inherent within the many characters he has portrayed.

In *Baisers volés*, Léaud reaches his potential in expressing his own visual vocabulary, much of his speech being accompanied by frenzied and anxious gestures and sudden movements in a style reminiscent of Keaton. In his performance style he achieves a certain harmony between both body language and the spoken word, playing on the interaction between the body and the mind. This is illustrated most clearly in the scene in which he obsessively rehearses and repeats the names of both, Christine Darbon and Fabienne Tabard which I will go on to discuss in further detail in chapter one. Through gestures and the body, he gives life to his words, thus he is able to project his expressiveness upon the audience.

Turim says Léaud creates "word pictures, a visual language in perfect harmony

with the words he speaks" (Turim 1972/1973: 46). Monaco said, "When he talks, his arms move with the awkward but communicative gestures that punctuate his films, his hands describing intricate patterns in the air, the blank, Keatonesque pan that is his face breaking into grins of recognition when he discovers a particularly bon mot" (Monaco 1976: 18). This Keatonesque quality is present in much of Léaud's performance style and he himself has talked of Keaton as being one of his favourite actors (Turim 1972/1973: 46). *Baisers volés* in particular is reminiscent of Keaton.

Improvisation constitutes a significant element to Léaud's acting style. Léaud himself has talked of the challenge of improvisation as being placed in a position where one has to find and establish one's own dialogues together with movements and gestures (Maraval 1976: 26). He describes this as the purest form of improvisation, particularly when the actor is placed in a position of being unaware as to what has gone before and what is to follow. He goes on to describe this as a feeling of falling into a great void and having to find the right way out. Léaud has always seen this as a creative way of working with a director and in so doing takes on a sense of '*mimétisme*' of his directors which also lends itself to the idea of authorship both on the part of the auteur and the actor. In *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, in the reform school where Antoine has been sent, the scene in which he is being interviewed by the psychologist displays Léaud's propensity for improvisation even as a child actor. We can also already observe Léaud's 'trademark' shrug of the shoulders together with a curious but mischievous smile that were to become indicative features of Léaud's acting style, whilst displaying a remarkable ability to improvise in the purest form. However, in contrast, Eustache scripted *La Maman et la putain* in such detail that this in effect gave the appearance of improvisation in what is, as already stated, arguably Léaud's finest screen performance.

We are, therefore, able to identify certain qualities in Léaud's screen persona that both affirm and contradict the idea of the star in the actor. Moreover, Léaud's

performance style as well as his physical presence give rise to ambiguities regarding gender, sexuality and dominant ideology in the creation of the star. Youth and sexuality are central themes around the roles that Léaud incarnates. Whilst the concept of youth was a central theme in the films Léaud performed in during the years of *la nouvelle vague*, we must also take into account Léaud's own transition from childhood into adolescence on and off the screen. Whilst we can simply analyse the relationship between Truffaut and Léaud and the considerable influence the director had upon the young actor, it is also important to examine Léaud's relationships with the other directors he has worked with and the full extent of his body of work in the cinema. Léaud himself recognised the problematic issues surrounding the Doinel character in that he was marked by this character from such an early age (Maraval 1976: 27). However, he also recognised that Eustache too held a considerable influence over him and thus he was able almost to incarnate Eustache himself through the character of Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain*.

Whilst this was a pivotal role for Léaud, the subsequent suicide of Eustache several years later adds a further dimension to this film positioning Eustache as a kind of *cinéaste maudit* reflected through the character of Alexandre. The idea of death within the process of acting is something that Léaud has alluded to in terms of the work of an actor (Dawson 1973/1974: 46) which gives rise to a certain melancholy present within his star image. This places elements of comedy and tragedy side by side, again pointing to a contradiction within Léaud's star image.

As comparatively little has been written on Léaud and given the fact that he is often reluctant to give interviews, it is therefore necessary to look deeper into the characters Léaud has incarnated and his own acting style in order to delve further into the Léaud persona. Following a recent meeting with Léaud⁸, I have been able to conceptualise much of what I have learnt of this unique actor of the French cinema through his screen roles. He spoke in detail about his work with Godard and Eustache

in particular as well as discussing the profound influence of Truffaut and the *Cahiers du cinéma* milieu he fell into upon the success of *Les quatre cents coups*. His star image raises interesting questions around the distinctions between the public and private spheres surrounding Léaud's persona, a question of whether life can be seen to imitate art, or indeed whether art can imitate life. Through Léaud's performance style, acting through absence and presence, he is able to give life to his characters. He is constantly playing between the abstract and being, between reality and fiction, between the functional and the delirious. His visual language heightens his screen presence played out through the mind, the body, décor and environment - his stare, the way he anxiously flicks his hair from his face, his sudden frenzied movements, the way his hands slice through the air as if it were his hands speaking. Thus performance itself becomes a kind of language, central to the star as signifier. In terms of mise-en-scène, the framing often seen in mirror scenes or processes of interrogation and theatricality on the part of Léaud's characters plays into this further through the concept of the acquisition of identity.

Monaco states that the exploration of an actor as a person is critical to understanding the screen persona of an individual. For Léaud this is particularly interesting given the fact that he grew up on screen and thus the spectator has been in the unique position of having been able to observe his progression from childhood into maturity on screen through his characters and as actor. Monaco describes Léaud and his active collaboration with the filmmakers he has worked with as "conscientiously and regularly illustrating our own deeper selves, subjectively holding the analytical mirror up to our own natures" (Monaco 1976: 20). It is precisely through such identification that the audience is drawn into the character's world and thus the star is able to project his persona upon the audience. This also places focus on the idea of framing of the character and the spectator through the cinematic apparatus as well as the personal vision of these auteur directors. We may question wherein lies the boundary between

persona and person for the spectator and it is precisely this question that is integral to understanding the construction of the star in Léaud.

¹ *Masculin-Féminin* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1965)

² *Le Cinema de Jean-Pierre Léaud*, Canal Plus, 25th October 2001

³ First published in 1957

⁴ Spoken by the English teacher, 'Petite Feuille', in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* (François Truffaut, 1958)

⁵ Jean-Pierre Léaud does not feature in the top ten box office French stars of the period quoted by Ginette Vincendeau during which his career spans (Vincendeau 2001: 27) [source: *Le Film Français*, no. 2478 29th October 1993]

⁶ Antoine de Baecque and Didier Péron, "Léaud, retour à Doinel", *Libération*, 31st August 2001

⁷ Walter S. Ross, "The Actor the French Dig Most", *The New York Times*, 28th June 1970

⁸ On 15th May 2004, I met Jean-Pierre Léaud in person in Paris

CHAPTER 1

JEAN-PIERRE LÉAUD AS STAR - CONSTRUCTION OF THE STAR IMAGE



8

Perhaps one of the most enduring screen images of Jean-Pierre Léaud is that of the freeze-frame of the young Antoine Doinel at the end of François Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups* (1959). It was a kind of snapshot of the soon to be/yet to be star, framing the young actor, the character and the director in that one shot, holding a mirror up to society. Léaud's star image has been mostly associated with the Doinel character heightened by a certain confusion between this character, the actor and director, Truffaut, evoking a somewhat marginal anti-hero, awkward with women whilst adoring them also, a comic, androgynous character - something of a misfit. Many of his characters experience unstable and unsatisfactory relationships coupled with an unrelenting desire to be around women and deeply felt reactions towards rejection. His characters are also often marginalised through socio-economic factors - participation in odd or unlikely professions - a private detective in *Baisers volés* (1968), a florist that dyes his flowers with ink, followed by an operator of model boats in *Domicile conjugal* (1970), a hairdresser aspiring to be an amateur racing driver in *Le Départ* (1967) dressing up as Father Christmas for passers-by to have their photo taken with him in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* (1966), or undertaking the occupation of 'flânerie' in *La Maman et la putain* (1972). Léaud's star image has also become associated with creativity - playing a film director in *Il ultimo tango a Parigi/Last Tango in Paris* (1972), in *Irma Vep* (1996) and in *Le Pornographe* (2000), as a writer in *Domicile conjugal*, *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent* (1971), *L'Amour en fuite* (1978), *La Naissance de l'amour* (1992) and *La*

Couleur du vent (1988) and as an actor in *La Nuit américaine* (1972) and even as a pop-star in *Dialóg 20-40-60* (1968). He is also seen as an enforcer of the law, as a detective in *Déetective* (1984), as a chief police officer in *Les Keufs* (1987) and as a judge in *Une Affaire de goût* (1999), *L’Affaire Marcorelle* (1999), and *La Guerre à Paris* (2001).

Léaud’s star image has been closely associated with the *nouvelle vague* period of French cinema through the continuation of the Doinel cycle as well as his roles in such films as Jean-Luc Godard’s *Masculin-Féminin* (1965) and *La Chinoise* (1967) which also served to fuel the political edge to his star persona. He came to be recognised as a kind of eternal *soixante-huitard* and hence his star image has also been closely associated with the immediate post-1968 era, marked most manifestly by Jean Eustache’s *La Maman et la putain*. In this sense, his star image can almost be seen to be connotative of this period from *la nouvelle vague* to pre-1968 French cinema to cinema representative of French society in the aftermath of 1968. This has led to some of his more recent roles paying direct homage to his star image associated with this cultural and political climate. This can be seen most recently in Bernardo Bertolucci’s *The Dreamers* (2002) as well as in Tsai Ming-liang’s *Ni neibian jidian/Et là-bas, quelle heure est-il ?* (2000) in which Léaud plays himself. His role in *L’Affaire Marcorelle* also harks back to the 1968 period of political instability in France with allusions to a former politically active existence.

Maureen Turim suggests that the kind of hero embodied by Léaud in the Doinel character is reminiscent of that of the 19th century literary tradition, such as those to be found in the works of Stendhal, Flaubert and Balzac (Turim 1972/1973: 43). This transposed into an important facet of the Doinel character through his love of Balzac. In *Out 1* (1970), Balzac also plays a central role as Colin seeks to unravel the mystery surrounding the ‘histoire des treize’¹. Léaud was also to play the role of Claude Roc in Truffaut’s adaptation of Henri-Pierre Roché’s novel set at the turn of the century, *Les*

Deux Anglaises et le continent. Balzac was certainly an important point of reference for Truffaut in his formative adolescent years which he subsequently translated into a number of his films and indeed through many of the characters played by Léaud for Truffaut. This romantic literary hero quality to Léaud's star image is also present in many of his other roles. Perhaps the most important role Léaud has taken on in this respect is that of Frédéric Moreau in Marc Cravanne's television adaptation of Gustave Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1971) which epitomises the mystification of women that inflects so many of Léaud's characters.

STARS - THE ECONOMY, PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY OF STARDOM

In *Les Stars* (1972), Edgar Morin describes the star system as being dependent on three factors - the economic, the psychological and the sociological, describing the star as an amalgam of the actor and the character:

"Le film terminé, l'acteur redevient acteur, le personnage reste personnage, mais de leur mariage, est né un être mixte qui participe de l'un et de l'autre, les enveloppe l'un et l'autre : la star." (Morin 1972: 38)

For Morin, stars become such powerful cultural icons through the process of idealisation of the star that leads to a sense of divinisation. Thus the star becomes god-like, and in this way the myth of the star is created. The various aspects of Léaud's star image are born out of this confusion of the boundaries between star and character, combining the economy, psychology and sociology of stardom.

The origins of the economy of stardom stem from the early studio system of Hollywood, a system dependent on a capitalist mode of production and consumption. Richard Dyer talks of four elements that constitute the economic significance of stars -

capital, investment, outlay and the market (Dyer 1979: 10). The economic function of stars lies in the fact that stars are on one hand the essence of a film narrative and in this way carry a film, whilst this feeds back into the star system through communication to a mass audience as god-like cultural icons. Dyer suggests that stars formed part of a studio's capital and that they had in effect a monopoly status. Stars also constituted the investment of a film in that a film's profit could be determined by the stars present in that film and outlay in terms of a film budget. Star images are also at the heart of the marketing of films. Therefore, investing in stars allowed for the creation of star images as cultural icons together with the media and marketing that surrounds the celebrity status, further enhancing the star image. In this way, stars have come to shape the industry in an economic sense. For an actor like Léaud, he can be seen to fit this model in that many of his films were carried by his presence, in particular the Doinel cycle. As a result of the Léaud-Doinel association and the *nouvelle vague* context, Léaud as a star was further concretised in other *nouvelle vague* films as well his more recent roles drawing upon this association. On the other hand, Léaud can be seen to represent a more atypical model in that his films have not received a consistent box-office success and many of these roles have been in much more marginal films as compared with such actors of the same generation as Belmondo and Delon which I will go on to explore further later in this chapter. Equally, the downturn in Léaud's career plays further into this as does some of the more negative criticism directed towards him as an actor². However, as Dyer points out, a film's success cannot solely be dependent on a star's presence in that film. The economic significance of Léaud's star image stems from the economic aspect of *la nouvelle vague*, limited box office success as compared with Belmondo and Delon for example and reception of his films by the media and audience alike.

The psychological aspect relates to how the individual is constructed and positioned in relation to the cinematic image - how does the individual spectator

participate in the projection-identification process of viewing and receiving film images? The sociological aspect relates to the wider context of cultural and historic specificity that feed into the way films are received. Stars act as vehicles in both the making and marketing of films. They are the focus of films and thus often act as cultural icons. This centrality to film production and audience participation makes them signs functioning as part of the wider signifying system of film itself. For the spectator, stars function both within the real and the imaginary, playing on the desire and lack experienced by the film viewer. The spectator negotiates the projection-identification process by assimilating himself or herself with the star on screen through projection of the ideal ego. However, the very illusory quality of cinema implies that the star is in effect not the projection of the ideal ego and therefore the ideal ego can never in reality be achieved. It is in this way that the projection-identification of the spectator is played out within both absence and presence. The illusion of the cinematic image portrays the character on screen under the conditions of the darkened auditorium, thus playing on the desire of the spectator, whilst the star is, of course, absent in reality, playing into the spectator's individual fantasy.

Together with this also comes the creative element in the construction of the star. Dyer identifies four constitutive elements in this respect - ordinariness of stars, specialness, the idea of the lucky break, and finally hard work on the part of the star (Dyer 1979: 42). The two initial concepts of both ordinariness and specialness alone raise a certain contradiction. How can stars be seen as ordinary yet also as special? Stars are ordinary in that they are equally individuals like everyone else. Yet their elevated star status through the magnification of their image on screen observed by the spectator in the darkened auditorium plays on the desire of the spectator and feeds into the spectator's fantasy. These very notions of ordinariness and specialness lead us to question how to reconcile such a contradiction. In her essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), Mulvey resolves this contradiction, asserting that it is the

'specialness' that actors bring to their roles of ordinariness that is constitutive of the star. The mechanism of the cinema has become adept in producing ideal egos that play between the concepts of likeness and difference. Thus stars by their nature embody this very contradiction (Mulvey 1975: 18).

The concept of the lucky break implies that certain circumstances, conditions or coincidences play a part in giving an actor the opportunity to achieve this elevated status. For Léaud, his 'lucky break' came when he responded to the advertisement placed by Truffaut in *France-Soir* in his search for the young actor to incarnate the character of Antoine Doinel. Pierre Léaud had also featured in Pagliero's *Un Homme marche dans la ville* which also saw Léaud's first screen role. The young Léaud had already found himself within a cinematic milieu. Truffaut noted the connection with Jean Domarchi through Léaud's mother, then a *Cahiers* critic, although Léaud himself did not place too much emphasis on this connection, seen from footage of the screen tests for *Les Quatre Cents Coups*:

Léaud: Moi, je ne le connais pas vraiment. C'est ma mère qui le connaît. Puis on l'a rencontré sur les Champs Élysées... Elle a dit, "Il y a mon fils..." Et il a dit, "Envoyez-le de ma part..."

Truffaut: Il est gentil, Monsieur Domarchi?

Léaud: Vous savez, je l'ai vu cinq minutes. Il semble très gentil. Sur la route comme ça...³

Nevertheless, the impression Léaud made upon Truffaut led him to give him the part of Antoine. Truffaut saw in Léaud the ability to bring to life the young Doinel character in a way that would work with his original idea whilst also recognising that much of Léaud's own personality would in fact create the character. Léaud recalls his intense desire for the role and this intensity has continued in a certain manner throughout his

career in that he remained committed to the continuation of the Doinel narrative in the four subsequent Doinel films (Monaco 1976: 18) which points to the professional aspect to the young Léaud at this point. He has also remained committed to a non-mainstream cinema, often working for directors who considered themselves as auteurs. I will look at the concept of authorship in more detail in chapter two specifically in relation to the Truffaut-Doinel-Léaud construction.

La nouvelle vague itself was based upon a refusal to comply with the established traditions of filmmaking within the studio system, and in so doing rejected the use of established stars, although this was partly through lack of financial means, not merely an active choice. However, *la nouvelle vague* through this very refusal to accept convention, shifting the emphasis from the economic to the creative force within filmmaking resulted in establishing its own stars, creating a system within itself. Such stars as Jean-Paul Belmondo, Gérard Blain, Jean-Claude Brialy, Anna Karina, Bernadette Lafont, Jeanne Moreau, Delphine Seyrig, Jean-Louis Trintignant, as well as Léaud were products of *la nouvelle vague* and thus became cultural icons representative of this new cultural force in French filmmaking. Ginette Vincendeau affirms the existence of a star system within French cinema, whilst asserting that French stars do not form part of a kind of “organized management” (Vincendeau 2000: 1), stars remain integral to the economy of the industry and that this is seen through their omnipresence. Rather than maintaining a kind of omnipresence in French cinema, Léaud’s presence within contemporary French cinema has given the spectator the unique and extraordinary opportunity to see Léaud grow up on screen, from child actor, through the incarnation of the teenage Doinel and his transition into adulthood, various politically motivated roles for Jean-Luc Godard in *Masculin-Féminin*, *La Chinoise* and *Le Gai Savoir* (1968) as well as playing roles in other films of the *nouvelle vague* period such as *Le Départ* and *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus*, to post-1968 roles in *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent*, *La Maman et la putain*, *La Nuit américaine* to more recent

films in which he is often either playing himself - *The Dreamers* and *Et là-bas, quelle heure est-il ?* or playing roles that act as references to his star image of the *nouvelle vague* period such as *Irma Vep* and *L’Affaire Marcorelle*. Vincendeau cites Jean-Paul Belmondo, Alain Delon and Gérard Depardieu as typical examples of stars created in this way whose omnipresence within French cinema together with box office success has concretised their star images. However, to consider Léaud in this respect is problematic in that his participation in the industry is not that of a conventional star nor is his career typical of such French stars as cited above, despite his presence in the industry for more than forty-five years. This leads us to consider what constitutes a conventional star and what makes for a typical career of a star.

Whilst Belmondo also came to prominence through *la nouvelle vague*, notably his performance as Michel Poiccard in *A bout de souffle* (1959) he was soon to shift into the realm of mainstream cinema as well as moving into theatre and television. Delon, whilst never connected with *la nouvelle vague* as such, did work with prominent auteurs, most notably for Luchino Visconti (*Rocco e i suoi fratelli/Rocco and His Brothers*, 1960) and later with Jean-Pierre Melville (*Le Samouraï*, 1967). Delon had also worked with directors of the tradition that Truffaut as a critic for the French film journal, *Cahiers du cinéma*, had attacked in his article “Une Certain Tendance du cinéma français” (1954), most notably René Clément (*Plein Soleil*, 1959). However, Delon too embraced the mainstream just as Belmondo did. Both came into the cinema from ‘macho’ backgrounds, Belmondo as a former boxer and Delon as a sailor serving in Indochina. However, Belmondo, unlike Delon, did undergo formal acting training at the Paris Conservatoire. Léaud’s career is atypical in various ways. He began his career as a child actor, his first major screen appearance being in Georges Lampin’s *La Tour, prends garde*. This film sees Léaud in a father-son relationship with Jean Marais, who represents an idealised male star image familiar for example from the triple role of prince charming, beast and the young man in Jean Cocteau’s *La Belle et la Bête* (1945).



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The narrative follows a traditional Oedipal trajectory that ends in Marais' character triumphing over evil and ultimately forming a couple. However, even this early on, L aud's expressiveness is apparent. This presents an interesting context given that Marais was established as a star of French cinema, playing

alongside the young L aud in a nurturing, protective role, whilst the setting is within a theatre group. With the knowledge of L aud's future roles, it is interesting to see L aud playing a character both in a father-son relationship alongside an established male star of the time and also within a creative context.

This role was then followed by *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and Jean Cocteau's *Le Testament d'Orph e* (1959). L aud's involvement in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* was, as discussed above, a kind of 'lucky break'. The success of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* at the Cannes Film Festival in 1959 brought the face and figure of the young L aud to the wider public. The final freeze-frame of the film was perhaps instrumental in this recognition in that, as mentioned above, this image has become one of the enduring images of L aud as child actor and indeed of *la nouvelle vague*. This has been cemented by a continued recognition of L aud as a kind of eternal adolescent, so strongly associated with this image - "l'enfant ch ri de la nouvelle vague" (Valot and



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Grandmaire 1989: 80). In *L aud l'unique* (2001), the scene with Agn s Varda at Cannes in 2000, who herself is considered as a precursor to *la nouvelle vague* and the move towards auteur cinema within French cinema, sees L aud almost as if he is still that 'child' of the French cinema seen at Cannes in 1959.

Indeed, Turim's article on L aud is entitled "Jean-Pierre L aud: Child of the French Cinema" (Turim 1972/1973: 41). Whilst on one hand he grew up on screen, he was also

seen not to have grown up, partly through the powerful and enduring images of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* but also through the embodiment of youth in his films of the early 1960s as well as, of course, the continued role of Doinel in the subsequent films in the Doinel cycle.

Léaud has remained throughout his career in the non-commercial sphere unlike Belmondo and Delon. However, Belmondo did star in some *nouvelle vague* films in the earlier part of his career - *A bout de souffle*, *Une Femme est une Femme* (1960) and *Pierrot le fou* (1965) for Godard and *La Sirène de Mississippi* (1968) for Truffaut, and these roles have often been considered his best and therefore certain comparisons can be drawn between the two actors. Above all, Belmondo's career is rooted in mainstream cinema, television and theatre. Likewise, Delon's star image is also considered more in the light of mainstream cinema and television. The fact that Léaud has remained in a more marginal non-commercial cinema is in a large part down to his own personal choice. He has openly acknowledged the education he received by the 'family' of the *Cahiers* critics in saying that he was in effect brought up and raised by them. Consequently, he has aligned himself with a cinema that he strongly identifies with. By playing, on the whole, marginal characters and through the contradictory gender issues that arise from his screen presence (which I will consider in more detail below) his star image has been concretised as belonging to a more marginal cinema and his close association with such directors as Truffaut, Godard and Eustache reinforces this aspect of his star image. Many of the directors Léaud has worked with were previous *Cahiers* writers, namely Truffaut, Godard, Jacques Rivette, Luc Moullet, Philippe Garrel and more recently such *Cahiers* critics turned filmmakers as Serge Le Péron and Olivier Assayas have chosen to work with Léaud. As Léaud has continued to be cast in this way his star persona has been created within this context and the spectator familiar with the type of roles he has incarnated holds a certain expectation to find him in such roles. Indeed, audience expectation plays into the way stars are

created from the economic angle of carrying a film because that star features in it, whilst desire on the part of the spectator wanting to see that particular star also plays a part.

MASCULINITY OR MASCULINITIES?

The most central contradiction in Léaud's image is the lack of an idealised masculine presence. His fragile, somewhat androgynous figure calls into question traditional notions of masculinity that are conventionally expected of male stars whilst often being juxtaposed against strong, empowered female characters in many of his roles - Madame Doinel, Christine Darbon, Fabienne Tabard and Colette in the Doinel cycle, Véronika and Marie in *La Maman et la putain*, Madeleine in *Masculin-Féminin*, Véronique in *La Chinoise*, Maggie Cheung in *Irma Vep*, Alice in *Pour Rire !* (1996). This then often leads to a reversal of traditional gender roles, Léaud's characters being in turn feminised by the strong female presences around them. This leads us to examine the ideological significance of Léaud's image as star and how this is affected by the ambiguities that arise in any such consideration. Dominant ideology would consider a traditional male hero as an idealised male - one who reinforces the premise of patriarchal society, all powerful, strong characters, voyeuristic, misogynistic and physically appealing. Given that so many of Léaud's roles are of a marginal nature, we are led to question how his star persona is seen to undermine patriarchal ideals in this context.

Ideology constitutes the system of ideas and set of values that a viewer brings to the screen. Societal norms and conventions thus play a major role in this process. Pierre Sorlin describes this as:

"...l'idéologie serait l'ensemble des moyens et des manifestations par lesquels les

groupes sociaux se définissent, se situent les uns en face des autres et assument leur relations.” (Sorlin 1977: 25)

Dominant ideology would consider stars to be idealised and unproblematic images carrying forward a dominant, conventional view of masculinity. Ideology as defined by Louis Althusser relates to “the imaginary relation of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 1969: 153). Thus it is the way by which individuals are constructed as subjects through ideology that allows for a certain identification process to take place for the spectator positioned as the holder of the gaze, objectifying the image presented on screen. Film is thus an expression of ideology. Althusser termed this process ‘interpellation’. Since cinema is itself an ideological apparatus in that it contains and projects ideology upon its viewers, this process of interpellation is able to produce the film spectator as a film construct. Judith Mayne quotes Jacqueline Rose who states that film as an “ideological apparatus rests on mechanisms of identification and sexual fantasy”⁴. The image of Belmondo in *A bout de souffle* seeking to identify himself with Humphrey Bogart as seen on a film poster qualifies this idealised type of star by association with an established American star seen to embody such masculine ideals. Likewise, stars such as John Wayne, Steve McQueen, Robert Redford, and within French cinema, Jean Gabin, Jean Marais and Gérard Philipe were all readily accepted as true stars by their audiences despite certain contradictions that did not necessarily represent images of the idealised male for the spectator. Morin describes the male star as linked to notions of heroism in which fighting for love, against evil, destiny and injustice constitute this image of masculine hero (Morin 1972: 171). It is interesting to note on this point that Anne Gillain likens Léaud to Bogart in that they both represented for the audience a certain embodiment of youth of that time (Gillain 1991: 23). In a similar vein, Turim likens Léaud to James Dean in terms of their representations of youth and the nation (Turim 1972: 41).

In the pre-*nouvelle vague* years, Gabin was one of the most prominent male stars of French cinema whose representations of youth, the people and the working-class hero came to embody the nation in such films as *Le Quai des brumes* (1938), *La Bête humaine* (1938), *Le Jour se lève* (1939) such that his star image has frequently been bestowed with the term 'myth'. Pierre Maillot describes this inherent quality of Gabin's star image as emanating from a kind of truth from his image that embodied identity of the nation over time (Maillot 1996: 18). This can be seen to further blur the distinctions between reality and illusion for the spectator and thus the truth the spectator believes is inherent within the image of the star. Maillot refers to Gabin on this note, as stated in Morin's *Les Stars*:

"Les gens disent que je suis le même dans la vie que dans mes films et c'est pour cela qu'ils m'aiment." (Morin 1972: 36)

Whilst Gabin was to become widely accepted as a star of French cinema at the time, certain ambiguities remain present in his performances through his representations of masculinity. Despite the macho masculinity represented by his many screen performances, his characters are often troubled by his relationships with women. Vincendeau identifies both the masculine and feminine qualities to his star image (Vincendeau 2000: 76). In *Le Quai des brumes* and *La Bête humaine*, Gabin embodies a certain brand of melancholic hero in which death is presented as the resolution. Similarly, the gangster roles of Belmondo and Delon would often end in mortality as in *A bout de souffle* and *Le Samouraï*. Only in a few films do we see a Léaud character die, in *La Concentration* (1965), *Made in USA* (1966), *Il Porcile* (1969), *Paul* (1969), *Une Aventure de Billy le Kid* (1971), *Parano* (1978) and *Bunker Palace Hotel* (1988). These roles do not, however, recall in any sense the macho males of the roles of Gabin, Belmondo or Delon, for whom death is the ultimate act of heroism whether that be

dying for the cause of love or for a criminal cause. Vincendeau states that Gabin's characters were ultimately fatal to themselves (Vincendeau 2000: 62), adding to the sense of myth around his star image. As discussed further in chapter four, a number of Léaud's characters flirt with suicide (*Boulevard*, 1960, *La Concentration*, *Paris vu par 20 ans après: Rue Fontaine*, 1984, *I Hired a Contract Killer*, 1990, *Le Journal du séducteur*, 1995, *Pour Rire !*), implying the unstable and fragile nature of these characters, who are in their own ways fighting for a certain cause. However, only in *La Concentration* does a suicide attempt end fatally, and possibly in *Paris vu par 20 ans après: Rue Fontaine*.

In Léaud's recent screen role as himself in a short documentary by Jacques Richard, *Léaud de hurle-dents* (2003), Léaud talks about the relationship between death and the practice of acting. He talks of the idea that the images of an actor will continue to live after death. The representation of an actor in his or her films will remain within that recorded filmic image which has captured them. He goes on to talk about Cocteau's notion that cinema is, in effect, filming death at work. Léaud fittingly equates this to 'bees in a glass hive'. Upon meeting Léaud in person, he alluded to Jean Genet, similarly equating the star with death. In an interview he once explained this in the following way:

"...j'ai dit à Godard : "La grande, la vraie star, c'est la mort." Par hasard, je venais de rencontrer Jean Genet, peu avant sa mort, alors que je relisais *Pompes funèbres*. Et Genet m'a dit : "On se demande pourquoi on voit tant de photographies de rois en exil, de stars en voyage ? Parce que la véritable star, c'est la mort." (Revault d'Allonnes 1986: 31)

For an actor still very much present in contemporary French cinema it is an interesting and a contradictory facet to his star image that whilst death has not featured in his

screen roles in the same way as for Gabin, Belmondo or Delon, an undertone of melancholy exists within his star persona. Moreover, for an actor who has been subject to the loss of the paternal figure of Truffaut, and equally the strong influences of Eustache and Suzanne Schiffman during his career, it is not surprising that the motif of death should figure within his star persona and indeed his own concept of the actor. In *Léaud de hurle-dents* he also talks about a particular spot in the Cimetière de Montparnasse where he goes to learn his lines when preparing for a role. The fact that this is in a cemetery alludes to this very motif of mortality. Nevertheless, as Léaud ambles through the cemetery, paying homage to various great figures of the French cinema and French cultural life, there remains an incredible sense of pleasure in his real life role as an actor beneath this somewhat fatalistic façade.

As Vincendeau notes, Gabin also displayed a trademark “explosion of violence” (Vincendeau 2000: 73) in many of his performances, not too dissimilar from the manic outbursts of Léaud. In *Léaud de hurle dents*, when venting his anger over his dentist, Léaud impersonates Gabin’s outburst from *Les Bas-fonds* (1936) as an analogy to the anger he feels towards his dentist. This imitation of Gabin by Léaud is not all too unlike this aspect of the Léaud persona that the spectator has come to recognise over the years.

Another interesting contradiction in the Gabin star image is the ability to draw together both the masculine and the feminine. *L’Air de Paris* (1954) contains homoerotic undertones which destabilise the all macho image of Gabin (Dyer 1990: 127). Vincendeau describes him in this light as playing both the mother and the father simultaneously (Vincendeau 2000: 76). In some of Gabin’s later films, he would play roles that fall into the older man/younger woman dichotomy, a theme that has a long-standing tradition within French cinema (Vincendeau 1992: 15). This is a role that Léaud has also taken on in *36 Fillette* (1987) and *Paris s’éveille* (1991) in which he assumes a more fatherly position towards a younger girl. By incorporating both

masculinity and femininity, Gabin's image is thus problematised. This raises a central contradiction in gender representations through his performances whilst confirming that an all macho hero image can be invested with elements of femininity that do not necessarily call into question the star status. Thus for an actor such as Léaud, the ambiguous gender representations do not necessarily detract from the creation of his star image. Similarly the homoerotic roles played by Depardieu are testimony to this (*Les Valseuses*, 1973, *Tenue de soirée*, 1986). However, as Maillot argues, Jean Marais' openness regarding his sexuality called into question the formulation of "un couple crédible avec les heroïnes de ses films" (Maillot 1996: 114). This place was to be taken by Gérard Philipe.

Despite the more conventional representation of masculinity presented by Philipe his star image is an interesting comparison to that of Léaud. His star image came to represent post-war generation youth and the fact that he died so young concretised this notion of youth further. Similarly, Léaud's star image would come to represent youth in a certain historical period in France – the pre- and post-1968 youth generation. However, the box-office success of Philipe problematises a comparison with Léaud just as Belmondo's and Delon's star images were shaped to an extent by their box office success in a way that diverges from the construction of Léaud's star image in this context. Nevertheless, in a consideration of the types Philipe embodied, certain similarities emerge – representations of youth, the romantic literary hero type as well as the less macho hero qualified by a less 'masculine' look. In a discussion about the contradictions present within Léaud's star image between Le Péron and myself, Le Péron alluded to Philipe as an interesting comparison. Other male film stars further qualify the idea that effeminacy need not necessitate a bar to stardom - Rupert Everett, Matt Damon and Montgomery Clift are just some examples, and from the silent comedy tradition, Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplin can also be placed within this category. Similarly, gestures formed part of the performance style of Jules Berry seen in *Le Crime*

de *Monsieur Lange* (1935) and *Le Jour se lève* that presented a less macho image.

Perhaps the most striking comparison to be made is with Robert Le Vigan. In *Le Quai des brumes*, Le Vigan as 'le peintre' stands in sharp contrast to the macho hero image of Gabin when clumsily attempting to seduce Nelly. Le Péron has also talked of Léaud as falling somewhere between the images of Le Vigan and Artaud adding that he will never be another Gabin⁵. In *Léaud de hurle-dents*, it is quite fitting then that the opening and closing scenes are made up of archive footage of Le Vigan talking about the role of the actor. Talking about his role in *Corps et biens* (1986), Léaud explains how Benoît Jacquot directed him to play like Le Vigan and Pierre Brasseur: "Alors j'ai foncé dans le côté Le Vigan !" (Revault d'Allonnes 1986: 31). Didier Péron refers to Léaud's own admiration for Le Vigan:

"En 1984, Léaud expliquait à *Libération* son admiration pour Le Vigan (*Le Quai des brumes, Goupis mains-rouges...*), 'l'acteur par excellence', il déclarait : 'Le lieu du désir de l'acteur, je peux très bien le nommer : c'est pas tellement d'être au théâtre : c'est d'être dans le box. Le box des accusés. Tu es à la fois renié par la société et tu imposes complètement ton jeu au milieu des émotions les plus fortes qui soient.'"⁶

This also points to the idea of the framing of the actor within the filmic image. Most poignantly, Truffaut himself described Léaud as "fils naturel de Goupi Tonkin" (Truffaut 1987: 206) from *Goupis mains-rouges* (1942).

Whilst Belmondo and Delon have both been readily accepted as macho males within French cinema their images do not come without contradictions. Guy Austin describes them as macho males within the feminised roles of film actors, asserting that the acting profession is inherently feminine by its very nature (Austin 2003: 48). Central to the concept of the idealised male on screen is the idea of the spectacle. The spectacular display of the male body on screen feminises the body by the mere fact of

being positioned as an object to be looked at and thus the body is objectified. Nevertheless, both these actors are in various ways idealised through their screen presences. Both have been associated primarily with gangster, adventure and police thrillers in which the symptoms of machismo are traditionally violence and fascination with women, and their instruments of machismo being guns and fast cars (Austin 2003: 49). In being associated with these genres, their star images have become more closely aligned with more popular genres as opposed to the more marginal sphere occupied by Léaud. In asserting this machismo, Belmondo insisted on always performing his own stunts (unlike Delon who had a stunt double). In relation to such displays of masculinity through such power and control over the external world, Austin quotes Martin O'Shaughnessy:

"Masculinity has nothing to prove yet somehow needs constantly to prove itself."



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Both have a certain physical appeal although differing from one another, Belmondo's rough, rugged look as against Delon's overwhelming beauty. Whilst fitting the idealised male image, Belmondo's star image also sees him as something of a joker. Indeed his second childhood ambition was

to become a clown. His facial features accommodate this in his rugged look and his "trademark grin" (Vincendeau 2000: 163) whilst also retaining a very masculine look. Delon on the other hand is outstandingly beautiful and this may account for the fact that his appeal lay more with the female audience as opposed to Belmondo who appealed more to the male audience (Austin 2003: 51). Whilst Mulvey argues that "man is reluctant to gaze at his exhibitionist like" (Mulvey 1975: 20), there remains something to be said for representations of masculinity projected upon the male

spectator. Following O'Shaughnessy's assertion above, the fact that masculinity has to prove itself also suggests that it demands qualification which by implication is required of the male spectator himself. Morin points to beauty as being a defining feature of stars in that the star system desires beautiful people to be part of it which also feeds into the desire of the spectator (Morin 1972: 40). Léaud cannot readily be seen to fit either of these types and to categorise him together with Belmondo and Delon is problematic save for the fact that all three belong to the same generation of French male film stars and share some elements of *nouvelle vague* and art cinema of the period. However, the clown like quality of Belmondo is not far detached from the comic element seen in Léaud's performances. Many of Léaud's roles are inflected by comedy which are accompanied by his frantic and often athletic gestures. Godard described part of Léaud's acting style as athletic in referring to a scene in *Week-end* (1967) when Léaud is seen jumping over a car while disputing with a couple⁸. However, when he attempts to 'stab' his victim in this scene, it is injected with irony by the fact that he has no weapon and it is mere mime. This again displays an element of comedy whilst also reminiscent of the silent film genre. Belmondo's acting style too was inflected by gestures unlike Delon whose acting style was far more minimal. Another similarity between Belmondo and Léaud can be drawn from the character Belmondo plays in *Pierrot le fou* (1965), in which Léaud also has a small part credited as 'le jeune homme dans le cinéma'. Consumed by literature, Pierrot is nicknamed 'le fou' by his girlfriend, Marianne, played by Anna Karina, thus portraying intellectual activity coupled with a sense of madness. This juxtaposition of Belmondo as against Karina also portrays a troubled, weak male positioned against a stronger female figure, further compounded by Karina's own star status. Many of Léaud's characters also display manic tendencies that add to a sense of marginality. Equally, in *La Sirène de Mississippi*, Belmondo's role, although seen initially in a conventional male role, is destabilised by the powerful and manipulative female alongside him played by Catherine Deneuve, again another

powerful star image.

On examination of Delon's image, his beauty can certainly be seen as an effeminate quality. Indeed, Vincendeau suggests he was in fact "too beautiful" (Vincendeau 2000: 173). Like Belmondo, many of his screen images are about the eroticisation of the male body seen to great effect in *Plein Soleil* (1959) where his body is very much on display. An extension of this is displayed in the narcissistic quality of Delon's characters seen in various mirror scenes in *Plein Soleil*, *Le Samouraï* and *Monsieur Klein* (1975). However, this narcissistic quality in Delon's performances



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relates more to control over the external world and therefore a more macho image which is distinct from the narcissism displayed by many of Léaud's characters. However, despite the very macho quality to Delon's star image, the undercurrent of the male body as beautiful and the effeminate quality of Delon

are not too far removed from what we see in Léaud's image. Whilst Delon's beauty was on one hand an instrument of power both in the creation of his star image and the manifestation of power as idealised male, this also carries an undercurrent of melancholy and fragility. On the other hand, Léaud's objectified body is not accompanied by feats of machismo and hence this is where the similarity ends. This is taken further in some of Léaud's performances where androgyny extends to the image of the dandy, most notably in *La Maman et la putain*, thus creating an image distinct from a more macho image like that of Delon. Whilst both actors display a certain narcissistic quality, for Léaud it is more a reflection of the internal (mind over body) whilst for Delon it is all about the external (control over the external world reflected through external appearance). In *La Maman et la putain*, Léaud's body is displayed to a different degree to the way in which Delon's body is often objectified. A prime example would be *Plein Soleil* in which the display of Delon's body is integral to the

spectator's insight into the character. In *La Maman et la putain* in the scene in which Alexandre and Véronika have just spent a night together in Marie's flat, Alexandre explains the pleasure he derives from listening to the 'voice' on the radio. In this scene, the voice acts as a form of distraction from the body on display to a disembodied voice on the radio which also plays between the modes of absence and presence. This also points to the dichotomy of the display of the body versus the display of the character and thus shows the character to rise above the significance of the body. In *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, the psychologist scene similarly employs a disembodied voice to play between absence and presence. The result in this scene is to refocus all attention on Antoine. Not only is this bearing his soul before the spectator by positioning the character in this way. It also places the female disembodied voice within the realm of desire both for Antoine and the spectator. This is further qualified when we later learn of her instrumental role in Antoine's release from the detention centre. In *Paris vu par 20 ans après : Rue Fontaine*, one particular scene shows Léaud as René on the telephone to Génie. Although he is in shot, his voice is projected as the distanced voice, whilst Génie out of shot is portrayed as possessing the present voice in a reversal of roles. This foresees the imminent rupture in their relationship reducing René to an even more troubled figure than seen at the beginning of the film.

In contrasting the star images of Belmondo and Delon with Léaud, the most interesting point is perhaps the notion of marginality. Given that their images are of idealised males, the marginal aspect to their star images poses a threat upon the masculine values they embody. Yet as Austin claims, "self-sufficient masculinity is also expressed by assuming a position outside society" (Austin 2003: 54). Thus their characters often become more marginalised. The very lawlessness of the Belmondo and Delon characters places them on the margins of society and off-screen alleged criminal associations were equally seen to be part of their star personae (Austin 2003: 55). Ironically, in a court case against a policeman who allegedly assaulted Belmondo,

he won the case only after the judge asked him whether his actions had been influenced by the gangster roles he had incarnated on screen. This also points to the blurring of role and self, life and art and thus actively contributes to the creation of their star personae, for as Morin states, the star is created through the breakdown and thus amalgam of the actor/character dialectic.

Both Belmondo and Delon present interesting elements within their star personae that inform aspects of Léaud's star image both in terms of how the star is created and in terms of masculinity as spectacle. Whilst they both occupied a position of being idealised males embodying traditional ideological masculine values, their star images are also fused with a certain anxiety surrounding the objectification of the male body on display for the spectator, further qualified by specific aspects of their performance styles. Austin contrasts Belmondo and Delon by stating that, "Delon's machismo is ultimately qualified by pathos, just as Belmondo's is by comedy" (Austin 2003: 62). Hence their star images are focused on a central contradiction in which the macho element is subverted, destabilising the very macho appeal contained within their star images.

These conventional male stars in French cinema appear to the spectator as idealised males yet their images are also fraught with ambiguities and contradictions. They both occupy positions placed within the success of stardom, whilst having to reconcile images of both conventional male heroes and marginalised individuals. Dyer argues in *Stars* that the star holds the capacity to reconcile such a paradox. Such sites of contradiction in which cultural ambiguities transcend dominant ideology in effect serve to create the star image. Mayne formulates this in the following way:

"...the appeal of stardom is that of constant reinvention, the dissolution of contraries, the embrace of wildly opposing terms." (Mayne 1993: 138)

However, there is a divergence between the Belmondo/Delon category and Léaud in terms of the appeal they held for the spectator. Vincendeau states that the appeal of Belmondo and Delon lay in the 'lifestyle' they represented and the desire for commodity that they embodied, asserting that they offered an alternative to the intellectual 'heroes' of the *nouvelle vague* (Vincendeau 2000: 160). Within this category she places Léaud. However, I would argue that such categorisation is too generalised in that it instantly places Léaud outside of the Belmondo/Delon grouping and that to confine Léaud to the 'intellectual hero' type does not take into account other aspects of his *nouvelle vague* persona. Moreover, she only makes passing reference to him as a star of this period. Austin, Maillot and Alain Brassart in *Les Jeunes Premiers dans le cinéma français des années 60* (2004) make no reference at all to Léaud, illustrating his lack of recognition as a star of the French cinema.

There are some interesting points of convergence between Léaud and Belmondo and Léaud and Delon which I have examined above, whilst Léaud's star persona also incorporates a different representation of youth, sometimes politically motivated, linking representations of youth to the concept of national identity. Yet, it is no surprise that Léaud has not been given any greater consideration in this sense as he too readily has been positioned on the flip side to the powerful idealised male images occupied by Belmondo and Delon and rooted firmly within the realm of a more marginal cinema. Whilst Belmondo and Delon both asserted a certain concept of French national identity, Léaud has done so in a very different manner. In asserting masculinity, Belmondo and Delon represent the virile whilst Léaud represents a more dandy-like image. Whilst Belmondo and Delon are reassuring in their representations of the new modernity, Léaud's anti-heroes only serve to critique such values. Such a critique on these new values of consumerism and indeed Americanisation are reminiscent of Jacques Tati's reflection on the new modernity and dissolution of 'Frenchness' in favour of a more homogenised consumer culture in such films as *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (1951)

and *Mon Oncle* (1957). He makes this political comment through comedy exposing the absurdities that the new modernity has brought with it⁹. This is paralleled through the many Léaud characters that stand in sharp contrast to the Americanised heroes incarnated by Belmondo and Delon.

A more striking comparison can be drawn with Jean-Claude Brialy who also emerged as a star of *la nouvelle vague*. Brialy came to prominence in Claude Chabrol's *Le Beau Serge* (1957) and *Les Cousins* (1958) and then went on to collaborate with both Truffaut (*Les Quatre Cents Coups*, *La Mariée était en noir*, 1967) and Godard (*Une Femme est une Femme*, *Tous les garçons s'appellent Patrick*, 1957) and for them both in *Une Histoire d'eau* (1957). In this collaboration between Truffaut and Godard as well as in Godard's *Une Femme est une femme* Brialy displays a kind of burlesque quality reminiscent of the silent comedy genre. Comparisons can equally be drawn with this genre and the comic, burlesque style of Léaud's performances. He has also been seen as the quintessential dandy image of *la nouvelle vague* (Brassart 2004: 296). Similar to Léaud he has also been associated with the romantic literary hero image. The most striking similarity stems from the role of Frédéric Moreau that he played in Alexandre Astruc's film adaptation of *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1961) just as Léaud would do for a television adaptation of the same literary work ten years later. Léaud and Brialy both appear in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and *L'Amour à la mer* (1962). Brialy's presence in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* presents an interesting juxtaposition between the adolescent Léaud and the slightly older Brialy, who was already beginning to emerge as a star of the period. The role played by Brialy assumes a superior masculine position to that of the adolescent and more fragile Léaud.

A victim of his own freedom, Antoine is equally writing his own fate without knowing it. His experiences are founded upon his own choices that he has the freedom to make which according to Allen Thiher follow a certain rhythm through which follows punishment then a "spree" - an active choice made by Antoine to counteract the

punishment he has undergone (Thiher 1979: 144). What is unfortunate for Antoine is the unpredictability of the outcome of these events that he has in fact written for himself. Much of the narrative is constructed around representations of divisions - masculinity and femininity, interior and exterior, authority and liberty, adulthood and childhood, truth and fiction, absence and presence. The dichotomy between Paris and the sea is portrayed through the contrast of urban locations of the city as against bleaker images of the detention centre and the sea. The connotations of *la mer/la mère* resonate as it is upon Madame Doinel's request that Antoine is sent to a detention centre close to the sea, something that he has never seen. This represents for Antoine an abstraction from the constraints of the city and the final freeze-frame of Antoine with the sea behind him indicates that perhaps at last he has finally found something of his own personal freedom. Yet there is equally a paradox in this sign. The sea is a maternal space that represents for Antoine the hope of finding his freedom but it is equally a barrier which renders the ending of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* somewhat ambiguous. Bob Baker described this image as the "whither will he whence" freeze-frame which carries the sub-text of "and whither the young Léaud" (Baker 1986: 3).

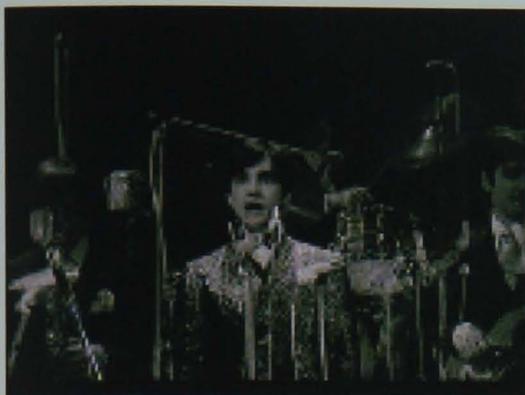
Le Beau Serge and *Les Cousins* go hand in hand, two films made by Chabrol only a few months apart with the same duo of Brialy and Blain in which they would both portray troubled masculinity. Brassart suggests the existence of homoerotic undertones in the relationship between Brialy as François and Blain as Serge in *Le Beau Serge*. This is portrayed more in the sense of dependency upon each other to come out the other side of their respective troubles as opposed to sexual relationships which appear to be negated (Brassart 2004: 309). Similarly in *Une Femme est une femme*, Émile's relationship with Angela is vital to them both as well as for Émile to cement his relationship with Angela. In this role, it is Belmondo's character who is ultimately rendered the more troubled through rejection. However, despite his being a prominent

figure of *la nouvelle vague*, Brialy was denied the same celebrity status attained by Belmondo and Delon during the same period. Brassart suggests that this resulted from the alternative representation of masculinity offered by Brialy's star image (Brassart 2004: 343). This dependency on a fellow male companion is present for some of Léaud's characters, most poignantly in Antoine's close friendship with René in *Les Quatre Cent Coups* but also for Alexandre and 'his friend' in *La Maman et la putain* and to an extent for Daniel and Dumas in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus*.

Stars can become points of resistance that reconcile ambiguities or contradictions. In an analysis of the star image of Léaud it is precisely such sites of conflict that need to be unpacked in order to establish how Léaud's star image is created and how the spectator perceives this star image by not fitting conventional notions of masculinity. Dyer suggests that we can consider stars in terms of types, and within this exist "alternative or subversive types" (Dyer 1979: 57). He cites Marlon Brando, James Dean and Montgomery Clift as examples. Morin too makes reference to Dean describing him as "une star parfaite" (Morin 1972: 145) - a god, a hero, a model. He also suggests that Dean was the first problematic star, embodying troubled youth in the post war era - "un nouveau type de héros, un nouveau type de star" (Morin 1972: 146). Dyer writes of both Clift and Dean that both were gay and "did something to launch a non-macho image of a man"¹⁰. Dirk Bogarde can also be seen in a similar vein whose star image also represented a non-macho male, raising ambiguous gender representations. As referenced above, Turim alludes to Dean in this sense when discussing Léaud as embodying a sense of youth and hence national identity in the post war era (Turim 1972/1973: 41). Brando, whilst his screen image was one of a macho male, also embodied a certain representation of youth like Dean. When he appears in *Last Tango in Paris*, Léaud alongside, we are still taken back to images of him in *Streetcar Named Desire* (1951), *The Wild One* (1953), and *On the Waterfront* (1954). However, in *Last Tango in Paris*, he is represented as a very different type to Léaud's

character. Paul is misogynistic, controlling and voyeuristic, whilst Léaud's character, Tom, the young film director, is the converse of this placed in a weaker position. Yet it is the Brando character that inhabits the role of the troubled male again pointing to masculinity in crisis. Tom, on the other hand, is placed in a role that instils comedy epitomised by the trademark Léaud manic declarations of love which culminate in a proposition of marriage not unlike a number of other Léaud character's (*Masculin-Féminin*, *L'Éducation sentimentale*, *La Maman et la putain*, *La Nuit américaine*, *Détective*, *Pour Rire !*) and it is Tom who is ultimately the one who is being cheated on. Tom as the director also, however, represents the voyeur through the very nature of gazing through the lens of the camera. Whilst there is an alternative/rebel type within the star image of Brando, there is equally something overpowering about his image in direct contrast to that of Léaud in this film and ultimately Jeanne does not marry Tom. The machismo and dominance associated with Paul stands against the troubled, weaker Léaud character and ultimately triumphs.

Comparisons can also be drawn with male stars that emerged in the British New Wave cinema which drew from *la nouvelle vague* as a source of inspiration. Tom Courtenay in *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (1962) and as a more comic yet equally rebellious character in *Billy Liar* (1963) and even the female star, Rita Tushingham, as Jo in *A Taste of Honey* (1961) came to represent a notion of disaffected youth. Similarly, Albert Finney in *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960) also came to represent a similar notion of youth although slightly more in keeping with the macho Belmondo image of *la nouvelle vague*, displaying a similar charm with women. However, Courtenay's characters are often seen as not male enough and somewhat hampered by this condition. Rather than fighting, they run and analogies can be drawn with many of Léaud's characters in this light. The emergence of pop-stars as a phenomenon of stardom also came to prominence in tandem with this 'kitchen sink' cinema widening the scope of popular culture aimed at the youth generation of the



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period. Léaud's role as a pop-star in *Dialóg 20-40-60* can be seen as a kind of parody of this phenomenon whilst also leading the viewer to question whether the image of Léaud in this role does actually present him as a star. People in the audience are seen in euphoric states, some of them holding pictures of

the star embodied by Léaud adding to a sense of displacement of pleasure in looking to desire on the part of the spectator and thus feeding into the star image presented on the stage.

Within *la nouvelle vague*, the idea of youth took on importance at this time, not merely as subject matter but more so in terms of the preoccupations and disenchantment of the young during the social and political climate of the Fifth Republic that accompanied the period of *la nouvelle vague*. As Keith Reader suggests, this preoccupation with youth was more to do with "the social, sexual and emotional problems of young adults" (Reader 1996: 260) as opposed to a mere concern with issues surrounding adolescence. What was perhaps significant about *la nouvelle vague* was the way the 'movement' crystallised a sort of mythology of its own history and in its immediacy it captured a sense of youth bound up within the political concerns of the period. Stars of this period were thus seen to personalise social meanings through embodying certain 'types', whether these be unproblematic idealised types or alternative types.

A crucial element to the construction of the star is identification on the part of the spectator. Although I have already alluded to this through the concept of interpellation, there is more to be said in terms of semiotics of the cinema and more precisely using psychoanalysis to study the creation of the star in relation to the spectator as cinematic subject. According to Christian Metz, stars form one of the elements of the signifying system of cinema. In semiotic terms, the signifying system

is based upon a set of differences and in psychoanalytic terms this is characterised by a sense of lack which feeds into a sense of desire on the spectator's part. The star is a cinematic sign that personalises meaning for the spectator. Through the process of identification with the star on screen the spectator is able to participate in this practice. Metz called this "secondary cinematic identification" (Metz 1975: 47) in which the spectator negotiates identification with characters on screen, following the primary identification of the projection of the film itself. Morin describes this projection-identification process as creating the star through the need of the spectator (Morin 1972: 91). Thus it is the duality of projection and identification that produces the star. The spectator is a film construct that drifts between the conscious and unconscious, between awareness of the fictional quality of film and acceptance of some kind of truth in the cinematic illusion. In terms of the star construct, Morin explains this in the following way:

"La star est immergée dans le miroir des rêves, et émergée à la réalité tangible." (Morin 1972: 91)

For Morin, it is in this way that the process of divinisation takes place, creating 'gods and goddesses'. For Jacques Lacan, this mirroring of the subject in the projection-identification process is constitutive of the 'imaginary' which he saw as stemming from entry into language which is essentially entry into the symbolic, the law of the father. It is this process that is required for entry into the social order. The 'mirror phase' is representative of the imaginary, in which the child establishes difference between itself and the world through identification of the other - of the mother. This realisation of the child's image forms the construction of the ideal ego. Thus the child negotiates a process of self-identification and the subject is thus constructed through entry into language. The third intervention is that of the father. The male child sees

itself as what the mother lacks, the phallus. However, he will submit to the law of the father for fear of castration by the father. This leads to the male child's renewed sense of lack and hence desire. For the female child, no ideal feminine identification is possible other than that of the phallic woman which is in effect a pre-Oedipal identification. Thus woman becomes a site of lack and of desire.

Transposing this into cinematic terms, the film screen is analogous to the mirror upon which the spectator projects his ideal ego and thus identifies with the character on screen. Thus the star participates in the dialectic between the imaginary and the real, absence and presence. In this way cinema plays on the unconscious of the individual constructing the film subject within the individual producing a sense of desire through the projection-identification process. The star becomes the site at which this desire is crystallised. This desire is further heightened through the illusion that what the spectator sees on screen is real, creating a presence of the star yet what is in effect absence - the imaginary signifier.

Identification also functions through the wider cultural and societal context which through the ideological function of the cinematic apparatus reinforces those societal norms. The spectator in recognising those norms comes to identify with such ideology. Thus the spectator is doubly implicated through bringing to the screen a certain set of values and beliefs and equally as witness to the performance on screen (Sorlin 1977: 136). In terms of the star, the spectator will negotiate the process of recognition in recognising traits within that character that reinforce a kind of ideology. In this way, a certain type can have such an ideological function. This also explains how dominant ideology has come to be accepted as the norm - the all masculine, macho hero who conquers evil and 'gets the girl' follows the traditional Oedipal trajectory ending in the formulation of the couple whereby the male star in conforming to societal norms and expectations reassures the spectator and reinforces those norms. What then for an actor like Léaud and in this light can he be considered a true star?

This illusion is extended beyond the spectator's experience of viewing the star on screen in that the star is itself a point at which life and art are blurred. Mayne describes this in the following way:

"The life imitates art (and vice versa) syndrome is a crucial component of the construction of star personae." (Mayne 1993: 135)

Whilst stars play their characters, they also bring themselves to the screen thus creating a blurring of the boundary between life and art, role and self, private and public. Thus the star becomes in a sense 'larger than life'. The 'gaze' becomes the focal point of the spectator's desire through which pleasure is derived, the star being the object of that gaze. The gaze is also central to Léaud's characters' manifestation of the mystification and adoration of women.

Mulvey argued that the gaze is essentially masculine and is active and powerful, whilst the position occupied by women is that of passive object of that gaze, positioning the woman as spectacle both for the spectator as well as other male characters on screen. This is often set up through camera angles, as Truffaut does through incessant focus on women's legs. Mulvey states that this male gaze reduces the female star to a submissive position. This therefore creates a complex dialectic between male voyeuristic gaze and fetishised female bodies. Mulvey talked of these being two distinct ways of looking from which the spectator derives pleasure from the cinema - voyeuristic and fetishistic. She cites as examples the films of Alfred Hitchcock as being inherently voyeuristic and those of Josef Von Sternberg as fetishistic by nature. This raises interesting contradictions between the male voyeuristic gaze of Léaud as against the many fetishised females he plays alongside. These women are seen as powerful and controlling against the androgynous figure of Léaud, whilst he exerts the male gaze upon the women around him. The troubled characters personified by Léaud are seen to

reinforce masculine ideals on one hand, assuming the patriarchal powerful position of male voyeur, whilst the empowered female image alongside serves to destabilise this very assertion of masculinity. Analogies can be drawn with the concept of voyeurism in Hitchcock's films, exemplified in *Psycho* (1960), *Rear Window* (1954) and *Vertigo* (1958) in which the very idea of being looked at places the holder of that gaze in a certain position of power. Yet ultimately relationships with women, who are powerful and often maternal figures serve to undermine the power invested in the gaze, destabilising conventional notions of masculinity. Cary Grant in *North by Northwest* (1958) provides an interesting comparison to the Doinel character in relation to failed Oedipal development and the destabilising force upon masculine values reflected in the character. Moreover, his is a star image also bound up with complexities surrounding gender representations.



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If the spectatorial gaze is inherently male, then how does this position the spectator in relation to the projection and identification of the ideal ego within the star image of L aud, or put more simply how is L aud's image perceived as a star in the eyes of the spectator? In *L'Affaire Marcorelle* and *Antoine et Colette*

(1961), L aud is seen in roles where he is in the very position of spectator and by extension, voyeur. The darkened auditorium of the cinema in both films or the Jeunesses Musicales de France auditorium in *Antoine et Colette* place these characters within the voyeuristic experience of the spectator whilst also playing upon their desires and fantasies. This equates to the desire that the cinema as signifying system plays upon the unconscious of the spectator. Placed in these positions, the dominance of this male gaze is challenged and often displaced. In *L'Affaire Marcorelle*, the cinema auditorium is a site of crisis rather than pleasure fuelling the character's anxieties. In *Antoine et Colette*, Antoine's desires are blatantly rebuffed rendering this environment

a site of rejection. This crisis of desire is replicated and further explored in the dream sequences in *L’Affaire Marcorelle* that renders Marcorelle almost incapable of distinguishing reality from illusion. This equally implicates the spectator by playing on the spectator’s own voyeuristic gaze who too is led to question wherein lie the boundaries between reality and illusion for Marcorelle. It is Fourcade who takes on the role of the ultimate voyeur. Marcorelle becomes the object being looked at which serves to further weaken his position as Fourcade uses the power implicated in his voyeuristic gaze to bring about Marcorelle’s downfall. This power of the look is transposed to that of the prison which in Foucauldian terms invokes the idea of panopticism in which power and knowledge is invested in the gaze¹¹. This is further concretised by Marcorelle’s eventual prison sentence. In *I Hired a Contract Killer*, Henri too becomes the object of the gaze as he is pursued by the killer whom he has ironically hired to kill him, whilst Henri exerts his own male gaze upon Margaret, another kind of ‘magic mother’.

In *Antoine et Colette*, Antoine’s infatuation with Colette is played out at the Jeunesses Musicales de France and can in itself be closely associated with the spectatorial gaze of the cinematic subject, only in this setting it is displaced from the performance on stage (rather than screen) to Colette also seated in the auditorium. A



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similar situation arises in the cinema when accompanied by Colette which only leads to her further rejection of his advances. Antoine’s exertion of the male gaze reaches its climax (if not anti-climax) when he moves into a rented room

opposite Colette’s family home from where he can play out his voyeuristic fantasies. Through her rejection, Antoine vicariously attempts to get closer through the family. Yet this only serves to infantilise him, further feminising his own position, whilst rendering Collette all the more ‘magic’. Antoine’s lack of maternal desire and failed

Oedipal development in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* translates into the adoration of 'magic women', of which Colette will be the first to become part of the '*club d'Antoine Doineau*'².

Whereas the voyeuristic gaze implies a sense of distance between the viewer and the viewed, the fetishistic mode of looking involves an active participation on the spectator's part thus cementing the active/passive dialectic of subject/object as male/female. Yet such fetishism of the female as object suggests ambiguities on the part of Léaud's characters who are in turn feminised by the presence of these women for often they are strong, powerful women, frequently representing the lack of maternal affection and thus embodying 'magic' mothers. In *La Maman et la putain*, Léaud in the role of Alexandre continues to display voyeuristic tendencies but extended to a more global sense of viewing the world around him as he inhabits the *flâneur* existence.

Yvonne Tasker suggests that in consideration of masculinity as spectacle what we are concerned with is rather a multiplicity of representations of masculinity as defined through the many layers of masculinity represented through popular culture rather than masculinity in a singular form (Tasker 1993: 110). Steve Neale also talks of the plurality of layers of identification possible for the spectator and through the spectator's own set of personal values, one is able to select appropriate levels of identification that are being paraded before the spectator. It is therefore problematic to consider the object of the look as purely feminine as the process of identification itself is essentially about desiring idealised images that can be equally masculine or feminine. This raises interesting questions in relation to the male body as spectacle. Other factors come into play that challenge this dominant powerful position of active male voyeur when also positioned as male body on display. Léaud's androgynous physique alone serves to feminise his image. Unlike the rugged, muscular look of Belmondo, or the outstanding beauty of Delon or the bulky macho stature of Depardieu, Léaud is somewhat effeminate looking, with a particularly slight stature.

This crisis in masculinity calls into question the credibility of Léaud as a star for the spectator, since his profile contradicts traditional values of masculinity despite his active male gaze brought to bear upon his passive female subjects and thus contradicting traditional ideological values of the male star for the spectator. If his characters and thus star persona do not exemplify conventional male values, how can the spectator through the projection-identification process recognise a star image in what is being presented before him or her on screen?

If we take the examples of Belmondo and Delon, they not only embody conventional masculine values but their bodies are also on display in many ways eroticised to a far greater extent than that of Léaud as discussed above. By applying Mulvey's analysis, this fact alone would serve to feminise their images yet, they have been readily accepted as macho male stars of the French cinema. A further process of feminisation can also be seen to take place in that their narcissistic tendencies constitute a feminising force. The ideal ego which through the projection-identification process presents the "screen surrogate" for the spectator (Mulvey 1975: 12) is in itself analogous to the threat of castration. This arises from the very fact that because it is ideal it is within the realm of the illusory and can never in reality be attained. Delon's character as Jef Costello in *Le Samouraï* is often seen before a mirror as if to affirm the power of his own beauty and pride in his own appearance. Similarly, Belmondo in *A bout de souffle* and Robert De Niro in *Taxi Driver* (1976) are seen to be seeking to affirm their sense of masculinity through self identification before a mirror. Whilst narcissism is all about mastery and control over the self and its projection on the external world, it is equally a feminising force as well as a manifest framing of individual desire. When in *La Maman et la putain* Véronika and Marie are seen applying make-up to Alexandre it is almost as if his self-absorbed narcissism is literally being thrown back in his face as he is further feminised by the situation. In *Le Samouraï*, whilst Delon uses his image as power, he follows a trajectory through which the character becomes

weakened and destabilised. Neale argues that this is brought about by the “double threat” posed by the presence of the black female singer as other (Neale 1983: 7). Yet the overriding element to the star image presented here is the celebration of narcissism. Neale argues that this is characterised by silence. However, for Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* this works in reverse as his verbosity is tantamount to the extremity of his self-absorption. However, for the Belmondo and Delon images, the props that serve to assert masculinity in the face of this anxiety (guns, fast cars) and the actions of the body in effect affirm these conventional masculine values that are simultaneously being threatened. Thus identification takes place for the spectator in the use of the body to assert masculinity rather than allowing it to be undermined by the feminising process of being on display.

Neale discusses Rock Hudson in the films of Douglas Sirk as exemplifying the male body on display in cinema. He follows Mulvey’s arguments in that he equates this eroticisation as a feminising force. However, Tasker criticises this as too sweeping a supposition (Tasker 1993: 115). Eroticisation is a feminising process, but one that works in conjunction with other gender constructions within the star image that can in fact render the male more macho - Belmondo, Delon and Depardieu displaying the body as beautiful yet powerful, asserting masculinity through their tools of power and authority, or rendered weak as for Léaud through manifestations of madness, adoration of women through manic reactions to rejection, his androgynous physique, his ‘intellectual’ props - literature, *Le Monde*, and indeed through creativity. Neale goes on to talk of the musical as being an inherently feminising domain for its male stars. Steven Cohan talked of representation of masculinity by the “song-and-dance-man” as problematic in terms of the active male/passive female dichotomy. This gave rise to a new perception of masculinity as displayed through the body, incorporating elements of the masculine and the feminine (Cohan 1993: 62). A feminising force can be seen from the display of the body, particularly in scenes where Léaud’s characters are seen

singing. Most poignant of all would be the role of the pop-star in *Dialóg 20-40-60*. On one hand this may be seen as a feminising sphere with the body on display in a creative capacity. Yet it also plays on the star quality of the actor himself ironically being placed in the role of a kind of star.

How can we then perceive a star image in Léaud? Looking at Vincendeau's explanation of what has made stars in French cinema, the principal factor she identifies is that of omnipresence. With a career spanning over forty-five years, having worked with some of the most influential French directors during that time such as Truffaut, Godard, Eustache, Léaud has held a certain presence within contemporary French cinema. Moreover, his body of work encompasses many films made with other European directors - Jerzy Skolimowski, Bernardo Bertolucci and Aki Kaurismäki further exporting the concept of youth and 'Frenchness' embodied by his characters to a wider audience. The American styled heroes epitomised by Belmondo and Delon can be seen as self-reflexive rather than exporting a certain image of French national identity. The stylisation of these characters was taken from the new modernity presented back to the French audience. On the other hand, Léaud's characters have been more concerned with representations of national identity in relation to youth which are reflected back upon society.

Whilst certain comparisons can be drawn between Léaud and Belmondo and Delon, Depardieu presents a more complex image. Whilst on first glance his star image would appear to be poles apart from that of Léaud, there are some interesting points in his star image that help qualify some aspects of Léaud's star quality. His known marginal and somewhat rough background has been reflected through some of his screen characters, notably Jean-Claude in *Les Valseuses*. The character is positioned as youth within the post-1968 climate in France. The clown like aspect to this character together with other comic roles he has inhabited present some similarities with the comic aspect to some of Léaud's characters as well as through representations of

disaffected youth. This film positioned Depardieu as an actor representative of the post-1968 era incorporating concerns that stemmed from this period in contemporary French history. Whilst very different to Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain*, both roles participate in the discussion of new sexual mores that came about at this time and thus both roles can be seen to be central to this concern of cinema of the time. Depardieu, like Belmondo and Delon also worked with Truffaut. In *Le Dernier Métro* (1980) he plays a somewhat troubled character also positioned against a strong powerful female, played by Catherine Deneuve, rendering him another of Truffaut's disenchanting males positioned against strong, powerful and magic women. Whilst he has also ventured into the mainstream, he has also held an affinity with auteur cinema. Although his star image is somewhat different to those of Belmondo and Delon, Depardieu has achieved a place within contemporary French cinema that places him as one of the most popular actors of his generation in France (Vincendeau 2000: 215). Yet he has not occupied the same realm of gangster films or thrillers as Belmondo and Delon have. He is perhaps most well-known for the many heritage films he has played in. Yet, he has also incarnated some homoerotic roles as in *Les Valseuses*, and *Tenue de soirée*, as well as firmly heterosexual roles creating a somewhat ambiguous star image in terms of gender representations. Whilst Léaud has not played any homosexual roles as such, the dandy side to his star persona epitomised in *La Maman et la putain* plays on ambiguities surrounding gender representations. If we add to this canon James Dean, Montgomery Clift and Cary Grant, we can also draw from their star images similarities that also encompassed troubled and gender conflicting roles.

One aspect of identification that Dyer refers to is that of consistency within a type that leads to recognition and identification on the part of the spectator:

"Because stars are always appearing in different stories and settings, they must stay broadly the same in order to permit recognition and identification." (Dyer 1979: 98)

This is one of the most significant aspects of Léaud's star image. The spectator has come to expect a certain type of role in Léaud's performances, the troubled fragile male, clumsy with women yet with an insatiable desire for female companionship coupled with wildly manic declarations about love and rejection.

THE STAR AS SIGNIFIER

Dyer goes on to identify various aspects of the construction of the character that in semiotic terms form signs of the character within the signifying system of film: audience foreknowledge, names, appearance, objective correlatives that establish the character's position in the world, speech of the character and others that reveal personality traits through the character and through others, gesture, action, structure of the character and finally *mise-en-scène* (Dyer 1979: 107). I would argue that in the case of Léaud, there are certain aspects of character that are singularly significant in the creation of his star image - speech, the mind, the body and movement, *décor* and environment. I will go on to examine these in turn.

Appearance is central to a consideration of Léaud as star in that there is a certain continuity that runs through almost all of his performances that serves to crystallise a certain image of the actor in the eyes of the spectator. He is almost always presented as well-dressed whether this being required of the occupation of the character or not. In *Pour Rire !* Nicolas's occupation does not form part of the narrative, yet he is always seen well-dressed throughout the film. In *I Hired a Contract Killer* even after losing his job, Henri's attire remains respectable presenting himself in a suit and tie in every environment or situation. Appearance takes on the utmost importance in *La Maman et la putain* in which this forms the essence of the character signifying Alexandre's narcissistic nature incarnating the dandy. Part of the appearance of the

dandy is endorsed by the props he uses which serve as a further level of signification. Books are integral to this - Balzac's *La Recherche de l'absolu* in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and *Le Lys dans la vallée* in *Baisers volés* or *Histoire des treize* in *Out 1* or otherwise *Le Monde* in *La Maman et la putain* which Alexandre uses to justify his existence as dandy and *flâneur*. Whilst in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus*, Daniel must take on the disguise of Father Christmas, this is rendered ironic by the fact that this is a means to an end so he can ultimately purchase the duffle coat he so desires.

One of the most important environments for Léaud's characters is that of Paris. In *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, the young Antoine grows up within the environment of central Paris. He is nurtured by Paris and yet he is also rejected by it. The bohemian microcosm of Saint Germain des Près stands as another character in *La Maman et la putain*. It is Alexandre's prop whilst it also props him up in defining his existence as a *flâneur*. In sharp contrast, the provincial town of Narbonne defines Daniel's existence as an outsider in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus*. Similarly the closed landscape of Chambéry in *L'Affaire Marcorelle* points to no means of escape that is paralleled by the prison where Marcorelle finds himself at the end of the film. Brothels and '*hôtels de passe*' feature as environments alluded to and sometimes frequented by a number of Léaud's characters - the opening scene of *Baisers volés* following Antoine as he is discharged from the army and again in *Domicile conjugal*, the closing scene of *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* in which the group chant in unison "Au bordel !" and in *Mon Homme* (1995). Further references are made to prostitutes in *L'Amour en fuite* (Colette), Véronika as the 'whore' in *La Maman et le putain*. (On this point it is interesting to note that Belmondo has often made passing references to prostitutes in interviews in an attempt to assert his heterosexuality and masculinity (Vincendeau 2000: 162)). All of these references point to environment and décor as having helped shape Léaud's characters and hold a certain continuity that establish a kind of sameness within his many characters.

Léaud's speech and gestures form an integral part of his star image. His unique expressiveness and body language are carried through his performance that again establish a sameness within his characters, contributing to audience recognition and expectation. His uniqueness in this sense is one way according to Dyer's formulation of 'types' that allows Léaud to transcend any such 'type' he may belong to and thus establish an individuality in his performance style. Together with this we may consider certain character traits and trademark gestures seen in Léaud's performances. His trademark stare is seen most prominently when he is seen returning the typewriter he has stolen together with René in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. He is often seen to anxiously flick his hair from his face whilst his speech is inflected with frenzied hand gestures. James Monaco describes this as punctuating his performance by slicing the air with hand gestures (Monaco 1976: 18). His movements are often athletic as in *Week-end*. He is often seen running in a frenzied manner. When Colette spots Antoine outside the law courts in *L'Amour en fuite* after having been granted a divorce, she remarks to herself how he has not changed. Whilst these are all constitutive elements of the performance style of the actor, it equally points to the person himself. The illusory quality of the film image plays with the spectator blurring a sense of reality and fiction within the spectator's identification with the actor on screen. Added to this are various aspects of performance that further blur this distinction. We are led to question to what extent is it mere performance or the actor manifesting his own trademarks and gestures on screen. Thus audience recognition and familiarity of such traits contribute further to the breakdown of the actor/character distinction. Furthermore, Léaud's known ability to improvise plays into this as the act of improvisation itself inherently requires displays of the person himself in order to personify the character. This would tie in with what Dyer terms transcendence and inflection (Dyer 1979: 99). Through both these processes Léaud not only falls within a certain mould of the 'alternative/subversive type' but inflects his exaggeration of this type as well as his own

individuality in order to transcend the 'type' towards being different in some way and thus individual. It is precisely this quality of Léaud's performance style that Serge Le Péron focuses upon in his documentary about Léaud symbolised by the title, *Léaud l'unique* (2001).

Dyer talks of the performance signs that contribute to the creation of the star image as facial expression, voice, gestures, posture and movement, explaining that "signification of a performance sign is determined by the multiple codes in relation to which it is situated, and also by its place in the totality of the film" (Dyer 1979: 136). Whilst Dyer discusses the different schools of thought on performance (Diderot/Coquelin as against Stanislavsky), and how the actor positions himself or herself in relation to the character, in order to consider Léaud's star persona it is perhaps more crucial to view this from the spectator's position. The signification of these performance signs is dependent on the narrative contexts they are placed in (Dyer 1979: 133) and hence the spectator is able to decode them.



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Dyer describes the face as "the window to the soul" (Dyer 1979: 134) implying that the use of close-ups absorbs the spectator in the emotions and concerns of the character. Morin also makes reference to the relationship between the face and the soul through close-ups as "de véritables coupes d'âme" (Morin 1972: 115).

Antoine's stare when he returns the typewriter he has stolen with René or the freeze-frame of Antoine staring directly into the camera in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* invites the spectator to empathise with his plight. In *La Nuit américaine*, when Alphonse is found at the go karting track, his stare, whilst invoking infantile behaviour, also draws the viewer into Alphonse's despair at Liliane leaving him for the stuntman. Paralleling the use of close-ups to open such a "window to the soul" is the use of narration which delves into the interiority of the character. Dyer identifies

this as one of the constitutive elements of character within a literary sense. Whilst this is not often seen in Léaud's performances, on the few occasions narration is used, the spectator is presented with an additional layer to the character. Claude's opening narration in *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent* is indicative of this whilst also pointing to other Léaud characters for whom documenting life and love is a necessity and part of the essence of these characters:

"Cette nuit j'ai revécu en détail notre histoire. J'en ferai un jour un livre. Muriel pense que le récit de nos difficultés pourrait servir à d'autres."

The use of narration also places the character in a privileged position within the narrative. Interiority plays a role for both actor and character. The interiority of the character draws the viewer further into the world of the character. Whilst interiority on the part of the actor allows for the soul of the character to be inhabited by the actor blurring the distinction between real and illusory.

The mirror scenes in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and *Baisers volés* call upon the viewer to participate in Antoine's own identification process. This also takes us back



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to the idea of the gaze and the question of who is looking at whom, whilst exposing a cross-section of the character's psyche before the spectator. The voice is the site at which Léaud's acting style is heightened. The mirror scene in *Baisers volés* exemplifies

Léaud's ability to project his voice at varying paces, with varying intensity serving to play on the absence/presence dialectic as Marc Chevré points out (Chevré 1983: 31), almost verging on the point of madness. The intensity that he reaches gives a strong sense of presence within the illusion of the reality of the character playing upon the shift between the real and the illusory that the spectator negotiates. Yet this scene also serves to separate the actor from the character drifting between the modes of absence and presence. Chevré describes Antoine as almost reaching a state of delirium through incessantly and repetitively chanting of his own name contrasted with those of Christine Darbon and Fabienne Tabard. He is stripped to his bare essence, questioning his very existence, as if desperately seeking to identify with his own self. The spectator is watching Antoine's image in the mirror, whilst he is staring at his own self. Thus in terms of the gaze, we question who is looking at whom. The scene is also very Lacanian by its very nature, illustrating an intensity of desire of a character both delirious and obsessive and playing upon the desire of the spectator. The scene is essentially constructed by words yet animated by Léaud's unique style. The scene also questions the idea of existence. Chevré uses this scene as an example to illustrate how Léaud tends towards abstraction in his acting style. He does not play pre-existing characters but is able to invent them. This scene also illustrates the interaction between the voice and body through speech and gestures, as for Léaud they are inherently linked. The voice is often dependent on the body and vice versa. Thus for Chevré words and gestures hold equal importance in Léaud's performance style as one complements the other (Chevré 1983: 31). Mathieu Amalric and Irène Jacob who both play alongside Léaud in *L'Affaire Marcorelle* both described Léaud's performance style as focusing very much on the mind¹³. Amalric equates this to playing with "l'imaginaire collectif", invoking a sense of desire on the part of the spectator as well as the interaction between Léaud and other actors/characters alongside him.

The voice as performance tool also stands out conversely through silent

performances. Jacques Richard's *Rebelote* (1982) is interesting in this context as it is done in the very style of the silent cinema and therefore the expressiveness of the character is carried through gestures and movement alone as opposed to spoken dialogue. The style of silent cinema is also evoked in *Le Départ* and *Rebelote* (1982) and within the narrative of *Irma Vep* and in *Une Aventure de Billy le Kid* (1971), much of the film is in fact silent. Chevrie suggests that Léaud's acting style is close to that of mime and hence gestures form the integral part of his acting style as exemplified in *Out 1* (Chevrie 1983: 31) in which initially the only means of communication is by the written word and his mouth organ which he plays - leaving notes in cafés encouraging people to give him money whilst we are led to believe that Colin is deaf and mute. When we subsequently learn that he is not deaf and mute through a telephone conversation with his parents this illusion is broken and we see Léaud inhabit the character through more commonly recognised traits and gestures as well as a certain kind of verbosity that the spectator has come to associate with the actor and similarly in *Domicile conjugal* Antoine and Kyoko are almost reduced to sign language through the



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impossibility of comprehensible verbal communication. Silence is contrasted with verbosity. These elements to Léaud's style evoke a kind of 'cinéma de regard' exemplified further in *La Maman et la putain*. The Léaud character will often use some kind of prop as a substitute which serves as a sign for

his communication in a kind of extension of the body. Often this will be the telephone as in Antoine's celebrated description of Fabienne Tabard in *Baisers volés*, his repeated phone calls to Christine in *Domicile conjugal*, the telephone call that leads to the puzzle of Sabine in *L'Amour en fuite*, the manic sung declaration of love in *Week-end* or the hasty telephone call made by Alexandre to relate the 'lost tampon' story to his friend in *La Maman et la putain*. Chevrie describes the role of the telephone as holding a

privileged position for Léaud in his acting style:

“Par le geste, la parole envahit le corps, et le personnage l’acteur, en une dialectique dont le téléphone est le lieu privilégié.” (Chevrie 1983: 31)

Ironically, Henri in *I Hired a Contract Killer* does not possess a telephone placing him further beyond the realms of communication and therefore all the more marginalised. At one point he explains to Margaret, “I’m not used to talking,” pointing to this dichotomy of the unspoken as against such verbosity exemplified in *La Maman et la putain*. It is equally a reversal of environments. In London, Henri is alien, a foreigner, an outsider. In *La Maman et la putain*, Alexandre is at home on his own ground in the cafés of Saint Germain des Près, although he remains a kind of outsider on the inside. Henri is most obviously seen as an outsider through the need to communicate in a foreign language. Whilst in this film, this aspect to the character contributes to his plight, in the Doinel cycle the references to the mastery of English as a foreign language possess a deeper resonance. In *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, the authoritarian English teacher, ‘Petite Feuille’ uses the phrase “Where is the father?” which has further connotations of the absence of Antoine’s unknown real father in his life and thus lack of such a reassuring father figure for him. In *Baisers volés*, Antoine is mesmerised by Fabienne Tabard’s apparent mastery over the English language. Through his fascination for her, his attempts to improve his own English are for him an attempt to get closer to her, also reminiscent of the mirror scene in the repetitive nature of his monologue. In *Domicile conjugal*, Antoine’s boss, Monsieur Max, demands the employment of English as his working language which he comically displays as being very stilted and restricted to certain phrases, poignant perhaps for Antoine at least:

Monsieur Max: Do you read American newspapers?

Antoine: I prefer poetry to prose.

Léaud was also required to perform in English in parts of *Irma Vep*. This film also plays on the dichotomy between verbosity and silence within Léaud's performance style. The idea of the silent cinema of Louis Feuillade that is being replicated in the film within the film is also transposed onto Léaud's character, the director René Vidal, as he is silenced out of his direction of the film. This idea within Léaud's own performances is paralleled when René tells Maggie, "It is not because it's silent that you must try to play more. You must play less. You must respect the silence." Therefore, despite the 'parole' being at the heart of Léaud's performance style, his expressiveness is also reminiscent of the silent cinema. His gestures, the relationship between the body and the mind and in particular his classic stare hark back to the silent cinema, all of which are reproduced in *Irma Vep* in particular.

In *Pour Rire !*, Alice's alienation of Nicolas and his subsequent realisation of her infidelity lead him to seek to enter the lives of Alice and her lover, Gaspard. When this finally comes to a head on being invited to dinner by Gaspard with Alice, on her recognition of the ensuing situation she refuses to allow him into Gaspard's apartment. Nicolas' response is to deliriously call out Alice's name repetitively outside the apartment which, when it reaches its peak, Nicolas is silenced by a bucket of water thrown over him followed by subsequent arrest. In this scene, Léaud reaches his peak in heightened verbal expression. This is also reminiscent of the heightened performance style seen in Léaud's performance in *Le Départ*. Léaud himself has alluded to this intense expressiveness present in his work by contrasting his acting styles in the work of Truffaut to that of Skolimowski¹⁴.

Despite the initial absence of verbal communication in the first two episodes of *Out 1* (1970), one scene in particular stands out as exemplifying the unique style of Léaud. Walking in the street he gives life to the words of Lewis Carroll's "The Hunting of



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the Snark" in a particularly animated style. L aud displays a particular expressiveness in delivering this speech which again plays within the absence/presence dialectic as well as invoking the improvisational element to his acting style.

Similarly, when Colin is seen in 'mute' conversation with his neighbour, his body language is replete with gestures and signs in response to the neighbour's questions.

L aud has himself talked of pure improvisation as being placed in a position where he has to find and establish his own dialogues together with movements and gestures, particularly when the actor is placed in the position where he is unaware as to what has gone before and what is to come after (Maraval 1976: 26). In *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, in the reform school where Antoine has been sent, in the scene in which Antoine is being interviewed by a psychologist, Truffaut wanted the responses to come from L aud himself and asked him to improvise this scene. In response to one particular question put to him he was able to fabricate a most articulate as well as telling reply:



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Psychologist: As-tu d ej  couch  avec une fille?

Antoine: Non, non jamais, mais enfin je connais des copains qui sont all s... ils m'avaient dit : "Si t'as vachement envie, t'as qu'  aller   rue Saint-Denis, l  il y a des filles." Alors, moi, j'y suis all  et puis... j'ai demand    des filles et je me suis fait vachement

engueuler, alors j'ai eu la trouille et puis je suis parti. Puis je suis revenu encore plusieurs fois. Puis alors, comme j'attendais dans la rue, il y a un type qui m'a remarqu . Il a dit : "Qu'est-ce que tu fous l  ?" C' tait un Nord-Africain. Alors, je lui ai

expliqué, alors il m'a dit... Il connaissait sans doute des filles parce qu'il m'a dit : "Moi, j'en connais une qui va avec des jeunes gens, tout ça." Il m'a emmené à l'hôtel où elle était et justement ce jour-là elle y était pas, alors, on a attendu une heure, deux heures, puis comme elle venait pas, moi je me suis tiré.

He displays a remarkable ability to improvise in the purest form in the way he himself describes the technique of improvisation as cited above. Truffaut gave Léaud a few indications about this scene a month prior to filming, with the principal objective that it was to be the best scene in the film. Truffaut wanted Léaud's own vocabulary to make the scene.

Improvisation reaches its peak in Garrel's *La Concentration* in which the text was entirely invented. Léaud has talked of how the filming was done in one shot of forty-eight hours in which the text was constituted through pure improvisation which also meant invented meaning of that text (Dawson 1973/1974: 47). Léaud has also talked about the differing degrees of improvisation that take place when he inhabits a role, with particular reference to *La Maman et la putain* which was scripted so precisely that it in fact gives the illusion of improvisation (Maraval 1976: 26). Yet even within a script of this nature, Léaud talks of a kind of improvisation as having to give life to those words and hence he sees the process of acting as essentially requiring improvisation. This again focuses on the boundaries between actor and character. Although the character is established through the script and narrative, the actor's presence in that role inherently implies a confusion between the real and the imaginary, the actor and the character. Françoise Lebrun who plays alongside Léaud in *La Maman et la putain* said of Léaud's acting style that he performs somewhere between presence and absence, somewhere between here and elsewhere. He functions as the intermediary between the virtual and the real (Chevrie 1983: 32). Rather than exposing the character, he plays on the character's 'absence', he personifies this absence within

himself and the role and thus is able to incarnate the character. This dialectic between absence and presence, real and virtual, reality and hallucination are central aspects to Léaud's acting style, that help us to understand the star as character, whilst also playing on the real/illusory dialectic for the spectator. Morin states that it is such participation in the dialectic between the imaginary and the real that creates an idea of myth within the actor and thus shapes both the industry and the spectator. Morin explains the breakdown of the actor/character distinction by the fact that "le cinéma exalte les personnages en même temps qu'il détruit l'acteur" (Morin 1972: 112).

Turim says Léaud creates "word pictures, a visual language in perfect harmony with the words he speaks" (Turim 1972/1973: 46). Monaco said on meeting him in person to interview him:

"...when he talks, his arms move with the awkward but communicative gestures that punctuate his films, his hands describing intricate patterns in this air, the blank, Keaton-esque pan that is his face breaking into grins of recognition when he discovers a particularly "bon mot" thus implying that these traits and gestures are commonly recognised both in the actor and the characters he has played again confusing the distinction between life and art." (Monaco 1976: 18)

Movement forms a further extension of this body language. What is characteristic about Léaud's style is the sudden and frenzied movements that accompany his rich, spoken vocabulary that add a further dimension to the character. He is often seen running - Antoine with René in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* as they inhabit the streets of Paris in their truanting, Antoine in *L'Amour en fuite* in which running represents his numerous attempts to resolve the puzzle of his life, the opening scene of *Le Départ* sees Léaud frantically running before stopping at a phone booth thus setting up something of the character from the outset using recognised traits of the actor. The use

of cars is a further extension of this idea of movement which serve as a signifying element within the narrative. Cars are the focus of *Le Départ* in which Marc is an aspiring racing car driver. In some instances cars are used within the process of voyeuristic activity in *La Maman et la putain* and in *Pour Rire !* In *La Nuit américaine* the go kart functions as an assertion of masculinity in the face of crisis.

A further element of movement which can also be seen as incorporating gestures are the fighting scenes Léaud's characters are sometimes seen in. These characters are often placed in respectable positions of authority - *L'Affaire Marcorelle* when Marcorelle ends up fighting an immigration officer and in *Les Keufs* when, as a chief police inspector, Bouvreuril finds himself in a similar situation. *Le Départ* also sees Marc caught up in fighting scenes further adding to the comedy aspect of the character rather than asserting any kind of machismo, rendering the hero both comic and tragic simultaneously. In *Week-end*, the man in the phone booth played by Léaud displays a manic character who is also caught within a fight scene. However, it is merely mime rendering his performance all the more ironic. In *Léaud l'unique*, he talks of movement as an integral aspect to his performances and the interaction of the body with his words. He talks in particular of a scene in *L'Affaire Marcorelle* in which he has a long monologue trying to describe to his friend, Georges, his confusion over reality and illusion. This binary opposition between reality and illusion is reflected through the body and the mind. In discussing this scene, he alludes to the filming of *Grandeur et décadence d'un petit commerçant du cinéma* (1986) in which Godard had said "J'aime bien quand tu cherches." This is a crucial element to Léaud's acting style that extends movement and language to environment. This idea also lends itself to the concept of the *flâneur* which I will consider in more detail in chapter four.



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STARS - THE LIFE AS ART DICHOTOMY



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This blurring of life and art reaches a peak in *La Nuit américaine*. It is a kind of documentary fiction in which Truffaut plays the director and Léaud plays the actor. The spectator is presented with the fiction within the film, the reality within the film, and the reality of characters within the film. Scenes which

see Alphonse together with Ferrand parallel the Doinel-Léaud-Truffaut construction. They can be seen as a reflection of the life of the actor and character simultaneously. In the documentary, *François Truffaut, The Man Who Loved Cinema* (1996), Nathalie Baye talks about her involvement in the film in which she says she often did not distinguish between life and the film or the film within the film. Various points of intertextuality present in the film also serve to blur the distinction further⁹. When Liliane tells Julie that she is leaving Alphonse for the stuntman, she alludes to Antoine's troubled childhood in *Les quatre cents coups* saying that he cannot make everyone else pay for his troubled childhood. Alphonse himself alludes to the breakdown of the distinction when he says to Julie, "La vie est plus importante que le cinéma." Léaud himself has alluded to the crisis of identity this character caused for him (Maraval 1976:

27) blurring for his own sense of reality and fiction. The name of the character can also be seen as intertextual in that Alphonse is the name of Antoine's son in the Doinel cycle. If we recall the naming formality in *Domicile conjugal* we are reminded of Antoine's egotistical behaviour, knowingly registering the name of Alphonse against the wishes of Christine. By drawing these two parallels, we are drawn towards the self-centred nature of the character of both Antoine in the Doinel cycle and Alphonse in *La Nuit américaine*.

Coupled with these elements to the star's screen persona is the off-screen persona. In a consideration of Léaud's off-screen persona, we recall his political involvement in the events of May 1968 which I will go on to discuss further in chapter three. This has been epitomised in Bertolucci's *The Dreamers*, moreover since he is in fact playing himself as he is today juxtaposed against archive footage of himself from the period. His off-screen image also appears to be somewhat troubled in that he is known to have been profoundly affected by Truffaut's death, troubled both in life as well as his art. Known to be reluctant to give interviews, he spoke for the first time since Truffaut's death about the profound effect that the Doinel-Truffaut relationship had upon him in a recent interview with Antoine de Baecque and Didier Péron¹⁵. Awarded an honorary César in 2000, on reception of the award ironically he gives the appearance that he has scripted this 'performance' and does in fact read his acceptance speech rather than improvise as one might expect from his known propensity for improvisation in his screen performances. He does not detract from this prepared 'script' except for a short smile when on receiving the award he says that it is not a bad way to start the year 2000!

The star image is itself one of the signifying elements of film, so what does the star image of Léaud signify? In *Léaud l'unique*, André S. Labarthe describes Léaud as a sign in himself, which he likens to a Chinese character - the visual is first observed and the meaning then follows, as if something to decipher. Rather than signifying a

dominant ideology, this signifies various contradictions present in this male star image - reversal of gender roles, rejection of the conventional gender role of strong, masculine, idealised male in favour of Dyer's alternative or subversive types - troubled, disenchanted males through failed Oedipal development and non-conformity with the traditional Oedipal trajectory.

Monaco describes the Léaud persona as "well-suited to the seventies" (Monaco 1976: 17). Whilst Léaud's work with Godard saw him embody politically motivated characters, acting as a mouthpiece for Godard's own political sensibilities, he has also captured the emerging political sensibility of youth and the nation in 1960s France which shifted further in the post-1968 era. Léaud's political involvement at this time must be acknowledged in order to read into these politically motivated characters. Léaud's involvement in the filmmakers' protest seen in archive footage from 1968 where Léaud is seen reading from a text in support of the Comité de la défense d'Henri Langlois was also used in *The Dreamers*. The very fact that he is seen playing himself in this role points to the confusion between actor and character for the spectator and thus a certain perspective of the star image is seen to emerge. These political concerns shifted in the post-1968 era. The concerns of this youth generation in the 1960s lead to explorations of the emerging thirty-something generation epitomised in *La Maman et la putain*. The role of Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* embodies this in its explorations and celebration of new sexual mores of the post-1968 era, a period that was marked by disillusionment with authority, the state and institutions which led to a need to rethink politics and culture in an intellectual framework.

Monaco also alludes to the breakdown of the distinction between life and art most poignantly expressed in *La Nuit américaine*. He suggests that the exploration of an actor as a person is critical to understanding the screen persona of an individual. For Léaud this is particularly interesting given the fact that he grew up on screen and thus the spectator has been placed in the position of observing his progression from

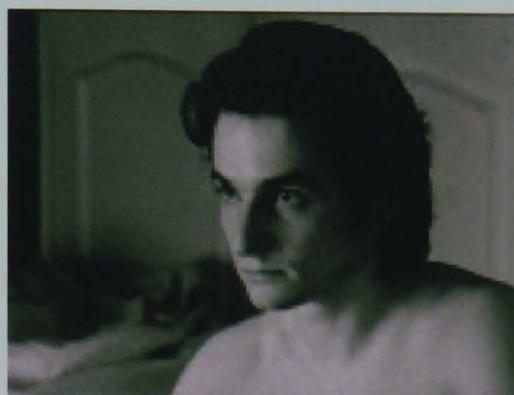
childhood into maturity on screen. We see a development in his characters and roles as well as the actor himself. Monaco describes Léaud and his active collaboration with the filmmakers he has worked with as “conscientiously and regularly illustrating our own deeper selves, subjectively holding the analytical mirror up to our own natures” (Monaco 1976: 20). It is precisely through such identification that the audience is drawn into the character’s world and thus the star is able to project his persona upon the audience in a kind of framing of both the character and the spectator. Thus we may question wherein lies the boundary between persona and person for the spectator within the star image. This question is integral to understanding the construction of the screen star.

Certain qualities in Léaud’s screen persona affirm and contradict the idea of the star within the actor. If we are to assume that Léaud’s characters fit Dyer’s alternative or subversive type, we must also account for the ambiguities which his presence on screen presents. Youth, sexuality and politics are central themes within the roles that Léaud has incarnated. Whilst the concept of youth was a central theme in Léaud’s performances during the years of *la nouvelle vague*, Léaud’s own transition from childhood into adolescence and adulthood on and off the screen must be taken into account. Whilst one can simply analyse the relationship between Truffaut and Léaud and the considerable influence he had upon the young actor, it is also important to examine Léaud’s relationships with the other directors he worked with. He once said, “Truffaut is my father, Godard is my uncle, and Henri Langlois is my grandfather” (Monaco 1976: 19) and together with his assertion that he was raised by the *Cahiers* critics during his formative adolescent years, his career was founded within the context of a wider parentage within the French cinema world. Léaud himself recognised the problematic issues surrounding the Doinel character in that he was marked by this character from such an early age which fed into a blurring of the identities of the both actor and character. Whilst Léaud has recognised the profound influence Truffaut had

upon him from this early age, Léaud has also acknowledged the considerable influence of Eustache and thus he was able to incarnate Eustache too through the character of Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain*.



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As comparatively little has been written on Léaud and given the fact that he is often reluctant to give interviews, it is therefore necessary to look deeper into the characters Léaud has incarnated and his own acting style in order to delve deeper into the Léaud persona. This raises interesting issues into the distinctions between the public and private spheres surrounding Léaud's persona, a question of whether life can be seen to imitate art. Through Léaud's performance style, acting through absence and presence he is able to give life to his characters. He is constantly playing between the abstract and being, between reality and fiction, between the functional and the delirious. His visual language heightens his screen presence – his stare, the way he anxiously flicks his hair from his face, his sudden frenzied movements, the way his hands cut through the air as if it were his hands speaking. In a recent article on *Le Pornographe*, director, Bertrand Bonello talked of his choice of Léaud for this film:

"...ça m'a paru évident qu'il devait le faire. J'ai une certaine prévention contre les acteurs de sa génération qui ont une grande technique mais peuvent être très froids. Lui, il est bouleversant à chaque prise. Le moindre incident est récupéré au profit du jeu et du film. Qu'il se prenne les pieds dans le tapis ou fasse tomber un accessoire, c'est

génial. Léaud est un comédien complet, à la fois expressionniste et bressonien. J'ai juste veillé à mettre en face de lui des gens qui ait une forte personnalité, le charisme de Léaud est tel qu'il bouffe complètement la scène..."¹⁶

Bob Baker claims that Jean-Pierre Léaud's on-screen presence is defined by the fact that despite his traits and gestures, words and movements, he never dominates the audience. This, he adds, is something which works with Truffaut's films as it is a concept inherently linked to the characters he plays. I would argue that this is indeed the case in much of Léaud's work. Baker claims that this idea is called into question by Léaud's role as a film star in *La Nuit américaine*, pointing to the central contradiction and confusion surrounding the character/actor/star relationship:

"The only role in the canon about which one has reservations is in *La Nuit américaine*, where he seems impossibly lightweight to ring true as a film star – until one reflects that that's just what he is." (Baker 1986: 4)

¹ Inspired by Honoré de Balzac's *Histoire des treize* and Lewis Carroll's "The Hunting of the Snark", Colin seeks to unravel a conspiracy

² Léaud was criticised for playing firmly Doinelian roles even outside of the work he did for Truffaut. The failure of *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent* and *L'Éducation sentimentale* were put down to this factor (Dawson 1973/1974: 47) as well as a troubled personal life at the time (de Baecque and Toubiana 1996: 435)

³ Screen tests for *Les Quatre Cents Coups* in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge le Péron, 2001) [also featured on *Les Quatre Cents Coups* DVD]

⁴ Jacqueline Rose, *Sexuality in the Field of Vision* [Verso, London 1986: 5]

⁵ Serge Le Péron, "Pourquoi Jean-Pierre Léaud est-il un acteur d'aujourd'hui" [*Télérama*, no. 2805, 15th October 2003]

⁶ Antoine de Baecque and Didier Péron, "Léaud, retour à Doinel" [*Libération*, 31st August 2001]

⁷ Martin O' Shaughnessy, "Jean-Paul Belmondo: Masculinity, Violence and the Outsider" in R. Gunther and J. Windebank (eds), *Violence and Conflict in Modern French Culture* [Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield 1994]

⁸ Interview with Jean-Luc Godard in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001)

⁹ The Tati/Hulot relationship can also be seen to parallel the Léaud/Doinel construction in that they became for the spectator almost interchangeable, Tati also coming from the comic tradition. Interestingly, Tati expressed his intentions to make a film in which he would kill off the character of Monsieur Hulot although he never did realise this project

¹⁰ Jack Babuscio, "Screen Gays" [*Gay News*, no. 79] (James Dean) and [*Gay News*, no. 104] (Montgomery Clift)

¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* [Vintage Books, New York 1977]

¹² Spoken by Colette in *L'Amour en fuite* (François Truffaut, 1978)

¹³ Interviews with Mathieu Amalric and Irène Jacob in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001)

¹⁴ Seen in archive footage in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001)

¹⁵ Antoine de Baecque and Didier Péron, "Léaud, retour à Doinel" [*Libération*, 31st August 2001]

¹⁶ Didier Péron, "Jean-Pierre Léaud, Acteur hors de prise" [*Libération*, 5th July 2000]

CHAPTER 2

THE DOINEL CYCLE: WHERE IS THE FATHER?

SURROGATE PATERNITY: BAZIN - TRUFFAUT - LÉAUD - DOINEL

In a special edition of *Cahiers du cinéma* devoted to François Truffaut, following his untimely death on 21st October 1984, Jean-Pierre Léaud wrote a very short dedication, but one that sums up the unique relationship he shared with Truffaut:

“Je dois tout à François. Non seulement il me communiqua son amour pour le cinéma : mais il me donna le plus beau métier du monde, il fit de moi un acteur. Aujourd’hui l’acteur préfère se taire pour laisser vivre et parler sur l’écran les personnages d’Antoine et d’Alphonse. J’ajouterai que François est l’homme que j’aimais le plus au monde, comme il disait de son ami, André Bazin.” (Léaud 1984: 40)

In the same way that Truffaut was saved by André Bazin, so too was Léaud saved by Truffaut. In the close relationship that was to develop between actor and director, Truffaut became for Léaud what Bazin had become for the young Truffaut. Bazin became an adoptive father for Truffaut, introducing him into the cinematic world and into a cinephilic family. Together with his wife, Janine, they offered the young Truffaut an alternative family environment. This cinephilic family also included the other young *Cahiers* critics and *nouvelle vague* directors, Claude Chabrol, Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette and Eric Rohmer amongst others. Bazin was by this time a highly regarded and influential figure within the world of cinema and was able to nurture and channel Truffaut’s passionate love of the cinema in a positive course. Through the relationship Léaud developed with Truffaut so too was he to find himself at the heart of this milieu. On meeting Léaud, he talked of this family and its educative influence upon him both as

an adolescent in his formative years and as a young actor entering the world of cinema and how he feels very much indebted to this family for the education they gave him. Through the education he received from this extended family Léaud too became an avid cinephile just as Truffaut had discovered the cinema in his adolescent years.

Truffaut's pre-directing years were characterised by on one hand his love of the cinema and his involvement with this cinephilic family, and on the other hand volatility and instability, joining the army on a whim, deserting twice and requiring Bazin to bail him out. Truffaut was later to admit that the cinema had in this way saved him:

"J'aurais à peine l'impression d'exagérer que le cinéma m'a sauvé la vie." (Gillain 1988: 19)

Bazin drew Truffaut further into the cinematic world by bringing him into the domain of the *Cahiers du cinéma*, the first major film journal of its kind, elevating the status of cinema to a true art form. Bazin's influence helped establish a climate of critical appraisal of the cinematic medium and his ethics and enthusiasm for cinema were readily adopted by Truffaut and the *Cahiers* provided the ideal platform from which to voice this aesthetic. This young cinephile was soon to turn cineaste, making his first feature film, *Les quatre cents coups* (1959) which also saw the birth of a long lasting relationship with the young Léaud. Bazin therefore not only played the role of adoptive father but also became an important figure in establishing Truffaut's career from the outset. Similarly, in casting Léaud in the role of Doinel, Truffaut also drew Léaud into the cinematic world albeit on the other side of the screen.

Léaud has acknowledged Truffaut's influence upon him as a kind of father figure that was to steer him on a positive course. In an interview with Antoine de Baecque and Didier Péron in 2001 Léaud talked openly about Doinel and Truffaut for the first time since Truffaut's death, as he also did upon his meeting with me. He points directly to

this paternal relationship when asked about the effect the release of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* in 1959 had upon him:

"...François m'a recueilli, m'a pris chez lui, m'a orienté. Une paternité s'est construite à ce moment-là."¹

Through this line of descent from Bazin to Truffaut to Léaud and Doinel, Léaud's experiences as an adolescent and young adult can be seen to mirror those of Truffaut himself and it is something of a twist of fate that Bazin died on the first day of filming of *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. Truffaut dedicated the film to Bazin thus bringing together this four way relationship. This was the point at which Doinel came to life on screen and the character of Doinel became the meeting point of this lineage. Just as Truffaut was orphaned at this point, so too would Léaud become orphaned by his adoptive father.

TRUFFAUT - LÉAUD - DOINEL: AUTOBIOGRAPHY OR LÉAUD'S SCRIPT?

Much work on Truffaut and Léaud has focused on the similarities between the actor and the director and it is clear that this was something remarkable about their unique relationship which gave rise to a certain confusion between the actor, the character of Doinel and the director, creating an alter-ego image of Léaud in relation to Truffaut. The fact that they physically grew to resemble each other as Léaud himself progressed into adulthood only cemented this confusion. However, as Jacques Siclier points out, this element of Léaud's star image is merely anecdotal:

"On a beaucoup dit, autrefois que le film *Les Quatre Cents Coups* était en partie biographique, on s'est plu à souligner la ressemblance existant entre Léaud et le cinéaste, mais tout cela ne relève plus que l'anecdote."²

Claude Jade described their association both professionally and as friends as “un jeu de miroirs troublants” (Jade 2004: 246) in her recent autobiography which also reflects the framing/autocritique side to both actor and director. However, it was not merely a physical resemblance that gave rise to this confusion. Doinel became a construction of both Léaud and Truffaut and this combination allowed the character of Doinel to take shape. Truffaut has often described the Doinel character as a “synthèse” of both Léaud and himself³. Equally, Léaud described Doinel as being the character that unites both Truffaut and Léaud⁴. He is their common ground and is constituted by them both. Thus Doinel does not exist alone. Moreover, the Doinel character is fictional and is the meeting point of actor and director within the realm of the illusory for the spectator. By analysing Léaud’s performances in the Doinel cycle, I wish to refocus these films away from the alter-ego construction to an analysis of Léaud as actor and auteur through his incarnation of the mythic character of Antoine Doinel.

If the Doinel cycle is a reflection of Truffaut’s own personal expression and sensibilities, it is equally the development of a fictitious character and progression of Doinel’s narrative from adolescence into adulthood, married life, parenthood and published author. Whilst Truffaut drew upon the autobiographical element in his work, particularly in the Doinel cycle, it was Léaud who in effect brought the character to life through his interpretation of the Doinel character by his own forms of expression. The style of *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, one of the first films of *la nouvelle vague*, is in keeping with the essence of the *nouvelle vague* ethics - a kind of documentary fiction in the way it was shot and the way the narrative develops. Truffaut himself described the character of Doinel as a documentary character whilst on the other hand he has referred to Léaud as an anti-documentary kind of actor (Truffaut 1987: 206) which also plays on the reality/illusion dialectic for the spectator. Seeing the director as author further concretises this association, thus the idea of autobiography in this sense places

the director firmly as auteur. However, both actor and director are part of this association, which both Truffaut and Léaud have acknowledged. Thus the notion of biography cannot stand alone in the construction of this character. The autobiographical element does not merely construct a correlation between Truffaut, the man and his films. The significance of Truffaut's work lies in the way in which he makes sense of our existence within society through the cinematic apparatus - the relationship between social context and the historicity that is brought into his narratives which is then projected upon the spectator. He uses cinema in this way as a medium to bring together his text and narrative with the spectator's position. Although the Doinel character made representations of the young Truffaut in various ways, Doinel's script was constituted by the character Truffaut wanted to create. Placed between the narrative and the spectator is the actor, the intermediary that functions to draw the spectator into this cinematic fantasy. This cinematic apparatus is thus the point of intersection between actor, director and spectator and it is here where the role of the star takes on importance. As Edgar Morin states, the cinema serves to destroy the actor whilst simultaneously exalting the character (Morin 1972: 112) which explains to some extent the confusion surrounding actor and character but equally the confusion between director and actor. Whilst Truffaut stated that some of the experiences of Antoine in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* were episodes he himself had lived, he also claimed that this was not an autobiographical work in writing "Je n'ai pas écrit ma biographie en 400 coups"⁵. Truffaut's work as an expression of the autobiographical needs to be placed in the wider sociological context of *la nouvelle vague* that focused on the personal expression of the director within the character, brought to life by the actor. If we look more closely at Léaud as the focal point, we can equally see the film as the birth of the career of this actor, and in the course of the rest of the Doinel films a trajectory of his career with Truffaut through the development of this mythic character at various points in his life. Autobiography comes into play as subject in line with Serge

Doubrovsky's notion of '*autofiction*' which relates to the discourse of the narrating subject and the narrated self (Doubrovsky 1998: 69). Autobiography implies by definition a literary written work as well as implicating the mirror through self-recognition. This takes on board the literary quality to Truffaut's films and in particular the Doinel series. Yet it also goes some way further towards the creation of an '*autofiction*'. Through the translation of personal experiences into an autoportrait, a certain fiction is created. Truffaut himself said that the films he likes most are those that resemble books or real experiences in a biographical sense⁶.

The character Truffaut created that Léaud breathed life into was to become an iconic figure in French cinema. By using the same actor to incarnate this character at various points in the adolescent and adult lives of both the character and the actor, Truffaut allowed the actor and character to grow in tandem with each other through the medium of the screen, being the adoptive father of them both. The myth of the Doinel character comes into being in *L'Amour en fuite* (1978) in which various moments and experiences of Antoine's life are put together in his own autoportrait. In *Léaud l'unique* (2001), one particular scene sees Léaud walking through the corridors of the film theatre at Cannes during the festival in 2000 where he poignantly looks at images of himself as Antoine in the films that make up the Doinel cycle that pieces together certain moments of his own life as an actor. Serge Toubiana and Antoine de Baecque suggest that *Baisers volés* (1968) in particular saw an amalgamation of aspects of both



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Truffaut's life and Léaud's own in that his gestures and mannerisms are as much reflections of Léaud's own memories (de Baecque and Toubiana 1996: 341). At the time of the making of *Baisers volés*, Léaud lived in an apartment two floors above the offices of Les Films du Carrosse, the production company set up by Truffaut, thus mirroring the paternal relationship of Bazin with Truffaut in the way he was taken into the Bazin household.

Truffaut instils in the spectator a sympathy for society's misfits, drawing the viewer into the world of the marginal outsider, whilst also calling upon the viewer to sympathise with a lack of maternal affection and hence the desire to be 'mothered'. His narratives are touching, sensitive portrayals of slices of reality whether directly drawn from his own experiences or not, punctuated by recurrent themes of childhood, adolescence, love and rejection, conflict between society and the individual and more so conflict within the self. Jacques Rivette commented on this touching depiction of Antoine's plight as "l'extraordinaire tendresse avec laquelle François Truffaut parle de la cruauté" (Rivette 1959: 39). The poetic quality of the film allows for a stripping away at the surface to reveal deeper inner selves of the characters and spectator alike.

In his search for the young actor who was to incarnate the role of Antoine Doinel, Truffaut said:

"Mon but étant de trouver une ressemblance plus morale que physique avec l'enfant que je croyais avoir été... Jean-Pierre était, comme Doinel, solitaire, anti-social et au bord de la révolte..." (Truffaut 1970: 10)

Truffaut recognised that the young Léaud had an anti-social nature although being of a somewhat stronger character than Antoine. Having had something of an unstable childhood, sent to boarding school aged six and constantly moved from school to school, Léaud was initially able to bring to the role a certain sensibility, seeing society

from the viewpoint of an outsider, from the margins. Toubiana and de Baecque go on to discuss Léaud's own background and what he brought to the role. A letter from one of Léaud's teachers from his boarding school describes how he was perceived as a somewhat anti-social character:

“Je suis au regret d’avoir à vous faire part que Jean-Pierre se montre de plus en plus ‘infernal’,’ écrit à Truffaut le directeur de l’école. ‘Désinvolture, arrogance, défi permanent, indiscipline sous toutes ses formes. Il a été à deux reprises dans le dortoir à feuilleter des images pornographiques. Il tourne de plus en plus au caractériel grave.’”

At the time of the auditions for the role Léaud showed such an intense yet nervous



desire to be cast in the role that he himself has since spoken of his desperate desire for that role (Monaco 1976: 18). At the time of the screen tests, L aud quite proudly gave his interpretation of what he understood Truffaut to be looking for:

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L aud: Vous aviez dit que vous voulez un mec qui soit gouaillieur.

Truffaut: Gouaillieur?

L aud: Oui. C’est pour  a, parce que le gars penseur... moi, non.⁸

In *L aud l’unique*, Le P eron comes back to this word L aud seized upon at the time, “*gouaillieur*”. L aud explains that the use of this word was his way of saying that he really wanted that role. The word also has connotations of verbosity that was to become intrinsic to L aud as actor whilst it also hints at a sense of mischief. Having recognised that L aud’s character was more energetic and somewhat more arrogant

than that of Antoine who he saw as more passive, Truffaut was compelled to adapt the role to suit Léaud's own character. In this way the construct of Doinel was shaped from the outset by Léaud himself. In Toubiana's and de Baecque's biography on Truffaut, an extract of an interview with Truffaut conducted by Claude de Givray is quoted which directly refers to the *autofiction* on the part of Léaud in the incarnation of this character:

"Je crois au départ, écrit le cinéaste, il y avait beaucoup de moi-même dans le personnage d'Antoine. Mais, dès que Jean-Pierre Léaud est arrivé, sa personnalité qui était très forte m'a amené à modifier souvent le scénario. Je considère donc qu'Antoine est un personnage imaginaire qui emprunte un peu à nous deux."⁹

His interpretation of the young Doinel is punctuated by many of the characteristics that the spectator would come to recognise in Léaud's acting style in his future work - his stare, when he is seen returning the typewriter he has stolen and in the celebrated final freeze-frame shot, his uncontrollable grin and laughter, as seen in the scene with the psychologist when he smirks at being asked about his sexual experiences. Equally in the scene where Monsieur Doinel tries to justify Antoine's mother's behaviour towards him, following this serious monologue, Monsieur Doinel suddenly cries out "Ah, merde !" at which Antoine cannot control his sudden outburst of laughter. This spontaneous laughter is indeed part of Léaud's own personality as seen in *Léaud l'unique* which plays into the comic side to his star persona. Likewise, on meeting Léaud in person, his speech was frequently inflected with such short bursts of spontaneous laughter.

Truffaut himself talked of the relationship between Léaud and the script of Doinel saying that, "Le film devenait meilleur que le scénario grâce à lui"¹⁰. In this sense Léaud can be seen as auteur of the text, actively contributing to the creative force

within the film. This idea of the star as auteur in tandem with the director as auteur is a tradition carried through many films of *la nouvelle vague* directors focusing on an 'acteur fétiche' - Jean-Luc Godard and Anna Karina and later Anne Wiazemsky, Claude Chabrol and Stéphane Audran and more recently Isabelle Huppert, or other auteur directors such as Claude Sautet with Romy Schneider and Léos Carax with Denis Lavant. Whilst we can add Truffaut and Léaud to this tradition, I would equally argue that the Godard-Léaud collaboration is as important in this context which further cemented his *nouvelle vague* image which I will go on to discuss in chapter three.

MAGIC MOTHERS, ABSENT FATHERS

In this first film with Truffaut, Léaud plays Antoine Doinel, an adolescent boy, outcast and punished at school, in the home and ultimately in prison. Whilst rebelling against



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institutions, he seeks refuge in art through a love of literature and also in his close friendship with René in his quest to achieve personal freedom. These two separate spheres can be seen as distinctly paternal and maternal areas respectively - patriarchal institutions of the home, school and prison as

paternal spaces and the free, outdoor environment of Paris as maternal. This also informs the gender roles of both Antoine and Madame Doinel, the two central characters in the film. Antoine is on the verge of experiencing for the first time a sexual awakening and will discover the mystery of female sexuality - a recurrent theme in much of Truffaut's work that is equally about a yearning for a maternal figure. Antoine is more content to be in the outdoor world where he is searching for the maternal affection that has so far eluded him. Madame Doinel on the other hand is part of the indoor world of authority that is patriarchal by nature as she takes on an empowered

role. Whilst Madame Doinel's image is highly sexualised she is at the same time demonised as a bad mother. She will be the first strong female to play alongside Léaud, rendering him the first of Truffaut's weak, fragile men, thus reversing gender expectations in an Oedipal context of mother and son. This troubled male would resurface as Louis Mahé played by Jean-Paul Belmondo in *La Sirène de Mississippi* (1968), Julien Vercelet played by Jean-Louis Trintignant in *Vivement Dimanche !* (1983), Bernard Granger played by Gérard Depardieu in *Le Dernier Métro* (1980) and even Truffaut himself playing Julien Davenne in *La Chambre verte* (1977).

For Antoine, his mother's rejection of him leads to a lack of fulfilment of his needs. In conjunction with this is the need for the presence of the father in order to represent an alternative source of identification which for the most part is absent in Antoine's life. Antoine continues to be incapable of integration within society, and failure is transposed into Antoine's future relationships with women throughout the Doinel cycle in his search for a substitute mother figure.

The one constructive relationship Antoine has at this stage is that with the psychologist at the detention centre. She too is represented as a sexualised female figure. One of the fellow inmates tells Antoine not to look at her legs, pointing to the idea of female legs as a focal point for Truffaut in the sexualisation of his female characters. This is a recurrent theme throughout Truffaut's work. The psychologist is also represented as a disembodied voice creating a further sense of mystery around her. She asks Antoine about his sexual experiences to his surprise and we are led to believe that she also negotiates his way out. She is a kind of substitute mother who is also sympathetic, something Antoine has not yet experienced. However, whilst she may have negotiated Antoine's freedom, Don Allen suggests that this idea of freedom is also related to that of isolation. This is most evident in the final freeze-frame which seems as bleak as it is hopeful for Antoine's plight henceforth (Allen 1985: 44). Seeing this image as a kind of snapshot reinforces the idea of the family around the young

Léaud in that this was the beginning of the 'album' Truffaut constructed around the Doinel character, embodied by the image of the teenage Léaud. Like parents, Truffaut and *la nouvelle vague* would get to follow the progress of Léaud and Antoine, and the spectator is also implicated in observing the development of the actor and the character. Unlike other child stars (for example, Shirley Temple or Jodie Foster), the audience sees a very different portrayal of that development through the documentary and realist quality to Léaud's performance together with his association with this cinephilic family.

Through the course of the Doinel cycle, Antoine progresses through a series of unsatisfactory relationships whilst equally obsessing over them with frequent manic protestations that have come to characterise the Doinel character (as well as the many other Léaud characters). Thus the fragile male is often juxtaposed against an empowered female which is translated through physical presence. Léaud is often seen positioned against tall, powerful and highly sexualised women seen through Truffaut's assemblage of portraits of 'magic' women. This can be traced as far back as *Les Mistons* in which Bernadette is rendered unattainable and magic through her maturity as opposed to the young boys and through her relationship with Gérard who displays a certain brand of masculinity represented through sport and athleticism. This leads to a reversal of gender stereotypes as well as reinforcing the male subject viewpoint. Conventionally, male protagonists are attributed the subject viewpoint of the spectator, thus positioning women as 'other'. However, many of Truffaut's men are not conventional male heroes. Failed Oedipal development in turn feminises these anti-heroes. Léaud's slight build and physical presence alone do not reinforce any traditional sense of a male hero, but more of an anti-hero. Truffaut said that prior to the screen tests for the role of Antoine, he remarked from the photo of the young Léaud that he had a somewhat 'feminine' countenance (Gillain 1991: 19).

The way in which Truffaut fetishises the female body is his primary tool for

empowering his women, rather than merely subjectifying the female body. This is achieved by investing power in the female image creating 'magic' portrayals of women in a similar vein to Josef von Sternberg's representations of Marlene Dietrich. Anne Gillain assimilates images of stairs with women's legs describing this as part of "the labyrinth the female body constitutes for the child's imagination" (Gillain 2000: 153). In this way the labyrinthine spirals of the Montmartre staircases can be seen as analogous to women's legs. Equally the camera's journey through the underground passages in *Baisers volés* (1968) following the pneumatic letter sent by Antoine to Fabienne Tabard evokes a similar labyrinthine image. Truffaut would focus upon both these symbols time and again in his work and we often see both at work simultaneously. In the opening scene of *Domicile Conjugal* (1970), the fourth in the Doinel cycle, the camera focuses on Christine's legs and follows her as she walks to the apartment she shares with Antoine, lingering on her legs as she walks up the stairs. The travelling sequences over Paris when Antoine and René are truanting see them running down these staircases, through long, mobile shots that create energy evoking a sense of childhood that also point to a maternal yearning.

In *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, there are several lingering shots on Madame Doinel's legs. This forms part of his sexual awakening whilst also serving to reinforce her powerful sexualised presence as well as her indifference towards him. This focus on Madame Doinel is played out in the presence of Antoine, further diminishing his position into anti-hero rather than hero. She is part of Antoine's indoor world, the authority of the home, and she is ultimately the point of rejection. In order to negotiate this rejection he can only deny her presence in his life. When he comes out with his celebrated lie when questioned by his teacher, 'Petite Feuille', it is therefore not altogether a fabrication:

Antoine: C'était ma mère, Monsieur,

'Petite Feuille': Qu'est ce qu'elle a, votre mère ?

Antoine: Elle est morte !



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This killing off of his mother in Antoine's imagination is his attempt to overcome the lack of fulfilment of his desire for her by asserting his own agenda. For Antoine she does not exist on the level that he desires and therefore he can only deny her existence in

this context. When interrogated about his relationship with his mother by the psychologist, Antoine can only be frank in his response saying that he does not feel that she loves him. This scene in particular is one in which "the window to the soul" (Dyer 1979: 134) is opened up for the spectator, further qualified by the improvisation on Léaud's part. In an interview at Cannes in 1959, Léaud describes how he approached the interpretation of this scene:

"Je me suis donné à fond dans ce que j'ai fait et j'avais besoin de m'exprimer une fois pour toutes. Et là, ça m'a donné l'occasion de m'exprimer vraiment."¹¹

During this scene, Léaud rarely looks directly at the camera, yet the camera remains subjective, focused solely on him. This is indicative of Truffaut's own view of the subjective camera:

"A subjective camera is the negation of subjective cinema. When it replaces a character, one cannot identify oneself with him. The cinema becomes subjective when the actor's gaze meets that of the audience." (Graham 1968: 83)

This also points to the aura of the star as established through the gaze of the spectator. The scene does not simply portray Léaud's face and words but also his composure, his movements and his presence. Léaud answered the questions exactly how he wanted and therefore they are his own words as he describes above. Truffaut had merely given him some indication and some ideas a month prior to filming the scene in order that the responses should come from Léaud in an entirely natural manner. He said in this same interview how in that particular scene he sees Antoine as a pure representation of himself. Similarly, in the interview with de Baecque and Péron, Léaud talks about the first time he saw *Les Quatre Cents Coups* in a cinema auditorium in which he saw not only Antoine, but much of Truffaut and himself within the character¹². It is the one scene in which Truffaut gave Léaud complete freedom to use his own expressions and words, the scene being entirely improvised:

"Je lui ai laissé toute liberté pour répondre, car je voulais son vocabulaire, ses hésitations, sa spontanéité totale." (Truffaut 1970: 11)

This scene is the first in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* in which we begin to see Antoine's sexuality being explored. This has only been dealt with implicitly prior to this point, through his surroundings - Madame Doinel, Pigalle and images of prostitutes. Antoine is positioned by the camera so as to make the audience the interrogator creating the subjectivity of this character. As the spectator's gaze meets that of Antoine, the spectator is drawn further into Antoine's world, his thoughts and feelings. This is entirely Léaud's own script in which, as he said himself, he gave everything of himself to make this the best scene in the film. This element of improvisation would prove integral to the acting style Léaud developed in future films, an aspect of his style which also draws the actor out of the character.

Ana Lopez, in her article "The Elegant Spiral", describes interior spaces as

"enclosures of loveless authority" (Lopez 1985: 146) which result in Antoine withdrawing from these patriarchal environments in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. The distinction between the two spheres is often established by close-up and static shots indoors and fluid, panoramic shots outdoors. However, whilst Madame Doinel is primarily a point of rejection, she also offers moments of protection. She enters into a sort of contract with Antoine in which she asks him to share secrets with her, to the exclusion of his father. In trying to keep his part of the bargain, it ultimately conspires against him and he must again suffer rejection and punishment both at school and at home. Constantly battling with this idolisation of his mother as against her rejection of him, the only way out for Antoine would seemingly be to run away and so he resolves to cut his family out of his life.

The city offers Antoine an alternative and he is all too ready to embrace this. The film begins with a panoramic view of Paris as the camera moves fluidly within the city, with the omnipresent figure of the Eiffel Tower looming in the background. These fluid shots accompany Antoine and René running through the labyrinthine streets of Paris setting up the city as another character within the narrative. This movement within the city is itself indicative of childhood. It is as if they are claiming the streets of Paris as their own nurturing environment. It also points to one of Léaud's characteristics in his acting style - movement often shown by running, in this case running away from crises seemingly towards a sense of freedom. The landscape of Paris as depicted in the film points to Antoine's and indeed Truffaut's own love affair with the city. Paris is to act as a substitute mother figure for Antoine in place of his mother who rejects him in the home. The city will protect and nurture him, for Paris is itself a maternal space. This is symbolised by the scene in which we see Antoine stealing a bottle of milk, pointing to the lack of a maternal presence and Antoine's incessant search for maternal protection.

This opening scene is somewhat incongruous in that it does not in any way pre-figure Antoine's fate. Paris is not only a nurturing environment, but also a much

sexualised environment. The Pigalle setting is indicative of this. This is Antoine's first real 'relationship' beyond that with his mother. He grows up in this environment and learns about sexuality in this way. On the verge of his own sexual awakening, Antoine is forced into this maternal environment. It is outdoors that he sees Madame Doinel and her lover, encounters prostitutes, and is surrounded by the many sexualised images of Pigalle. One of the most poignant scenes in this outdoor environment is that in which Antoine in his efforts to help a woman find her dog, played by Jeanne Moreau, is belittled by an older man, played by Jean-Claude Brialy. The interaction between Brialy's character and Antoine plays out a battle of wills in his attempt to affirm his masculinity as against the adolescent Léaud. The scene is also significant for the two star roles of Moreau and Brialy present in this scene, juxtaposed against the fragile Léaud.

The quasi-Lacanian scene in which Antoine is seen at his mother's dressing table shows his most evident attempt to be drawn further into her world and to delve into the mystery surrounding her sexuality. Three mirrors are present which on one hand serve to fragment Antoine's images whilst also drawing him deeper into Madame Doinel's world. This is also Antoine's attempt at self-recognition through his own reflections in the mirrors present. Lopez sees this as making him something to be observed and one of the ways in which his face is "flattened" (Lopez 1985: 145) and thus taking the viewer further and into Antoine's own world and his desires. Antoine is a child who wants to be seen and noticed. This mirror scene is his attempt at self-recognition which relates to the acquisition of language and hence recognition of sexual difference. Antoine is a character who performs as much as Léaud performs that character.

Truffaut revisits this scene in *Baisers volés*, as discussed in chapter one. The intense and involved repetition of his own name and those of Christine Darbon and Fabienne Tabard is Antoine's way of seeking to appropriate both women into his life, questioning their place in his life as well as his own existence. Desire is expressed both

through the body and the spoken word. Léaud's expressiveness in this scene is so intense and engaging that the spectator becomes as captivated by Léaud/Antoine as he is himself. Antoine's experiences with women have been conditioned by his first experience of rejection by the most influential female figure in his life at this point, his mother, and he can only continue his quest for maternal desire/female companionship in order to overcome this lack of maternal affection.

Antoine is caught between these two women, both strong, powerful figures in their own way. However, Antoine must go through a certain apprenticeship - a sentimental education - before he is able to recognise that Christine is in fact the woman he really loves. Fabienne Tabard represents for Antoine 19th century romantic ideals following the literary tradition. Her apparition presents another kind of 'magic' mother to Antoine. His hopeless obsession with her can be seen to stem from the failed relationship with his own mother as she too is highly sexualised and her role is further fixed by the star persona of Delphine Seyrig who by this time was an established female star in French cinema. This serves on one hand to make a mockery of Léaud's slight, androgynous image whilst equally cementing his own star image into a kind of Keatonesque comic figure, placing him in the unconventional role of the younger man with the older, 'magic' woman.

Antoine literally describes Fabienne Tabard as an apparition, as he in his own mind compares this situation to Félix's hopeless love for Madame de Mortsauf in Balzac's *Le Lys dans la vallée*. Once more the influence of Balzac upon Antoine's ideals plays a part. However, the difference lies in the fact that Fabienne does appear to him after his hopeless pneumatic declaration of love. His relationship with Fabienne and the way in which he is enraptured by her do not display the more masculine nature one expects of a conventional male role whilst also placing him against her star image. Just as Truffaut injects comedy in this situation, he equally focuses on the magic of this particular moment. Fabienne herself tells Antoine that they are not in a 19th century

novel and shows him the reality of the situation. Whilst this is another kind of contract that Antoine will enter into, the experience will allow him to break from his self-absorption and recognise that it is in fact Christine he loves and wants to be with. It is a very dream-like scene that extends beyond an Oedipal context which also plays upon the spectator's desire. Fabienne can be seen not only in the context of maternal desire that is fulfilled through this experience but also as the intervention of the father that allows Antoine to enter the symbolic and thus accept the law of the father.

Within the Oedipal context, the father's role is to separate mother and son and introduce repression of desire. This presence is to a greater extent absent for Antoine in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* for he learns that his father is in fact his stepfather. Thus Monsieur Doinel does not pose any Oedipal threat to Antoine since he is not his real father and he too is a weak male positioned against Madame Doinel. In order to account for this Antoine readily takes up any opportunity to seduce his girlfriends' parents. In both *Domicile conjugal* and *L'Amour en fuite* he voices the idea that the parents of a girlfriend are vital to any relationship for him, harking back to *Antoine et Colette* (1961) and *Baisers volés* in which he is seen to enjoy the company of Colette's parents and Christine's parents when Colette and Christine have made other plans. Monsieur Henri also takes on this role for Antoine in *Baisers volés*. There is nothing surprising, therefore, in Antoine's search for the absent father, which parallels the Bazin-Truffaut-Léaud-Doinel lineage, conditioned by Truffaut's and Léaud's own experiences of being nurtured by a father figure in their formative years of their education of the cinema. It is interesting to note that in Truffaut's *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent* (1971) in which Léaud incarnates the hero, Claude Roc, neither his father nor that of Anne and Muriel are present, again pointing to strong mothers and absent fathers as a conditioning influence over the young male in Truffaut's narratives and Léaud's performances for Truffaut.

However, Antoine does experience some fleeting relationships with a paternal

figure but none that compensate for the absence of the father. Monsieur Lucien in *L'Amour en fuite*, Madame Doinel's lover in *Les quatre cents coups*, reverses the roles for Antoine as we see the awkwardness felt by Antoine by this experience. In *Baisers volés*, the death of Monsieur Henri takes away this presence for Antoine. Yet, as Antoine leaves behind his job at the Agence Blady, he also leaves behind the sense of lack that feeds into his own desire, as he progresses towards marriage with Christine.

In *Domicile conjugal*, when Antoine runs into Monsieur Darbon in an *hôtel de passe*, whilst this is in a sense reassuring for Antoine, it equally causes a rupture in his relationship with Christine's father as the rupture in his own marriage has already taken place. In *L'Amour en fuite*, Antoine's meeting with Monsieur Lucien does not invoke a sense of a newly found father figure to take on this role for Antoine. Antoine has now already become a father himself. When he first takes on this paternal role in *Domicile conjugal*, it takes a billboard advertisement to bring him to the recognition that he is to become a father. When Alphonse is born, he smiles nervously and awkwardly before the photographer holding the young Alphonse in a somewhat uneasy manner. In *L'Amour en fuite*, he struggles with the responsibility that comes of being a father showing himself to be not altogether reassuring in this paternal role. Failed Oedipal development translates not only into unsatisfactory relationships with women but also a not all too encouraging paternal role.

THE EXPRESSIVENESS OF DOINEL/LÉAUD: THE SPOKEN AND WRITTEN WORD

Léaud's unique acting style is to a great part due to his expressiveness and the way he gives life to his words, the way he chooses his words when improvising and the expression of those words that form his own vocabulary. Equally for Truffaut, language was a fundamental aspect of filmmaking. Many of the *nouvelle vague* directors, in

seeking to make cinema a true art form in the same way as literature, made many literary references in their work whilst literature was itself a major source of inspiration. These two aspects combined have produced in Léaud a need for expression through words, language and literature which through Léaud's interpretation of the role of Doinel alone have given rise to a unique expressiveness that is a fundamental aspect of the Léaud persona most evident in *La Maman et la putain* (1972). Through Léaud's characters, we see an assemblage of particularly verbose characters who in this way draw the spectator further into the lives of these characters. *Baisers volés* in particular allowed Léaud to make full use of his expressive style, constituted through frenzied gestures often accompanied by wild protestations hinting at a sense of madness. Laure Charcossey makes reference to Léaud's expressiveness when discussing his interaction with Marie-France Pisier in *Antoine et Colette* as: "une façon si particulière de parler, entre le détachement et l'ironie"¹³.

In *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, Antoine seeks solace in the writings of Balzac and when his mother proposes her contract to him this maternal desire equally gives him the creative inspiration which he thrives upon. However, such moments of creativity often lead to his downfall. The poem he inscribes on the classroom wall results in punishment. At home he succeeds in setting alight his 'shrine' to Balzac and at school he is punished for plagiarism of Balzac's *La Recherche de l'absolu*. The influence of Balzac returns in *Baisers volés* where at first Antoine is seen reading *Le Lys dans la vallée* in the army prison, incongruously placed in this environment. He returns to this when captivated by Fabienne Tabard. He can only equate his feelings for her to Félix's hopeless love for Madame de Mortsauf. Perhaps the most marked written expression of Antoine's desires comes in the form of the hopeless pneumatic letter he sends Fabienne Tabard. This also points to another side to Léaud's characters - madness. There are also connotations of this in the letter Antoine sends Colette declaring his love for her. When they meet again some twenty years later in *L'Amour en fuite*, Colette recalls this

manic side to his character - that whilst she claimed to be impressed by his eloquence, his clumsy attempts to seduce her were simply off-putting. In *Domicile conjugal* when Antoine's Japanese mistress, Kyoko, sends him flowers with written messages contained inside them, Christine's discovery of this leads to their initial separation. Other references to the written word are symbolised by the typewriter Antoine and René steal in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, the printing factory where Antoine sleeps after having run away as well as the letter he writes to his parents informing them that he is running away all of which signify moments of crisis or downfall. It is therefore not surprising that with this insatiable appetite for the written word, and in particular that of the romantic, literary tradition drawn from 19th century French literature, that Antoine ends up writing his own novel. The title alone lends a sense of irony to his experiences of love and relationships, *Les Salades de l'amour*. It points to his failed relationships and encounters with women that at the same time parallel not only the confusion of his own life but the puzzle surrounding the photo of Sabine in *L'Amour en fuite*. The trajectory of Antoine's story leads to its conclusion when Colette returns the photo of Sabine, paralleling the seemingly satisfactory outcome of his relationship with Sabine.

Léaud's expression of the spoken word links the character more directly to the actor and indeed the way in which Léaud gives life to Antoine. His wild manifestations, his manic proclamations and the way he punctuates his speech through his frenzied gestures are all part of Léaud himself that he imposes upon his characters. This equally serves to instil a comic element into Léaud's interpretation of the Doinel character. This is seen to great effect in *Baisers volés* in which improvisation plays a significant part. In some parts of the Doinel cycle language becomes a barrier and therefore Antoine cannot survive in these situations. When he first falls under the charm of Fabienne Tabard, he is transfixed when he hears her speaking English on the telephone. His reaction is to listen to records teaching English at home in his attempt to draw nearer

to her, reminiscent of the mirror scene in the same film. However, as with the Balzac incident in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, such attempts at creativity often result in failure as this yearning is inherently linked to maternal desire. Therefore in *Domicile conjugal*, Antoine's relationship with Kyoko cannot last. Expressing himself through both spoken and written words is integral to his being and he is incapable of maintaining dialogue through gestures alone. Whilst gestures remain integral to Léaud's acting style, the verbosity of his characters demands verbal expression in order to make his manifestations complete. In his attempt to explain his actions to Christine he tries to justify himself on the grounds that it was Kyoko's exotic nature that captured him, "C'est un autre continent". Totally self-absorbed, Antoine expects Christine to be understanding and when she displays her anger he can only do the same by suddenly, albeit, clumsily removing the mattress from the bed to sleep in the other room in a wildly manic protestation but one that is equally comic. Léaud's propensity for the ridiculous through such wild protestations feeds into the expectation on the part of the spectator who comes to recognise such traits through his individual acting style.

Machines also take on importance in Léaud's verbal communication. The telephone is of particular importance from *Baisers volés* through *Domicile conjugal* to *L'Amour en fuite*. Antoine's celebrated declaration of love for Fabienne Tabard communicated to the detective agency he works for is transmitted by telephone. In *Domicile conjugal* the telephone first takes on importance when Antoine and Christine finally get a telephone in their home. Ironically, Antoine declares that he has no interest for it. However, when confronted with the impossibility of his affair with Kyoko, his only escape is the telephone. In *L'Amour en fuite*, the telephone begins the whole puzzle that Antoine is seeking to solve. Antoine's expressiveness cannot be detached from that of Léaud himself. The character of Doinel is in many ways informed by Léaud's ways of expressing himself, whilst his own unique style is constantly at play drawing the character out of the actor.

The rotor in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* is the first machine that takes on significance in the Doinel cycle and is one of its enduring symbolic images. This scene is indicative of the protection that Paris offers Antoine as well as serving as a metaphor for the cinema itself, both ideas pointing to a maternal longing and a need to be nurtured. Gillain describes this as "un environnement mère favorable" (Gillain 1991: 91). It is a womb-like construction that is a site of protection, danger and pleasure concurrently. It also provides another instance where Antoine's image is flattened against the screen. However, this moment of pleasure is swiftly brought to an end when immediately after this Antoine sees his mother with her lover. When Antoine unexpectedly sees his mother with her lover in this exterior environment, this provides a site of contradiction. Madame Doinel belongs to the interior world of the home and is further demonised when seen in the freer environment outdoors thus causing a rupture in the protection offered to Antoine by the maternal environment of Paris and a breakdown in the illusion of maternal desire. Gillain describes this moment in the following way:

"...Madame Doinel deviendra le catalyseur de l'exclusion sociale de son fils dès qu'il aura rencontrée dans les bras d'un homme inconnu." (Gillain 1991: 83)



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This motif of the rotor as metaphor for the cinema is perhaps the most significant in terms of the search for maternal affection and ultimately a fulfilling relationship with a woman in that the same scene recurs at the end of the Doinel cycle at the end of *L'Amour en fuite*. At this point Antoine has seemingly resolved his internal conflicts in establishing his relationship with Sabine. There are also other references pointing to the importance of the cinema as a substitute

for affection and protection. Following the scene with the Balzac shrine and the fire, the solution proposed by Madame Doinel is for the three of them to go to the cinema, what appears to be the only happy moment shared by the family in the entire film. The fact that they go to see Jacques Rivette's *Paris nous appartient* (1960) is significant not only for the self-referential aspect to another film and director of *la nouvelle vague*. It is also indicative of the comforting and nurturing nature of the city. Indeed, the cinema auditorium recurs in other Truffaut films pointing to the importance of escapism through cinema for the young Truffaut as in *L'Argent de poche* (1975) in which it is evoked as part of childhood experience.

The final freeze-frame image in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and the final flashback of the rotor seen in *L'Amour en fuite* once more point to Antoine's search for freedom and protection. It is equally about the separation of the real from the illusory, Antoine's life as well as a reflection on his past and indeed his experiences in childhood and adulthood.

DOINEL AS "MYTH"

Whilst on one hand the narrative in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* follows a linear pattern, it can also be seen as a series of episodic events that follow a cyclical pattern that comes full circle with the rotor flashback at the end of the Doinel cycle in *L'Amour en fuite*.

Antoine remains, even in his thirties at the end of the Doinel cycle, an eternal adolescent constructed through a series of episodes in his life that serves to concretise the myth first created in the final freeze-frame of Antoine in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. This idea of the eternal adolescent in the Doinel character was remarked by the director, Olivier Assayas, who would go on to make two films with Léaud (*Paris s'éveille*, 1991, and *Irma Vep*, 1996) in a special edition of *Cahiers du cinéma* following

Truffaut's death in 1984 which again adds a sense of myth to the Doinel character:

"Doinel, c'est le portrait d'un type qui ne grandit pas. Éternel gosse, éternel adolescent, vivant d'expédients, de boulots marginaux, confronté aux réalités sérieuses de l'existence et n'en assumant aucune. Au contraire, se laissant vivre, suivant l'air du temps, se perdant dans *Les Salades de l'amour*, le titre de l'ouvrage qu'il publie dans *L'Amour en fuite*." (Assayas 1984: 141)

Roy Armes described the creation of the myth of Doinel as having been constructed through the narrative of *L'Amour en fuite*:

"...a virtual documentary on Jean-Pierre Léaud seen here at key moments of a twenty year career. The effect too is to enhance the reality of Antoine. Always a curiously solid fictional character because of the extent to which he was an autobiographical extension of both director and actor, here he seems an authentic representation of twenty years of French cinema in his own right." (Armes 1985: 256)

This also points to the *autofiction* aspect to Truffaut's narratives and Léaud's incarnation of Antoine who has something of both Truffaut and Léaud and as mentioned above, the Doinel character does not exist alone. As quoted by Gillain, Jean Collet made the following observation of Doinel as a mythic character:

"Aujourd'hui, Antoine Doinel, Jean-Pierre Léaud, est l'un des mythes bien vivants de notre cinéma français. Quand on évoque un mythe cinématographique, on confond souvent le personnage et l'acteur."¹⁴

This idea of myth contributes to the blurring of fiction and reality and moreover the

creation of the star. In this way, a certain kind of star persona was created around Léaud in his interpretation of the Doinel character. Truffaut's use of close-ups and the many occasions where Antoine's profile is flattened against the screen particularly in *Les quatre cents coups* - the rotor, the mugshot, the mirror sequence, pressing his face against the window at the detention centre when René is refused entry to the



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detention centre and above all the final freeze-frame - all contribute to the subjectivity of the Doinel character bearing a "window to the soul" of the actor and character for the spectator. Whilst there is no express continuation in the films in that each film can quite readily stand on its own, the continuation of Doinel's narrative and development of his story further cement this mythic persona and indeed the Léaud image. Truffaut, Doinel and Léaud became synonymous, and even in *La Nuit américaine* (1972), one of the two films outside of the Doinel cycle made by Truffaut starring Léaud and Truffaut, parallels can be drawn between the role played by Léaud and that of Truffaut as the actor and the director respectively of a film within a film. We are led to question to what extent are both director and actor playing themselves and in what way this can be seen as a documentary fiction.

By separating the four figures of Bazin, Truffaut, Léaud and Doinel, we are led to question how Léaud's star image is defined within the context of the Doinel character. The true star image of Léaud comes from the sum total of characters he has incarnated, and thus to extend the definition of his star image we need to go beyond the

Bazin-Truffaut-Léaud-Doinel construction. Whilst there are many biographical references to be drawn from Truffaut's work and in particular from the films that make up the Doinel cycle, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the director and his art on one hand and that of Léaud, the actor, on the other, we need to separate the Truffaut-Doinel, Truffaut-Léaud and Doinel-Léaud constructions. Truffaut himself said of Léaud:

"J'ajoute seulement que Jean-Pierre Léaud est selon moi le meilleur acteur de sa génération et qu'il serait injuste d'oublier qu'Antoine Doinel n'est pour lui qu'un des personnages qu'il a joués, un des doigts de sa main, un des habits qu'il a portés, un des collègues de son enfance." (Truffaut 1970: 11)

This mythic character that was the first major role incarnated by Léaud is only the starting point of how his star persona has been constructed and only the beginning of the myth surrounding Léaud himself.

¹ Antoine de Baecque and Didier Péron, "Léaud, retour à Doinel" [*Libération*, 31st August 2001]

² Jacques Siclier [*Le Monde*, 25th January 1979]

³ François Truffaut, *Les Aventures d'Antoine Doinel* [Mercure de France 1970: 9];

Approches du cinéma: François Truffaut ou la nouvelle vague (Paul Krellstein, RTBF 1972) [featured on *Domicile conjugal* DVD]

⁴ Antoine de Baecque and Didier Péron, "Léaud, retour à Doinel" [*Libération*, 31st August 2001]

⁵ *Arts*, 3rd June 1959

⁶ *Post-scriptum* (Maurice Dugawson, 1970) [featured on *Domicile conjugal* DVD]

⁷ Interview with François Truffaut by Claude de Givray [Archives des Films du Carrosse: 41]

⁸ Screen tests for *Les Quatre Cents Coups* in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001) [also featured on *Les Quatre Cents Coups* DVD]

⁹ Interview with François Truffaut by Claude de Givray [Archives des Films du Carrosse: 41]

¹⁰ Interview with François Truffaut in *Cinéscope avec René Michelems* (Thierry Michel, RTBF 1980)

¹¹ Interview with Jean-Pierre Léaud in *Reflets de Cannes* (François Chalais and Jacques Planche, INA, Licange Productions 1959) [appearing on *Les Quatre Cents Coups* DVD]

¹² Antoine de Baecque and Didier Péron, "Léaud, retour à Doinel" [*Libération*, 31st August 2001]

¹³ Laure Charcossey, "Le Roman de Léaud" [www.fluctuat.net/cinema/dossier/Leaud.htm, 2000]

¹⁴ Jean Collet [*Nouvelles Littéraires*, 25th January 1979 – 1st February 1979]

CHAPTER 3

THE GENERATION OF MARX AND COCA-COLA

LES ENFANTS PRODIGES

The success of *Les quatre cents coups* (1959) in 1959 marked the 'public' arrival of *la nouvelle vague* and also saw the birth of Léaud's career within its context. Léaud found himself not only the focus of attention at the Cannes Film Festival in 1959, but also at the heart of the *Cahiers* group and indeed *la nouvelle vague*. The explosion of young, first-time directors on the film scene in France produced a climate within which critics and filmmakers alike sought to elevate the status of cinema to that of a true art form. For the young Léaud, the sensibilities of such a movement proved to be a nurturing and reassuring force for the young actor progressing from adolescence into adulthood. The images of the young Doinel unjustly punished by authority and equally by the unpredictability of the choices he has to make have remained in every cinephile's memory. Furthermore, the images of the young Léaud being held up in triumph at the Cannes Film Festival further concretised the image of the young actor as child star.



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Albert R emy who plays Antoine's stepfather spoke of the attention L aud and Truffaut received at Cannes, pointing to L aud's reaction at the time in contrast to the more unassuming L aud as a young adult a few years later:

Rémy: On les a trouvés dans tous les bars... Il s'est senti vedette là. Depuis il a bien changé. Il a de nouveau... les pieds sur terre, un sens de réalité.

Interviewer: Un garçon timide maintenant ?

Rémy: Maintenant c'est sa période de timidité...¹

The birth of his career coincided with and was marked from the outset by the beginnings of this revolutionary and political movement within contemporary film history - *la nouvelle vague*.

One of the fundamental characteristics of *la nouvelle vague* was the economic aspect, in that the production methods meant that these films were made on small budgets since there was no budget for using studios and established stars of the cinema. In so doing *la nouvelle vague* created its own stars born out of this new, fresh style of filmmaking. Rather than being based on the economy of production with big budgets, *nouvelle vague* films were by definition financed on low budgets and collaboration between these filmmakers, therefore creating the notion of a 'group'. As making a first film was facilitated by various factors, it became a spontaneous movement, the latter years of the 1950s seeing more than 200 new, young directors venturing to make their first films. This cinematic movement was to mark a specific era in contemporary French culture, having made a significant influence upon filmmaking as a whole. François Truffaut set up his own production company, Les Films du Carrosse, financed by his father-in-law, Ignace Morgenstern, allowing him to make *Les quatre cents coups*. Whilst *A bout de souffle* (1959) was directed by Jean-Luc Godard, the idea was conceived by Truffaut and Claude Chabrol also participated as artistic supervisor. *Une Histoire d'eau* (1957) was a direct collaboration between Truffaut and Godard, both credited as directors of this short film. This financial aspect translated into a new aesthetics that constituted a more realist, quasi-documentary approach

characterised by shooting in outdoor locations, the use of hand-held cameras and a more abrupt editing style thus creating documentary fictions. In *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, the final freeze-frame of Antoine Doinel looking at the camera with the sea behind him crystallised this new aesthetic and it remains an enduring image of the early years of *la nouvelle vague*. This is a technique that has since been copied and celebrated placing focus on the male protagonist within a kind of framing that draws the spectator into the character's world whilst also questioning his place within it. When talking to me about his involvement in *la nouvelle vague*, Léaud talked of it as very much a revolutionary movement in cinema which he was proud to have been a part of.

LA POLITIQUE DES AUTEURS - AUTOCRITIQUE AND AUTOFICTION



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In his article "Une Certaine Tendance du cin ma fran ais"², Fran ois Truffaut vehemently attacked '*la tradition de qualit *' in French cinema, what he referred to as '*le cin ma de papa*'. This was to mark the beginning of a new sensibility towards filmmaking in France. Truffaut, along with the other *nouvelle vague* directors to be, began their careers as writers for the film journal, *Cahiers du cin ma* which was founded by Andr  Bazin and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze. Bazin was to become something of a father figure and a mentor for these young *Cahiers* writers - cinephiles soon to become cineastes in their own right. Similarly, Truffaut and the *Cahiers* critics were to become L aud's own mentor and 'family'. The birth of *Cahiers du cin ma* was to transform filmmaking from both critical and aesthetic perspectives. Truffaut's attack on *la tradition de qualit * was accompanied by support for a fresh approach to filmmaking in which the vision of the director would lay its mark in every aspect of the process of filmmaking. Antoine De Baecque writes of Truffaut's

personal approach in the following way:

“François Truffaut, grace aux 400 coups, impose le cinéma comme autoportrait, comme journal intime, comme une lettre manuscrite écrite à la première personne.”
(de Baecque 1998: 89)

Thematic concerns focused on subjectivity which played into the idea of authorship on the part of the director, as exemplified in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. This idea of imposing a kind of ‘autoportrait’ (discussed in chapter two with reference to Serge Doubrovsky on *autofiction*) is significant not only in terms of the quasi-biographical nature of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and *Antoine et Colette* (1961) in particular but equally in terms of the *nouvelle vague* ethic of portraying concerns of youth within the specific focus on the everyday. This was done in a documentary fashion reflecting a certain sensibility on the part of the director himself. Moreover, the synthesis between Truffaut, Léaud and Doinel reflects not only an autoportrait of the young Truffaut as director but also of the young Léaud, both linked together through the fictional character of Doinel. Claire Clouzot described the position of the director in relation to the film text and central characters in the following way:

“Le cinéaste est au centre de ses films, derrière et ‘à côté’ de ses héros, sous formes d’allusions au cinéma, à la peinture ou à la littérature qu’il aime ou qui vient de lui tomber sous les yeux.” (Clouzot 1972: 30)

Filmmakers adopting this approach would use the camera as an apparatus with which to declare their own personal vision. It was named *la politique des auteurs* implicating a political and revolutionary expression. Alexandre Astruc had anticipated this call for a new auteur inspired approach to filmmaking in his article, “La

Caméra-stylo”³, seeing cinema as a language through which the director could express more personal themes in a move away from the more traditional French cinema that had preceded it. Astruc was equating personal expression with the written word thus pointing not only to the idea of authorship but also the importance of language within this new approach to filmmaking in France.

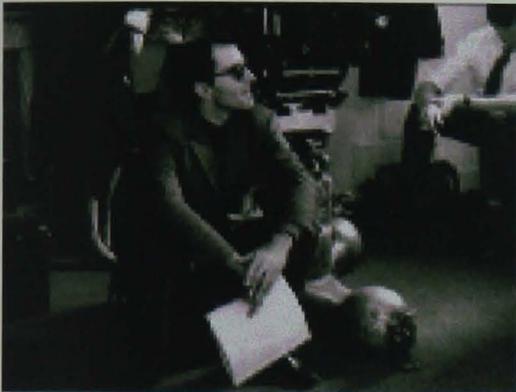
This auteur approach would see the filmmaker as the true author of the artistic work. Inspiration came equally from other French auteur directors such as Robert Bresson, Jean Cocteau, Jean Renoir, Jacques Tati as well as Hollywood directors such as Alfred Hitchcock and Howard Hawks, and the Italian Neo-realist movement. Whilst this is somewhat contradictory in that *la nouvelle vague* was based upon a completely different mode of production from the Hollywood model (in which principles of production and consumption are foremost), these young directors drew from these influences to create a new fresh cinema that was based more upon aesthetics than the economics of production. However, as a movement, *la nouvelle vague* was no less dominated by the economy of production, only that it took as its impetus a more aesthetic approach to the process of filmmaking. Parallels can be drawn, however, with low budget filmmaking in Hollywood as exemplified by the films of Samuel Fuller. Whilst refuting the traditional economic and production values inherent in the Hollywood system, the auteur approach drew on this more revolutionary, aesthetic approach that was present to an extent within Hollywood filmmaking. The birth of *la nouvelle vague* was not an event as such that happened at a specific time but rather a coming together of fresh ideas with a common purpose that came about through a culmination of various strands of filmmaking that went before it. This was crystallised by the theoretical impetus of the *Cahiers du cinéma* and the domain of the cine-clubs. This cultural climate in the late 1950s only fuelled further the need for the filmmaking industry to create its own voice and fresh approach within *la nouvelle vague* for cinephiles and directors alike. The growing cine-club movement provided the ideal

platform from which to foster enthusiasm and support for this new style of filmmaking. The Cinémathèque française itself became the bastion of French cinematic culture under the direction of Henri Langlois.

Commonly considered as precursors to *la nouvelle vague*, Agnès Varda's first film, *La Pointe courte* was released in 1956 followed by Roger Vadim's *Et Dieu créa la femme* (1956) which was instrumental in establishing Brigitte Bardot's star image and a new kind of femininity that would be further explored in films of *la nouvelle vague*. Bardot's rise to stardom led the way for the emergence of new stars within a new kind of star system which was based upon principles of aesthetics rather than economics in contrast to the Hollywood system. The emergence of this new star system reflected the ethics of *la nouvelle vague*, and in refusing to employ known stars *la nouvelle vague* ended up creating its own stars. The beginning of *la nouvelle vague* soon followed and was marked by Claude Chabrol's *Le Beau Serge* (1957). Set in provincial France against a bleak landscape reflected through an equally bleak narrative, the film has a distinct realist style. This was then followed by *Les Cousins* (1958), *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and *A bout de souffle*. Whilst Truffaut had been banned from the Cannes Film Festival in 1958 for his protestations against *la tradition de qualité*, he was present the following year as winner of the best director award for *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. The success of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* in 1959 marked the 'public' birth of *la nouvelle vague* and both Truffaut, at the age of 28, and Léaud at the age of 15, became darlings of the French cinema world. This success opened the way for other *nouvelle vague* directors to make their first films.

Léaud's subsequent roles within *la nouvelle vague* were placed within the context of a new, emerging sexual politics and climate of disillusionment amongst that generation of French youth. Léaud not only became recognised as a sort of alter-ego of Truffaut through his incarnation of the Doinel character. Through many other roles he also became a kind of double for Godard. Susan Sontag talks of Godard's style of

filmmaking as a kind of autocritique. Although, stylistically, Godard's approach may be very different from that of Truffaut, the *nouvelle vague* ethic of lending the personal vision of the auteur equally comes into play. When Léaud is placed within this context it adds a further dimension of autoportrait and indeed autocritique displayed through his theatrical style that feeds into the idea of 'mimétisme' through which Léaud has been able to take on the mannerisms and sensibilities of his directors in the roles he has played for them.



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This autocritique style to Godard's filmmaking made for a self-reflexive and self-critical approach which in holding a mirror up to society creates a sense of framing of the individual. Interrogation is often employed so as to question and establish some kind of truth embedded in language, education, image and sound and hence cinema itself. In this way, the cinema also plays into the framing of the character who is interrogating and the character being interrogated. The character and the spectator become interchangeable as with Godard it is often the spectator who is being called upon to question some established truth. This serves to open up the character and the narrative before the spectator. Part of the realist basis of *la nouvelle vague* was to turn the mirror towards society rather than merely holding the mirror up to individual expression. The notion of interrogation is one way in which this is achieved. In *La Chinoise* (1967), Guillaume is frequently seen speaking direct to the camera playing out the role of actor within the film as well as Godard's mouthpiece on the other side of the camera. This idea of self-reflexivity and self-critique is also very much at play in Jean Eustache's *La Maman et la putain* (1972) and is also exemplified in *Le Gai Savoir* (1968) in which Léaud plays the role of Émile Rousseau. The literary and philosophical context of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* gives rise to a certain kind of literary hero positioned within a kind of interrogation

process. In *La Chinoise*, Godard purposefully makes the spectator aware that he or she is watching cinema, therefore, breaking the illusion of the cinematic image whilst reconstituting it to ascertain a certain truth behind it. In one particular scene, Léaud is seen to engage in an aside with Godard and Raoul Coutard, the cinematographer, blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality, in which they are talking about defining the role of the actor. Likewise, in *Le Gai Savoir* the end of the film sees Juliet Berto and Léaud address each other by their real names as opposed to their character names of Émile and Patricia, directing the spectator to the fact that the cinema is, in effect, a reproduction of a present reality. Godard's method of questioning the truth behind the cinematic illusion opens up the star-character relationship. In *La Chinoise* the interaction between Léaud, Godard and Coutard is made all the more significant by Léaud's star presence whilst also feeding into the character being portrayed here by Godard. Turim suggests Léaud's participation instils a sense of irony which is heightened through his pre-existing screen image (Turim 1972/1973: 45). Furthermore, Godard has talked of the very process of film direction itself as a kind of interrogation⁴. Serge Toubiana and Antoine de Baecque allude to a left militant streak in Léaud's real life suggesting that this allowed him to empathise with Godard and the characters he would play for him, moving away somewhat from the non-revolutionary character of Doinel (de Baecque and Toubiana 1996: 388). Just as he had been able to give much to the role of Doinel so too would he be sympathetic towards the political tendencies of his characters for Godard at this time.

The theatrical quality is achieved through interrogation on the director's part, through interrogation with the character and through the character's own theatricality. This kind of interrogation process feeds into the myth created through the production of a certain meaning. The notion of interrogation is itself a kind of framing structure that draws the spectator further into the character's world. The documentary style of framing the character in this way opens the character up before the spectator. For

Truffaut this was often about the actual framing of the character within the image. For Godard this was made explicit through interrogation in which the character is often seen face-to-face with the camera and seen to expose the film narrative by a documentary-like participation in the film. Godard himself talked of the approximation of documentary realism and theatre in an interview with Tom Milne following the screening of *Vivre sa vie* (1962) at the London Film Festival in 1963:

"...through documentary realism one arrives at the structure of theatre, and through theatrical imagination and fiction one arrives at the reality of life." (Milne 1963: 10)

Léaud's own wide vocabulary of expression and body language plays into this idea of interrogation in Godard's style. The idea of theatricality is also present in the use of songs as exemplified by the man in the phone booth played by Léaud in *Week-end* (1967). This is also seen in *La Maman et la putain* in which Alexandre attempts to sing along to a song on the radio and in *Masculin-Féminin* (1965) in which his singing is derided by the fact that Madeleine is herself a pop-star.

The notion of interrogation that had earlier featured in the psychologist scene in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* would be further developed in *Masculin-Féminin* and *La Chinoise* (Turim 1972/1973: 43). Interrogation is central to Paul's method of seduction of Madeleine in *Masculin-Féminin* and it is central to Godard's exploration of this generation of 60s youth and, moreover, Godard's investigation of a new construction of the male. Rather than narrative revealing the character, it is in fact the character that reveals the narrative through a series of monologues and interrogation. This is most clearly displayed when Paul interviews Mademoiselle 19 ans and also in the final scene in which Madeleine is first interrogated about the circumstances around Robert's accident which leads to a questioning of pregnancy and abortion. Within this idea of interrogation, Godard is exploring ideas around the modern couple, a new emerging

sexual politics whilst also investigating a newly constructed male as represented by Léaud. A scene in *Masculin-Féminin* sees Madeleine, Paul and Catherine share Madeleine's bed, later paralleled in the celebrated scene in *La Maman et la putain* seeing Véronika, Alexandre and Marie in bed together. Although the tone of the two scenes is quite different, both are pointing to new constructions of relationships, and *La Maman et la putain* in particular shows how these emerging changing attitudes found their place in the post-1968 era. Léaud was at the heart of this new construction of the male. His unique place within *la nouvelle vague* saw him embody this as an adolescent and young adult and equally through this transition, unlike the other male stars who came to prominence within *la nouvelle vague* whose star images were less closely associated with the relationship between political struggle and youth.

Léaud did venture into theatre at one point in his career which Truffaut had encouraged at the time. In 1967 he performed in Antoine Bourseiller's productions of *La Baye* (which, interestingly, was filmed by Godard) and *Silence, labret remue encore* at the Festival d'Avignon that year. However, he remarked how he missed working in front of the camera - in front of the "eye of death that Cocteau was talking about" (Dawson 1973/1974: 47). Thus Léaud's performance style necessitates the framing inherent within the function of the cinematic apparatus which informs an aspect of his star image.

LA NOUVELLE VAGUE - A NEW YOUTH GENERATION

The label '*nouvelle vague*' was coined by Françoise Giroud in an article about the youth of the time⁵ in which she used the term more in an attempt to describe the new, emerging youth generation. The term was quickly adopted to refer more directly to cinema. It was a movement all about youth both behind the camera, its audiences and indeed much of its subject matter. Youth in France by the 1950s made up a significant

demographic group. This was a generation that had experienced the war and its aftermath. As the numbers of young people between the ages of 15 to 29 now made up a significant proportion of France's population, youth became a significant force in contemporary France. Youth was seen to be lasting longer whilst the notion of 'subcultures' began to emerge. Many young people were becoming increasingly vocal towards political events whilst taking on board new moral attitudes that came to define certain aspects of the youth of this period. De Baecque described this youth in the following way:

"Il s'agit tout d'abord d'une identité communautaire, groupusculaire." (de Baecque 1998: 46)

Therefore for the young *nouvelle vague* directors it was only natural for youth to be a central thematic concern. Linked to this was a re-evaluation of love and relationships which became a prominent theme throughout *la nouvelle vague*. In making such re-evaluations, taboos were broken down, the idea of the modern couple was explored, and in particular, portraits of the modern woman dominated whilst retaining a realist dimension. This was embodied by such female stars born out of *la nouvelle vague* as Françoise Dorléac (*La Fille aux yeux d'or*, 1960), Anna Karina (*Vivre sa vie*), Bernadette Lafont (*Le Beau Serge*), Jeanne Moreau (*Jules et Jim*, 1961), and Delphine Seyrig (*L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, 1960). This led to an exploration of the contemporary, modern woman, seeing women as powerful, whilst objectifying the female body in a documentary style. De Baecque talks of the new construction of woman as both "femme-document" and "femme-objet" (de Baecque 2003: 291). Godard focuses on this idea of women as powerful through the creation of the star image of Anna Karina who was to feature in a number of his films, with Chantal Goya as a pop-star in *Masculin-Féminin* (as she was in reality), and the powerful, politically active character

of Véronique in *La Chinoise* by Anne Wiazemsky, another 'acteur fétiche' for Godard. Truffaut too would centre his narratives around strong female characters who in turn would render vulnerable males weaker through such a juxtaposition. Léaud was to play central roles representing this new male for both Truffaut and Godard, thus becoming very much a symbol of *la nouvelle vague* in this context. De Baecque captures this sense of the everyday together with changing moral attitudes in the following way:

"En enregistrant ce qui traverse les rues, en prenant leurs acteurs parmi la jeunesse, même l'élite, en profitant de tous les hasards et de toutes les rencontres, les films de la nouvelle vague ont réussi, tant bien que mal à saisir des habitudes et des mœurs."

(de Baecque 1988: 119)

De Baecque goes on to talk about the term *la nouvelle vague* as full of culturally and historically specific references created within the immediacy of its own history and in so doing it established its own myth symbolised through various images and the stars that it in effect created:

"...la nouvelle vague forge presque instantanément un mythe. Elle est le premier mouvement cinématographique à avoir réussi à fixer avec une telle acuité la mythologie d'un moment d'histoire." (de Baecque 1988: 115)

This idea of myth also plays into a sense of hyperrealism which is itself closely linked to the concept of theatricality. Léaud's interpretation of Truffaut's sensibilities on screen served to create a myth in the Doinel character itself. The final freeze-frame of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* was instrumental in this. The ambiguity of the image leads the spectator to question Antoine's future whilst it also gives a reflection on the painful progression of adolescence to adulthood expressed in a particularly poetic manner.

Similarly, both Jean Seberg and Jean-Paul Belmondo became iconic figures of the early years of *la nouvelle vague* as Michel Poiccard and Patricia Franchini in *A bout de souffle* and their images also became instrumental in creating a mythic quality to *la nouvelle vague*. In *Léaud de hurle-dents* (2003), Léaud refers to Seberg as a symbol of *la nouvelle vague*, which again points to the idea of the cinephile/filmmaking family that he himself was born into and became part of through his early screen roles.

Much thematic focus of these early *nouvelle vague* films was, as mentioned above, centred upon a certain representation of masculinity. Geneviève Sellier points to the portrayal of a male protagonist often as a kind of alter-ego of the director with whom the spectator is invited to identify as a central focus of *la nouvelle vague* narratives (Sellier 2001: 126). Antoine is perhaps the most striking example of this new kind of male protagonist whilst other roles inhabited by Léaud during this period saw a progression of this character not only within the Doinel cycle itself but also through other films of this period he made with Godard, Jerzy Skolimowski and Eustache. This new kind of male was also represented by Belmondo in *A bout de souffle* for Godard despite the references to the gangster style of hero and also as Louis Mahé in *La Sirène de Mississippi* (1968) for Truffaut. Likewise, Depardieu's characters, Bernard Granger in Truffaut's *Le Dernier Métro* (1980) and Bernard Coudray in *La Femme d'à côté* (1981) can readily be seen as cousins of the Doinel character.

In Skolimowski's *Le Départ* (1967), Léaud displays a heightened animated style that is reminiscent in certain respects of his work with Godard. The narrative evokes the dilemma that Marc must reconcile - the affirmation of masculinity though his desire to become a racing driver and his relationship with Michèle. In a similar vein to Christine in *Baisers volés* (1968) and *Domicile conjugal* (1970), this affirmation of masculinity is undercut by a feminising force. One scene in particular stands out in which there is no dialogue, only the music score to accompany Marc and Michèle as they are seen messing about with a large mirror that they then go on to try to pawn. In

this scene they are both seen in a playful, joyful state in which they in turn gaze at their individual reflections. What is significant about this mirror scene is the movement of both characters and the playfulness of their gestures which feeds into the comic, silent hero type that Léaud is often likened to. The framing of the characters in this scene is established in a different way to the mirror scenes in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and



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Baisers volés, invoking a certain complicity between both characters in their relationship. Strong female presences are also at play in *Masculin-Féminin* which sees Paul alongside Madeleine, a pop-star, giving her an elevated status in the narrative. Similarly in *La Chinoise*, as Guillaume seeks to reconcile his role as an actor with the political struggle that the characters are involved with, he is placed alongside

Véronique who is herself a strongly politically minded character and a strong feminine force.

Léaud's role as Daniel in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* (1966) was to prefigure Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* whilst also constituting something of a natural extension to the characters of Daniel and Paul. The central difference between the two lies in the exploration of sexual attitudes of the mid-1960s in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* and the development of these ideas in 1970s France in *La Maman et la putain*. For Eustache it was a film about that particular character as defined by the environment just as Paris would figure for Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* (Collet 1967: 50). Based in Narbonne, Léaud as Daniel is defined from the outset as an outsider. He does not have a Narbonne accent which instantly displaces his presence. Moreover, the narration that is used in this film draws the viewer further into Daniel's world through a sense of interiority of the character, looking back on youth in a nostalgic sense whilst also questioning his place within the narrative. As with *La Maman et la putain*, it is a film all about the everyday, shown through minimal camera movements that open up this

provincial town for the spectator as well as the life of this outsider that is somehow not fitting with the place. It was also strictly scripted like *La Maman et la putain* save for two scenes, Daniel with a girl on a bench and the group of young people seen in the café. It also displays a natural spontaneity about the everyday which also parallels the microcosm of Saint Germain des Près that later featured as almost another character



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within the narrative of *La Maman et la putain*. As with *Masculin-Féminin* which was made the same year, the film talks openly about sexuality and new moral attitudes. The final scene exemplifies this whilst also recalling the end of Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* in a nostalgic reflection on youth. Although it was not intentional on Eustache's part he remarked how fitting it was that the ending of this film resembled so closely the ending of *L'Éducation sentimentale* (Collet 1967: 50). What Eustache achieves in this film is the display of different behaviours within the character of Daniel who is very much dependent on environment and company. Yet these different facets to his character are brought together in the definition of his existence through disguise (the Father Christmas outfit and the duffle-coat) and the position of the outsider, again a new construction of the young male in 1960s France. The photographer displays an interesting parallel to the character of Daniel. He is ultimately taking on the position of voyeur, framing Daniel through his disguise, in the company of passers-by, usually young females. This parallels the voyeurism within Daniel as he too is a holder of the

gaze behind his disguise investing in him a certain power behind the look. However, it is the element of disguise that destabilises his identity which also relates to the character's narcissism. There is also a mirror scene in this film where Daniel is narcissistically admiring his Father Christmas disguise. The notions of disguise, narcissism and voyeurism again all play into the idea of framing which was taken up again later in *La Maman et la putain*. The narration that accompanies this serves to open up the character even more so before the spectator.



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Whilst Léaud's place was established in its adolescent context through the Doinel character, the spectator would also become curious to see how this figure would develop within the context of 1960s youth and a new sexual politics. Through his omnipresence in *la nouvelle vague* unlike Belmondo

who soon ventured into the mainstream, Léaud's image was crystallised within the myth of *la nouvelle vague* and became the embodiment of the youth generation behind the camera, facing the camera and the young cinephile audience engaging in this new revolutionary cinema, and in so doing came to embody this new brand of masculinity. This new male was often defined through creativity on one hand and a need and desire for women on the other, the two spheres often causing conflict giving rise to a new troubled, vulnerable male. Language and literature are integral to this aspect of creativity and thus romantic ideals of women and relationships were often reflected in a literary context. Léaud's roles as Antoine, Guillaume in *La Chinoise*, Émile in *Le Gai Savoir* and Colin in *Out 1* (1970) epitomise this, whilst the many other references to language and literature play into this further. Léaud plays the revolutionary writer, Saint-Just, in both *La Chinoise* and *Week-end*. In *La Chinoise*, Guillaume's relationship with Véronique is based on a romantic ideal of mutual respect for one another that is reminiscent of the literary hero (Turim 1972/1973: 44). The literary facet to Léaud's

star image is further extended through Claude in *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent* (1971). In particular, Léaud's role as Bernard Dubois in *Les Lolos de Lola* (1974) sees a conscious mirroring of the life of the director in this film that makes it an evident autobiographical work. The opening scene which sees Bernard stealing a typewriter makes a direct reference to *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and to the idea of autoportrait which is the very premise of this film. In *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus*, the scene in which Daniel and Dumas are stealing books also makes a direct reference to *Les Quatre Cents Coups* within the same context. This inherent literary quality also gives rise to a certain tension between theatricality and documentary. In this sense Godard and Truffaut shared a common purpose in giving importance to language and literature and its possibilities. Léaud came to embody this representation through his characters and his directors through the notion of autocritique and thus *autofiction*. Within this there is also the idea of self-referentiality that is found in many films belonging to *la nouvelle vague* also serving to cement the myth created around *la nouvelle vague* and Léaud's star image of the period.

De Baecque talks of *la nouvelle vague* as "un groupe", "une génération" and "un mouvement de jeunesse" stylised by its own language and gestures, attitudes and appearances (de Baecque 1998: 16). In terms of the common vision held by the group, what the *nouvelle vague* directors sought to do was to stylise aspects of the everyday and in so doing, present a personal reflection that would be projected back upon society. The sense of 'framing' that this gave rise to placed the focus on the new male protagonist representative of new masculine values and the youth generation of the time. As Léaud became the face of *la nouvelle vague* through his collaboration with Truffaut and Godard he came to represent this new kind of masculinity, exploring the place of a vulnerable, intellectual kind of protagonist within the context of relationships for this 60s generation of youth, leading to an exploration of the new sexual politics that was beginning to emerge.

As for male stars that emerged at this time, their roles were often to be played against the female roles accompanying them and in reaction to them - Jean-Paul Belmondo and Jean Seberg in *A bout de souffle*, Gérard Blain and Bernadette Lafont in *Le Beau Serge*, Jean-Claude Brialy and Anna Karina in *Une Femme est une femme* (1960). For Léaud this would be portrayed through juxtapositions against Claude Jade, Marie-France Pisier and Delphine Seyrig in the Doinel cycle, against Chantal Goya, Anne Wiazemsky and Juliet Berto in his films with Godard and later Bernadette Lafont in *La Maman et la putain*. De Baecque describes both Léaud and Belmondo as iconic figures of *la nouvelle vague* in the following way:

"Jean-Pierre Léaud, alias Antoine Doinel dans les 400 coups de François Truffaut avec Belmondo/Poiccard, c'est l'autre personnage fondateur de la nouvelle vague, celui qui la rendra célèbre dans le monde entier." (de Baecque 1998: 100)

The idea of marriage is dealt with both by Truffaut in the Doinel cycle and by Godard in *Masculin-Féminin* and later by Eustache in *La Maman et la putain*, all of which see Léaud at the centre of these relationships. Whilst Truffaut was concerned with the emotional context, Godard focused on the limitations of marriage, whilst both point to the unsatisfactory nature of marriage and its confusions. In *Masculin-Féminin*, Paul proposes to Madeleine only to receive an indifferent response. As he tries to convince her, the many conversations taking place around them serve to distract their attention and the spectator from the focus of their relationship. A deeper concern for Madeleine is the reconciliation of sex, relationships, abortion and contraception. Yet it is ultimately Paul who has to struggle within these boundaries. In *La Maman et la putain* the film begins with Alexandre's proposal of marriage to Gilberte which she refutes. The film comes full circle to the proposal of marriage of Alexandre to Véronika. However, despite her affirmative response, the spectator is led to question the validity and outcome of

this proposal. It does not present itself as the logical conclusion, unlike the ending of *Baisers volés* which follows a more traditional resolution of the Oedipal trajectory. Following the making of *Domicile conjugal*, Léaud talked of marriage as a thematic concern of film also expressing something of his own views on the subject in wanting to make a film that:

"...will bring together the two main forces of the twentieth century, Freud and Marx. It will be about love but not love the way they do it in the movies now. Not love under capitalism, but love in a free society. We say "my wife", but she isn't a possession, she's a human being. We have this way of owning somebody, because that's the spirit of our society. I want to break away from all that..."⁶

Through the natural progression of Léaud's characters in his *nouvelle vague* films through Antoine, Paul, Guillaume, Daniel, Marc and Colin, he went on to achieve this as Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* marking a new period in his career as an actor and indeed of French cinema in the post-1968 era.

MAY 1968 AND BEYOND

The events of May 1968 were very much a spectacle reflecting both cultural production and the politics of the time in the vein of Guy Debord's work *La Société du spectacle*, first published in 1967. Cultural production by its nature necessitates spectatorship to produce a spectacle. What May 1968 showed was the way in which cultural forces are intertwined with political struggle and that one is dependent on the other expressed through disillusionment with power structures and institutions. Alain Touraine described the movement in terms of changing attitudes towards the class struggle in the dissolution of the "illusion of a society united through growth and prosperity"⁷.

By the mid-1960s, the political climate in France was increasingly being reflected through cinema. A feeling of malaise was growing evident within this youth culture. Politics have often held a certain proximity to contemporary French culture and the tradition of intellectual thought has often brought these two spheres together. The educational force of cinema was seen in this very light by the cinephiles as an instrument for expression. It is therefore not surprising that the events of May 1968 were prefigured by *L’Affaire Langlois*. Intervention of the state in cultural affairs was seen as a threat and thus the involvement of the film world in these politics prefigured the more widespread events of May 1968 - also anticipated by Godard in his assertion: “lutter sur deux fronts”⁸ - politics and culture or more specifically, education. Sylvia Harvey talks of the remarkable pace with which support came together and then disbanded. She explains this as being one of the defining characteristics of these events (Harvey 1980: 3). It began as a student movement but was rapidly supported by workers and the creative sectors. As for the cinema world, this disenchantment had already come to light through the Langlois affair which saw the alignment of cinephiles, *Cahiers* and filmmakers of *la nouvelle vague* further calling for an alternative cinema as a very form of education.

Although *la nouvelle vague* was seen to have faded away by this point, its representations of this youth generation fed into the growing disenchantment with the politics of the Fifth Republic under De Gaulle and, moreover, the support for Langlois, the events of May 1968 and new changing attitudes within sexual politics represented most poignantly in *La Maman et la putain*. The Langlois affair prefigured the more widespread events of May 1968 through the expression of a need for cinema to be recognised as a form of expression and above all, a form of education. Elements of *la nouvelle vague* both came together and came to a head. Revolution and confrontation became central not only to the struggle for the students and workers engaged in the strikes and revolt in May 1968 but they had already become the focus of the filmmaking

world in support of Langlois and in the filmmakers' protest in Cannes in May that subsequently closed down the festival that year. The *nouvelle vague* directors were at the fore of the filmmakers' protest, most evidently Truffaut and Godard, whilst Léaud's presence in this context is not surprising. In archive footage of the period, Léaud is often seen at Truffaut's side whilst Godard and Eustache as well as many other eminent figures from the French film world are often seen in this footage. This placed Léaud's



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nouvelle vague star image within this context, pointing to the political edge to his star persona. The image of Léaud in Godard's *La Chinoise* holding the little red book has come to symbolise the very idea linking political struggle and the creative forces behind filmmaking in this one image and was used as the front cover of a special edition of *Cahiers du cinéma*, marking thirty years since the events of May 1968⁹.

The opening scene of *Baisers volés* pays direct homage to Langlois which was itself in production during the Langlois affair in 1968. Moreover, Léaud had already by this time become established as an emblematic figure of *la nouvelle vague* through his roles for Godard during the 1960s and thus his image was embedded in the notion of political struggle and revolution. This setting situates the context in which filming took place, evoking the significance of these events in 1968 for Truffaut and Léaud. This extends the paternity first established between Bazin and Truffaut to incorporate Langlois in this family. In *Léaud de hurle-dents* (2003), the very idea of the

documentary pays direct homage to Langlois which is again connotative of the importance he held for the young Léaud as one of the many cinematic figures of the French film world mobilised in his support in 1968. Furthermore, the idea behind the documentary was conceived by Léaud himself. The film begins with a preface to the Langlois affair and explicitly refers to Léaud's active political involvement in support of Langlois.

On visiting the grave of Langlois in the Cimetière de Montparnasse, some thirty-five years after the Langlois affair took place, Léaud expresses his pleasure in seeing his own image on the grave of Langlois, describing him as, "notre père à tous"¹⁰. On his grave is a montage of various iconic cinematic images, of which the young Léaud



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as Antoine Doinel behind prison bars is one. Léaud also talks of the former site of Langlois' grave as a place where he has rehearsed for some twenty films. This points to the importance of the education of Langlois to the cinephile movement and *la nouvelle vague* itself

and the place of the young Léaud within this, together with the inspiration he derived from Langlois in his own career, thus again extending the parental lineage that began with Bazin. Léaud has himself paid homage to this parentage in stating, "Truffaut is my father, Godard is my uncle and Henri Langlois is my grandfather" (Monaco 1976: 19). As Léaud reads from Truffaut's *Le Plaisir des yeux* (1975) this further fixes the context of this lineage. As archive footage from 1968 shows Léaud and Truffaut side by side in the demonstrations in support of Langlois, Léaud quotes Truffaut directly, and indirectly refers to his own involvement in this landmark period of contemporary film culture in France:

"Nous gardons tous un souvenir ému de cette période de dévouement à une cause, de sacrifices personnels, et de l'absence de doutes qui caractérise l'engagement quand il

est passionnel... la bataille de la Cinémathèque a compté parce qu'elle a marqué la première - et probablement la dernière - retrouvaille des jeunes gens enthousiastes qui, dix ans plus tôt, dans une ambiance de camaraderie assez exceptionnelle, avaient donné naissance à la Nouvelle Vague." (Truffaut 1987: 96)

In the aftermath of the events of 1968, the French film world reorganised itself both on a political front and an aesthetic front. Some filmmakers moved further into the realm of explicit political comment such as the Dziga Vertov group of which Godard was a part. On the other hand, film criticism itself was subject to a re-evaluation. Political struggle within the cinema was seen through form and content thus in terms of the signifier and signified as taken up by Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni, themselves *Cahiers* critics at this time. What 1968 achieved in terms of content within filmmaking in French cinema was a re-evaluation of the new sexual politics and a coming together of concerns of French youth and national identity within a post-1968 context. When Eustache came to make *La Maman et la putain*, Léaud was able to represent that disaffected, politically active youth of 1960s France - students, cinephiles and filmmakers alike. This film epitomised this new sexual politics of a generation now entering their thirties, whilst Léaud's role was defining of the disenchantment cultivated within this youth generation. In the aftermath of 1968 and the years that followed, relaxation of censorship regulations and the new sexual politics that had taken hold, not only in France but more widespread, led the cinema to draw these concerns together, providing an insight into this growing restlessness that had become youth's preoccupation. In *La Maman et la putain*, Eustache makes a poignant comment on human weakness and failure as well as suffering, playing between document and fiction. On meeting Léaud he described the essence of this film to me as:

"...l'incarnation de l'inquiétude, le choix des mots - l'incarnation des mots. Il y a un

rythme. C'est anti-naturel. C'est littéraire."

This literary quality stems from the very theatricality of the film which strips the characters to their bare selves through a framing process of the character before the spectator. The result is a film that marked a new departure in French cinema focusing on the disillusionment of the so-called generation of Marx and Coca-cola now entering their thirties within a climate of changing sexual mores and attitudes. The film is equally an *autofiction* on the part of Eustache as director and author of the film text as well as an *autofiction* of Léaud as the author of its expression, cementing his star image as an eternal *soixante-huitard* in the dawn of the post-1968 years.

¹ *Cinéaste de notre temps : François Truffaut ou l'esprit critique* (1965)

² *Cahiers du cinéma*, vol. 6 no. 31 1954

³ *Écran Français*, no. 144 30th March 1948

⁴ *Image et Son*, no. 215 March 1968

⁵ *L'Express*, 3rd October 1957

⁶ Walter S. Ross, "The Actor the French Dig Most" [*The New York Times*, 28th June 1970: 6]

⁷ Alain Touraine, *The May Movement: Revolt and Reform* (trans. Leonard F. Mayhew) [Random House, New York 1971: 64]

⁸ Spoken by Véronique in *La Chinoise* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1967)

⁹ *Cahiers du cinéma* numéro hors-série, May 1998

¹⁰ Spoken by Jean-Pierre Léaud in *Léaud de hurle-dents* (Jacques Richard, 2003)

CHAPTER 4

UN NOUVEAU TYPE DE HÉROS MASCULIN

LES SALADES DE L'AMOUR

The title of Antoine Doinel's memoirs revealed in the last film of the Doinel cycle, *L'Amour en fuite* (1978), *Les Salades de l'amour*, succinctly sums up the troubled and failed relationships Antoine negotiates as well as the many problematic relationships experienced by other Léaud characters - or love's confusions (as the title is translated in the English subtitles). These characters are as fascinated as they are controlled by the female characters around them and their very being is often defined and further established in this way. Questions relating to gender are presented through the juxtaposition of fragile males against strong females often through both voyeurism and fetishisation of the female body to use Laura Mulvey's terms (Mulvey 1975: 12) as discussed in chapter one. The spectator is invited to participate in the male voyeuristic gaze and is further drawn into the lives of these characters through the fetishisation of these female characters. Yet, this juxtaposition does not serve to weaken the female characters so much as it in fact serves to empower them, destabilising conventional gender constructions. Léaud's characters do not hold a position of control despite occupying a voyeuristic position of adorer of women, but are themselves rendered vulnerable and feminised through rejection by fetishised females who would otherwise be undermined following Mulvey's conceptualisation of objectified female bodies. In the Doinel cycle, Antoine is positioned first against Colette, then Christine and Fabienne, all serving to undermine his masculinity. Likewise Maggie Cheung positioned against René in *Irma Vep* (1996), Antoine against Fabienne Tabard (Delphine Seyrig) in *Baisers volés* (1968), Alphonse against Julie (Jacqueline Bisset) in *La Nuit américaine* (1972) and Marcorelle against Agnieszka (Irène Jacob) in *L'Affaire Marcorelle* (1999) all take

on this role. These 'couples' also have in common strong female images and indeed strong female star images of the actresses in these roles.



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In *La Nuit américaine*, Alphonse incessantly asks the question: "Est-ce que les femmes sont magiques ?" The constant need for reassurance in efforts not to fall victim to the women around these characters results in a kind of deification of these women. Ironically, Truffaut makes reference to the title of the Doinel biography, when, following Alphonse's crisis after Liliane has left him, Truffaut as Ferrand, the director of the film within *La Nuit américaine*, responds fittingly providing one of the many intertextual elements present in the film:

Jean-François: Alphonse, toujours amoureux, toujours les salades.

Ferrand: Un jour je ferai un film. Ça s'appellera *Les Salades de l'amour*.

This idealisation of women is seen from the male protagonist's point of view, and in this position these characters are often rendered weak and fragile. This often stems from a lack of maternal affection and hence the desire to be mothered, giving rise to an anti-hero rather than hero per se. Conventional masculine ideals are destabilised in favour of a more vulnerable, troubled male and as they are often marginal characters, this further positions these males as anti-heroes. Truffaut's fetishisation of his female characters merely serves to affirm the mystery of womanhood whilst at times also demonising them. Madame Doinel in *Les quatre cents coups* (1959) is the epitome of this reverse side of womanhood for Truffaut and for the young Antoine. Her highly sexualised image equally presents a contradiction in that she does not fulfil the desires of Antoine in an Oedipal context. Annette Insdorf suggests an explanation for the dominant, powerful roles assumed by Truffaut's women in that they are often 'double' characters displaying more than one self (Insdorf 1989: 105). They can equally be vulnerable but with dependent, troubled males alongside this simply further destabilises conventional notions of masculinity. Subjected to this feminisation further reinforced by Léaud's fragile build and androgynous nature, this troubled male often has to negotiate a rite of passage stemming from failed Oedipal development. For Antoine, he can only flirt with the family in order to surmount this weakened position.

Antoine alludes on two occasions to his predisposition for girls from nice, bourgeois families in *Domicile conjugal* (1970) and again in *L'Amour en fuite*, adding that the family is as important to him as the girl herself. This is seen first in *Antoine et Colette* (1961) with the surrogate family offered by Colette's parents and again in *Baisers volés* in Antoine's relationship with the Darbons who subsequently become his in-laws in *Domicile conjugal*. However, this displaced affection for the family often leads to indifference on the part of the female character, which is also a direct consequence of the dichotomy presented by magic/demonised mothers as well as the absence of the 'father'. Antoine longs for not only a maternal figure but also a family.



This desire for familial attention often stems from failed Oedipal development through lack of maternal affection whilst his voyeuristic and often obsessive fantasies serve to push these women further away from him. However, in *La Nuit américaine*, the crew, like one big, happy family, are far from stable. Although Alphonse seems content in the company of Ferrand as a kind of surrogate father, paralleling the real-life Truffaut-Léaud relationship, and with Liliane to whom Alphonse will propose, his dream is shattered when she runs off with the stuntman. The equilibrium of the 'family' is destabilised and Alphonse can only compensate for this by flirting with madness before trying to seduce Julie. Madame Lajoie's outburst is testament to this destabilisation in which she denounces the false intimacy of everyone within the filmmaking profession. Whilst her outburst is amusing, it is also telling of the dysfunctional nature of this surrogate family that cannot fulfil Alphonse's desires and needs. Toubiana and de Baecque talk of the difficulties in Léaud's own life at the time this film was made which they suggest was reflected in this film (de Baecque and Toubiana 1996: 435). They talk of Léaud having suffered from depression, financial problems and romantic failures in his personal life that impacted on the people around him in his professional life. Thus when Ferrand attempts to reassure Alphonse this can be seen as a direct parallel between Truffaut and Léaud at this time:

"Le films sont plus harmonieux que la vie... Des gens comme toi, comme moi, tu le sais bien, on est fait pour être heureux dans le travail, dans notre travail de cinema."

A consistent feature found in many Léaud characters lies in the misfortune and mishaps that befall them. This element of consistency allows for a certain perception of the actor that contributes to the making of the star image. Clumsy, awkward attempts to seduce women are often thwarted by rejection. Infidelity often plays a part not only by the Léaud characters themselves but also by the women around them. When

Antoine attempts to seduce Colette in the darkened auditorium in *Antoine et Colette*, she can only reject his clumsy advances. At the end of the film she is seen leaving for a night out with Albert who stands in sharp contrast to the weaker, more fragile figure of Antoine, shattering the dream for him. In *Baisers volés*, when Antoine goes round to Christine's home, we are not surprised to see Christine hiding outside the house waiting for an opportunity to sneak past unseen as Antoine is welcomed in by the parents. In Aki Kaurismäki's *I Hired a Contract Killer* (1990), the way in which Henri Boulanger seduces Margaret is so stilted that it only seems to render his hopeless plight all the more pitiable. Yet there is equally something quite touching about this character. Nicholas Saada points to a line spoken by Léaud which he suggests is equally a kind of confession on Léaud's part (Saada: 60):

Margaret: Why did you leave France, Henri?

Henri: They didn't like me there.

Margaret too can be seen as a kind of 'magic mother' similar to Fabienne Tabard in that she is offering Henri not only affection but also protection. Just as Fabienne appears to Antoine as a kind of apparition, so too is Henri transfixed by her image the moment he lays eyes upon her. Henri also suffers rejection caused by the loss of his job as well as being rejected from his own country, as alluded to in the above line from the film.

Masculin-Féminin (1965) sees Léaud in the role of Paul whose adoration of women is more pronounced than that of future characters he was to incarnate for Jean-Luc Godard. In some ways he can be seen as an extension of the character of Antoine from *Antoine et Colette* (1961). Together with his desire for Madeleine, he also displays a need for interrogation which culminates in his questioning of Mademoiselle 19 on politics and revolution and new sexual attitudes of 1960s youth. This idea of interrogation can be seen as an extension of voyeurism whilst it is also closing the

space between subject and object of the gaze implied by the very idea of voyeuristic activity. The result is to focus desire and fantasy at close quarters with the anticipation of a more direct and hopeful response whilst also attempting to remain in control, the outcome often being indifference or rejection. In *Masculin-Féminin*, Paul does succeed at first but this is thwarted by a proposal of marriage to Madeleine. This attempt to remain in control is in a sense Paul's way of politicising love and relationships, establishing a set of power relations seen to full effect in his interrogation of Mademoiselle 19 ans. In his first long scene with Madeleine, Paul's method of seduction is based on this notion of interrogation as he asks her incessantly why she lied about arranging to meet him that evening and whether she would in fact go out with him. As their relationship progresses, Paul proposes to her whilst her indifferent reply is reminiscent of Colette's non-committal response to Antoine's written declaration of love in *Antoine et Colette*. For a number of Léaud characters, marriage is seen as the ultimate resolution in their desire for female companionship. In *La Maman et la putain* (1972), marriage as an outcome of Alexandre's relationship with Véronika is questionable given her alcohol-induced state of hysteria. Marriage is often seen as the logical conclusion and fulfilment of desire, yet it is only in *Baisers volés* that it is in fact a logical outcome and moreover, it does not last.

This notion of interrogation is taken up by Léaud's role as Guillaume in *La Chinoise* (1967) for Godard which was to prefigure the events of the following year in 1968 whilst the focus of the narrative is taken up with the students' leaning towards Maoist ideals. However, one scene in particular stands out in which Guillaume exclaims to Véronique that it is impossible to do two things at once. At this, she launches into a forceful explanation as to how this is possible concluding that what is necessary is "lutter sur deux fronts". This serves to undermine Guillaume's position not only in relation to politics but also in relation to love, as he is momentarily shaken by her rejection of him.

In roles where Léaud is seen in more 'grown-up' relationships with women, his characters often display tendencies towards juvenile behaviour. These characters are often in constant need of outward displays of affection and reassurance of their place within a relationship. However, this often places these characters in a weaker position that sometimes leads to infidelity on the part of the female character. In both *Pour Rire !* (1996) and *La Naissance de l'amour* (1992) Léaud is seen in roles that fall foul to such uncertainty. Both Alice in *Pour Rire !* and Hélène in *La Naissance de l'amour* end up cheating on the males incarnated by Léaud - a reversal of roles from Antoine's unfaithfulness in *Domicile conjugal* or the openly conducted three way relationship in *La Maman et la putain*. There is also an interesting point of intertext to be found in *Pour Rire !* on this note. Nicolas' encounter with the nurse in the hospital provides an additional layer to this character and indeed to the sum of Léaud's characters, as if to affirm the fact that his self-absorption will always render him unlucky in love, prefiguring the breakdown of Nicolas' relationship with Alice. For this character is played by Françoise Lebrun - Véronika, the 'whore' and the nurse in *La Maman et la putain*. As Nicolas questions whether they have previously met, the nurse's reaction is firmly negative. In both films, Alice and Hélène become uncertain of their positions, ultimately questioning the possibility that these relationships could work after all. The final scene in *Pour Rire !* as Alice is frozen by her uncertainty over leaving Nicolas recalls the long silent scene with Marcus and Hélène in *La Naissance de l'amour* where both women are seen to be on the verge of succumbing to the intensity of emotion displayed by the Léaud characters.

Following Hélène's initial departure, Marcus engages Paul in a monologue in which he talks about revolution. This serves equally as a metaphor for the sentimental education that both men still have to follow. His delivery is intense yet lyrical at the same time adding a poetic feeling to his speech:

“Personne ne sait ce qui se passe aujourd’hui parce que personne ne veut qu’il se passe quelque chose. En réalité, on ne sait jamais ce qui se passe. On sait simplement ce qu’on veut qui se passe. C’est comme ça que les choses arrivent. On dit ça, que les camarades ne faisaient pas la révolution... parce que nous voulons la révolution. Si toutes les conditions de la révolution étaient réunies, la révolution serait inévitable.”

Whilst it is Paul who represents *l’amour en fuite* (Philippon 1993: 30) fleeing family responsibilities, and in particular the troubled relationship with his son, it is Marcus who acts as a kind of commentator on love and politics. They both represent the youth generation of 1968, now in their forties, extending the discussion of the new sexual mores and ideals earlier explored in *La Maman et la putain*. Philippon alludes to this perpetual sentimental education that they continue to negotiate as eternal *soixante-huitards* (Philippon 1993: 31). In the car journey to Italy, Marcus metaphorically points to what he has lost and what he is searching for simultaneously:

“Je suis arrivé à la conclusion que j’avais plus de destin... Rome n’est pas notre destin. C’est notre destination.”

It is on their arrival in Rome that Marcus faces Hélène in a scene filled with long shots that focus on Hélène as well as Marcus, as he remains in silent contemplation in contrast to his usual verbosity. This use of long shots that pervades much of the film also recalls the cinematography in *La Maman et la putain* in which Eustache succeeds in drawing the spectator further into the lives of the characters. Dyer talks of close-ups as bearing a “window to the soul” (Dyer 1979: 134) and in this light this very shot in *La Naissance de l’amour* draws together both love’s confusions and the *soixante-huitard* from Léaud’s previous incarnations that have marked his star image in this way. Philippon goes on to describe Léaud’s performance as expressive yet achieved through

a process of interiorisation:

"...ce Léaud qui atteint maintenant une superbe expressivité par l'intériorisation, est magnifique... Il n'est guère surprenant de reconnaître par moments, derrière le visage de Marcus, tel personnage de Truffaut, l'Alexandre de *La Maman et la putain* ou l'homme blessé de *Rue Fontaine* (de Garrel), tant Léaud, intrinsèquement et depuis longtemps, a cette capacité à capitaliser les personnages forts qu'il a interprétés." (Philippon 1993: 32)

This adoration of women is often coupled with clumsy as well as voyeuristic actions. This is first seen in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* in which Antoine's Oedipal desire and his unsuccessful negotiating of the Oedipal course results in his continued failure to be content in his future relationships throughout the Doinel cycle. In this way, the first rejection of Antoine's desire by his mother goes on to shape his future relationships first seen in his obsessive fantasy over Colette in *Antoine et Colette*. Her continued indifference towards him urges him not to hold back but to decisively move into a room opposite the apartment of her parents from where his ultimate voyeuristic fantasy comes into being. This voyeuristic activity affirms notions of masculinity within the character by asserting the male gaze upon feminised objects. Comparisons can be drawn with *Panique* (1946) and its remake, *Monsieur Hire* (1988), which focus on voyeuristic activity that is ultimately subject to a destabilising force upon the male, rendering the character fragile and troubled through rejection resulting from the intensity of such voyeuristic actions. Antoine continues to exhibit voyeuristic tendencies when seen following a girl in *Baisers volés* in the same way Alexandre pursues Véronika in *La Maman et la putain*, only that in the latter case he does succeed. Through Alexandre's masquerade as a dandy, he seduces women through not only his words but also through voyeuristic tendencies played out in a *flâneur*-like fashion. This

also recalls Baudelaire's cult of the dandy.

Truffaut invites the viewer to partake in this voyeuristic fantasy by focusing frequently on the legs of his female characters. This is first seen in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* before Madame Doinel who is ignorant of Antoine's sexual awakening and his desire for her affection. Don Allen quotes Truffaut in describing this as "that silken skin more disturbing than the real one" (Allen 1985: 28). First explored in *Les Mistons* (1956), Truffaut presents voyeuristic fantasy to the spectator calling upon him or her to partake in the desire of these young boys, '*les mistons*', through their fascination for Bernadette. Truffaut thus transforms his women into apparitions, a theme which is carried through much of his work and explored in detail through the character of Antoine. These magic women are unattainable but no less capture the imagination of enraptured males. They are the object of male fantasies yet through their unattainable status they are rendered powerful, dominant figures of the male imagination.

Voyeuristic activity is taken to the extreme in *Déetective* (1984) in which Léaud as Détective Neveu is involved in a case where he is literally spying on the suspect through a camera positioned in a hotel room opposite. However, the power invested in the look is destabilised and his relationship with Arielle is called into question, again destabilising the masculine subject as holder of the gaze. The ultimate rupture takes place when in his attempt to assert his authority, yet seemingly lacking the confidence to do so, he mistakenly shoots his colleague in place of the real suspect.

The opening scene of *Domicile conjugal* exemplifies Truffaut's fascination for women's legs as the camera persistently follows Christine, focusing on her legs as she does her shopping then returns to the apartment she shares with Antoine. One of the many instances of fetishising the female body, Truffaut actively invites the spectator to partake in this voyeuristic activity. This is accompanied by the continued mistaken address by the shopkeepers towards her as "Mademoiselle" as she corrects them by asserting they should be addressing her as "Madame". This serves to reaffirm her

position both as object of desire and as empowered female although in this case positioning her as Antoine's wife. The result is to affirm Christine as "one of the first modern and well-adjusted women in Truffaut's universe" (Insdorf 1989: 117). Whilst Mulvey sees this objectification of women mediated through the male gaze as essentially undermining resulting in the affirmation of masculine values, the male gaze can also be seen to render the female object as powerful, unattainable, magical as it is in turn destabilised by the magic quality of the object. This can be seen for example in the way Josef Von Sternberg empowers Marlene Dietrich in *Der Blaue Engel* (1930) by almost deifying her image. This becomes a destabilising force for the male character who is at the source of the male gaze, contradicting traditional masculine values of power and patriarchy implied in the male gaze.

A common trait found in Léaud's roles is the manic aspect to these characters, frequently expressed through manic protestations over love which are often in response to rejection or simply relating to his greed for female companionship. The celebrated phone call in *Baisers volés* as Antoine's relays his report on Fabienne Tabard is one such example. The telephone is the signifying tool for this manic declaration. Similarly in *Week-end* (1967) the man in the phone booth offers the recipient of the phone call a manic declaration of love as he sings down the receiver. All such scenes seeing Léaud on the telephone imply the distanced voice. The act of singing often acts as a signifier for behaviour bordering on madness or displaying manic tendencies in Léaud's characters. This is seen in *La Maman et la putain* where Alexandre attempts to sing along to a record, yet is incapable of doing so convincingly. Whilst this instils an element of comedy into this scene, it stands in sharp contrast to the song that Véronika then goes on to sing. Whilst she is embarrassed by her performance, adding a more serious tone to the situation, Alexandre can only revel in his own. Following a discussion about who Bob Dylan is with his friend, Robert, in *Masculin-Féminin*, Paul is seen to take the lead as he sings impromptu as if taking his lyrics from the newspaper

in front of him. As he does so, he punctuates his 'song' with hand movements as if he were conducting himself, again taking pleasure from his own performance.

Madness is sometimes seen to manifest itself through suicidal tendencies. Through such behaviour, the characters display a kind of self-dramatisation or hysteria that positions these characters as weak males whilst at the same time calling for the



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spectator to empathise with them. In *Pour Rire !* Nicolas having discovered Alice's infidelity, attempts to commit suicide in front of Gaspard, Alice's lover. The manic side to his character reaches a climax culminating in the scene in which Nicolas cries out Alice's name in front of the apartment of Gaspard.

His unrelenting yelling simply escalates into a frenzy rendering the character both comic and tragic simultaneously. Juxtaposed against Gaspard, a sports photographer, Nicolas's position is undermined. Gaspard's involvement in sport implies a certain brand of masculinity that Nicolas and indeed many Léaud characters cannot live up to. Moreover, Alice as a high-flying lawyer only feminises his position further as she occupies a more masculine position in this powerful role. She recalls Colette in *L'Amour en fuite* who also plays a lawyer. Ironically, we never actually find out what Nicolas'



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own occupation is. In *I Hired a Contract Killer*, Henri Boulanger resorts to hiring a professional killer to kill him, having failed in his own attempts at suicide. On one hand this is perceived as quite pathetic yet also comic in the absurdity of the situation Henri creates for himself. In *Le Journal du séducteur* (1996), the

manner in which Hugo pulls out his revolver and brandishes it around aimlessly and carelessly is again not only comic but another manifestation of madness. The scene also takes place in front of a mirror adding another level of signification. Furthermore,

his insistence on the Indian musicians continuing to play their music only adds further comedy and tension into the scene. His respectable occupation as a professor of literature renders this all the more ironic. This is analagous to the role of Pierre Lachenay in *La Peau douce* (1964), who is also a lecturer, and in keeping with other Léaud's characters, is another of Truffaut's weak vulnerable males. Similarly, Léaud as Decourt in *La Couleur du vent* (1988) is portrayed as a particularly manic character who is also a writer.

La Nuit américaine shows Léaud play to the extremes of madness. As he emerges from his room dressed in his nightshirt he plays the fool but a somewhat deranged one too. As he takes solace in his attempts at seducing Julie he can only call Julie's husband to announce this to him. Ferrand says to Julie:

"Alphonse est un enfant, il agit comme un enfant."

This not only points to the manic side to his character but also to an eternal childlike psychological state. This is reinforced by the image of Alphonse at the go karting track, as he turns to the camera with the face of a sulking child. This also reinforces the screen image of Léaud as eternally childlike.

THE LITERARY HERO

The literary influence present in many Léaud characters aligns his star image with the literary hero often within the 19th century tradition. This is portrayed through a love of literature (Balzac in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, *Baisers volés*, *Out 1*, 1970) through roles themselves taken from literary adaptations (*L'Éducation sentimentale*, 1971, *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent*, 1971) or connected with literary works (*Le Journal du séducteur*, *Jane B par Agnès V*, 1987, *Le Gai Savoir*, 1968) and through roles where

Léaud plays a writer in his own right (*Domicile conjugal, L'Amour en fuite, L'Île au trésor*, 1985 *La Naissance de l'amour, La Couleur du vent, Innocent*, 1998). This literary aspect to many Léaud characters is frequently a reaction to their desire for certain women, and sometimes the desire to be mothered accompanies this. Thus Antoine's love of Balzac in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* points directly to this aspect of the character who through Balzac seeks to get closer to the maternal presence in his life. Likewise, Antoine's hopeless infatuation with Fabienne Tabard is expressed through equating the situation with *Le Lys dans la vallée*. These roles often follow the tradition of the *Bildungsroman* in which the narrative traces the development of the protagonist in a kind of apprenticeship to life who will negotiate various trials and tribulations in order to ultimately enter the social order. *Baisers volés, Les Deux Anglaises et le continent* and *L'Éducation sentimentale* can be seen very much in this light.

As Antoine falls under the spell of Fabienne Tabard in *Baisers volés* he undergoes his initiation not only into adulthood but also into the world of love and relationships. This apprenticeship forms Antoine's real sentimental education following the *Bildungsroman* tradition. Fabienne represents not only the lost maternal figure and thus his maternal desire. She is an 'apparition' that for Doinel fits with his Balzacian romantic ideals, whilst she is for him unattainable, this does not prevent him from writing another celebrated declaration of love. For Antoine, Balzac is his tool with which he attempts to achieve association with maternal desire as he had previously done in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, seeking to get closer to Madame Doinel through his adoration of and inspiration drawn from Balzac. Antoine's initiation into the adult world follows a succession of women that cross his path with the ultimate resolution of the Oedipal trajectory in the formulation of the couple of Antoine and Christine. In order to achieve this, Antoine must negotiate this series of 'relationships', most importantly that offered by Fabienne Tabard within the context of the 19th century literary tradition of the sentimental education of the younger man by the older women. This is another kind of

contract like that proposed by Madame Doinel in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, but on this occasion with the intention of affirming that "les gens sont formidables"¹. This leads Antoine to affirm his relationship with Christine that will result in marriage. This is also the most comic of the relationships Doinel experiences. Truffaut himself said that it is this very couple that provides much of the comedy in *Baisers volés*, the juxtaposition of these two actors that forms a most unlikely couple:

"Ce qui fera rire, ce sera le couple Léaud-Seyrig, le contraste entre elle et lui parce que vraiment, c'est énorme." (Rouillet 1968: 96)

However, this scene culminates in the death of Monsieur Henri who has become Antoine's mentor, and in effect a substitute father figure. Following his resolution to confess that he is in fact the mystery lover of Fabienne Tabard, Antoine explains this to Monsieur Blady following which Monsieur Henri suffers a heart attack and dies. Gillain describes the events of this scene as Antoine having not only 'slept' with his mother, but also having succeeded in killing his father (Gillain 1995: 125) positioning Antoine at the centre of the Oedipal context. Interestingly, Seyrig wrote to Truffaut after the filming of *Baisers volés* was completed displaying a kind of unexpected reversal of roles in terms of her own established star image and that of the more fragile, comic figure of Léaud in this film:

"Je suis désespérée de manquer si totalement d'invention alors que Jean-Pierre Léaud exerçait sur moi, et je pense sur tout le monde, son charme et sa liberté de mouvement et de parole devant la caméra. Vous voyez, il a exactement les qualités que je voulais posséder. Son indépendance vis-à-vis des mots, son aisance dans l'improvisation, c'est ce que je souhaitais le plus acquérir."²

The Balzacian element is again present in Jacques Rivette's *Out 1* in which Léaud plays Colin, something of an outsider who is striving to decipher the puzzle of the 'histoire des treize'. He is also seen displaying the archetypal Léaud clumsiness with women when rejected by Pauline. There are many elements of intertextuality in this film that position Léaud against other stars he has previously played alongside or against those he was soon to play alongside - Michael Lonsdale as Thomas (Monsieur Tabard in *Baisers volés*), Bernadette Lafont as Sarah (Marie in *La Maman et la putain*) and Juliet Berto as Frédérique (Yvonne in *La Chinoise*, and Patricia in *Le Gai Savoir*), as well as important figures of *la nouvelle vague* itself - Jacques Doniol-Valcroze as Etienne, Eric Rohmer as le balzacien and Suzanne Schiffman as co-director who equally collaborated on many of Truffaut's films. When Etienne says to Colin, "Cette histoire des treize est un pur fantasme adolescent", we are reminded of the adolescent Antoine in his admiration of Balzac, the Balzacian context of Antoine's relationship with Fabienne Tabard and indeed the eternal adolescent quality of Léaud's star persona. Moreover, the presence of Doniol-Valcroze is significant both from the fact that he co-founded the *Cahiers du cinéma* and hence the 'family' that Léaud was born into, and also from the fact that his name inspired the name of the Doinel character from his pseudonym of Etienne Loinod (Truffaut 1970: 10). Lafont, Lonsdale and Léaud would come together again a decade later in Liliane de Kermadec's *Mersonne ne m'aime* (1982). In this way intertextuality plays on the interpretation of the spectator whilst also concretising this *soixante-huitard* image and the eternal adolescent aspect to Léaud's star image. Whilst Colin is very much an outsider in this film, the puzzle that he is seeking to resolve places him within a literary context that adds another layer to the literary hero aspect of Léaud's star persona, and in this film he portrays very much a marginal anti-hero. In addition, the *nouvelle vague* figures present in the film and its crew further concretise the importance *la nouvelle vague* gave to literature. The film is in itself almost like an autoportrait of *la nouvelle vague* itself in the aftermath of 1968,

positioning Léaud as the marginal character of Colin within the 'family' seeing him alongside Doniol-Valcroze and Rohmer, as well as Rivette and Schiffman behind the script. Léaud has spoken of Rivette as his '*maître*' and spoke in detail to me of the influence Suzanne Schiffman had over him. His participation in this film thus brings together other strands of the lineage he was born into at the beginning of *la nouvelle vague*.

As exemplified in the Doinel films, Balzac was an influential reference point for Truffaut. Beyond the Doinel cycle, the Rodin statue of Balzac features in *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent* again locating this point of reference for Truffaut, the film itself being a literary adaptation. This is just one of the many literary references that pervade the film. Claude himself is a writer and during the course of the film he publishes his first novel, *Jérôme et Julien*, which can be seen as a direct reference to *Jules et Jim* (1962) also written by Henri-Pierre Roché and adapted for the screen by Truffaut. Obvious similarities can be drawn between *Jules et Jim* and *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent*, namely the triangular relationship that evolves in both narratives. However, as Serge Toubiana points out, despite the historical setting at the



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turn of the century, the film is as much a dialogue between the generation of 1968 and the bourgeois ideals that infuse the film's narrative (Toubiana 1985: 5). In the confusions that ensue with Claude's inability to identify which of the two sisters he is in love with, the subtext of strong mothers and absent

fathers returns. Whilst Madame Roc is on the scene, she will not permit Claude to marry, remaining the domineering powerful mother that she is. The deaths of Catherine and Jules in *Jules et Jim* are echoed by the death of Anne in *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent*. We can add to this the bloodstain that is portrayed so dramatically towards the end of the film after Claude and Muriel have spent a night

together for the first time, alluding to the death of the character and indeed their relationship.

This is also a story of impossible love and confusion. Madame Roc assumes the position of powerful matriarch, disapproving of Claude's relationship with Muriel. This prompts another form of contract between mother and son calling for a year's separation between Claude and Muriel. Rather than affirming their love for each other, this renders it all the more impossible. Thus Claude's declaration that he will one day write a book about their experience points to the need expressed by many Léaud characters to document and thus justify love's confusions of desire, impossible and troubled relationships and adoration of women. The written word becomes the site at which such experiences are privileged. Gillain associates this relationship with literature and the written word as coinciding with 'original sin' in relation to the Doinel character and thus the impossibility of such desire for Antoine:

"Dans le déclin et la chute d'Antoine Doinel, l'écriture joue le rôle du péché originel: dès qu'Antoine prend la plume, les désastres s'abattent sur lui. Dans ce contexte, la décision absurde de voler une machine à écrire est tout à fait logique, quand on sait l'importance capitale du langage chez Truffaut." (Gillain 1995: 32)

The first letter from Claude to Muriel in which he expresses his love for her is his first attempt to document the experience. This declaration of love follows in the same vein as the love letters written by Antoine, first in *Antoine et Colette* and even more so in the pneumatic letter he sends to Fabienne Tabard in *Baisers volés*, particularly given the Balzacian context. Claude's letter is subsequently followed by numerous letters on Muriel's part, something of a reversal from the love letter writing Antoine we have grown accustomed to in the Doinel films. In *Baisers volés* Christine remarks how at one time she would receive up to nineteen letters in a week from Antoine. Whilst Madame

Roc seeks to obstruct any relationship between her son and either of the two English girls, Anne and Muriel too play a part in rendering Claude's relationships with each of them impossible, first when Anne comes between Claude and Muriel and later when Muriel does likewise in relation to Anne and Claude. Gillain in quoting Truffaut described such bitter love in the following way:

"Truffaut disait avoir voulu dans ce film 'presser l'amour comme un citron'."³

Here too is a literary hero confused over two female figures with the mother figure of Madame Roc also playing into this. This is not too far removed from many of Antoine's experiences conditioned from the outset by Madame Doinel leading to failed relationships and confusions in adulthood. Similarities can also be drawn with *La Maman et la putain* in which Alexandre can be seen almost as a parody of this literary hero again caught between two strong female characters.

Léaud as Frédéric Moreau in *L'Éducation sentimentale* is the epitome of this literary hero and this character is perhaps the most significant of the Doinel ancestors of the literary tradition. He too is also to undergo an initiation into the world of love precisely within a 19th century context. A number of similarities can be drawn with other Léaud characters and it is no surprise to see Léaud in this very role. Broadcast in 1973 on French television, this mini-series followed Léaud's body of work from the 1960s which had already characterised his star image as an eternal adolescent as well "the surviving vestige of the literary hero of the romantic tradition" (Turim 1972/1973: 43). Thus this role can be seen as an amalgam of some of Léaud's previous roles - uncertainty about women whilst equally displaying an extraordinary fascination towards them. We see this from the very beginning of the first episode when Frédéric is instantly captivated by Marie Arnoux. This unrelenting adoration of the women Frédéric encounters continues to manifest itself in his subsequent relationships with

Rosanette and Madame Dambreuse which ultimately leads to his downfall. This sentimental education by the older more experienced woman is alluded to when on first meeting Madame Dambreuse, Frédéric says, "En vérité, je crois que je préfère les femmes de trente ans."



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Outward expressions of emotion can be seen as a destabilising aspect of the masculinity represented by Frédéric, first when he has spent a night for the first time with Rosanette and again on the death of their child. Both these expressions of emotion are direct consequences of Frédéric's passionate and impossible love for Madame Arnoux. Such an outward display of emotion undermines a conventional sense of masculinity and is thus a destabilising force in the construction of the character as all masculine. In this context of older woman/younger man, Frédéric can be seen as a kind of eternal adolescent particularly in his repeated assertion that he will never marry, thus not conforming to the traditional Oedipal trajectory, unlike the modern day literary hero of Antoine in *Baisers volés*. These two concepts of masculine values correspond to Mulvey's conception of both acceptance of marriage as entry into the symbolic and rejection of this ideal as narcissism (Mulvey 1981: 14). Somewhat ironic for a film that was made within the context of the changing face of sexual politics in the post-1968 era, Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* can equally be seen to accept this entry into the symbolic in his proposal of marriage to Véronika. However, the ending is distinguished from a traditional Oedipal resolution by the hysteria in which the proposal is relayed and received. This plays upon the idea of self-dramatisation on the part of

Véronika whilst Alexandre is simply stunned by the conclusion he has been led to as he is silenced by her. Antoine too ultimately follows this course although ending on a note of uncertainty at the end of *L'Amour en fuite* with Sabine in which they neither affirm nor discount the possibility of their relationship working, whilst marriage has already proved to be a failure.

Whilst the Godard films that Léaud played in were of a more political nature, his role as Émile Rousseau in *Le Gai Savoir* is important within such a literary as well as philosophical context. The film was commissioned as a documentary to be based on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Émile* and is concerned with the acquisition of knowledge through the individual's relationship to sounds and images. In keeping with Godard's revolutionary style, the film sees Léaud and Juliet Berto in discussion in a television studio which is inflected by political images and sounds that cause ruptures in the dialogue. The significance of this role for the Léaud persona is that it extends the *soixante-huitard* image already associated with Léaud, whilst linking it to the idea of knowledge deriving from a literary source. *Émile* was itself something of a revolutionary text that led to a reform in the education system in France, and whilst Godard's film did not have the same impact on filmmaking, it is nevertheless an important role within the body of Léaud's work that further establishes the literary and political aspect of Léaud's *nouvelle vague* persona whilst the film itself is firmly rooted within the importance of language and the ability of the cinematic image to promote this ideal. James Monaco suggests that even if Léaud had only made this film, *Masculin-Féminin* and *La Chinoise*, he would nevertheless deserve consideration as a star of this generation within French cinema (Monaco 1976: 18).

LES MAMANS ET LES PUTAINS

Following Liliane's departure from both the film set and her relationship with Alphonse



in *La Nuit américaine*, as Alphonse emerges from his room dressed in a nightshirt he utters the words:

"Personne veut me passer dix mille balles pour aller au bordel ?"

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Whilst this makes for a particularly comic scene, it points not only to the manic side of Alphonse's character, but also to his need to come to terms with crises through a kind of assertion of his masculinity and indeed his own identity. This is an element of the star image of Léaud that whilst he is able to instil comedy into crises there is often such a need to assert and affirm his own position. One way of achieving this is sometimes manifested through encounters with prostitutes and visits to brothels or *hôtels de passe*. It is also a reassertion of masculine values in the face of being feminised through rejection or infidelity.

The '*salades*' that Antoine finds himself in during the course of the Doinel cycle often lead to visits to the brothels whilst his encounters with prostitutes can be traced



back to his adolescent years in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. The Pigalle environment which plays a maternal protective role for Antoine also contributes to his education as he goes through his sexual awakening. When taken to prison Antoine's position is further feminised by the prostitutes that surround

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him in this authoritarian patriarchal space. When asked about his sexual experiences by the psychologist in the detention centre, Antoine does not hesitate in relating his one failed attempt to visit a prostitute.

On being discharged from the army in the opening scene of *Baisers volés*, Antoine wastes no time in heading straight for an *hôtel de passe*, although he appears to be obviously unaccustomed with the 'rules' which also makes for comedy in this scene. Following the death of Monsieur Henri, Antoine can only console himself by visiting a brothel, only on this occasion he is now accustomed with the formalities. Allen rationalises this as Antoine "asserting life in the face of death" (Allen 1985: 54). Another brothel scene appears in *Domicile conjugal* which again sees Antoine attempting to assert his own position when confronted with the rupture of his marriage with Christine. As he leaves the building, he cannot avoid passing Monsieur Darbon on the stairs. Not altogether surprised to see Antoine, Monsieur Darbon can only be protective of Christine, irrespective of Antoine's surprise at seeing his father-in-law in this environment.

Towards the beginning of *Les Lolos de Lola* (1974), on arrival in Paris, Bernard is greeted by his friend, Yann, and is introduced to a street full of prostitutes. This serves as his initial education into Parisian life. The short scene in *Mon Homme* (1996) in which Léaud as Monsieur Claude is enticed into Marie's apartment is reminiscent of these brothel scenes that pays homage to this aspect of Léaud's *nouvelle vague* persona. Léaud retains the comic element to this scene, as he, smartly dressed as ever, shakes hands as if having concluded a deal with Jeannot, Marie's lover and pimp.

The place of the brothel in 19th century French literature was that of an institution which often formed a kind of education for the young man. In *L'Éducation sentimentale*, the ending finds Frédéric and Deslauriers reminiscing on their youth and their failures in life. As they engage in the memories of their youth, they remember having been refused entry to a brothel, alluding to their failures in life, whilst also remembering the experience fondly. The visits to brothels by various Léaud characters parallel this idea giving rise to the idea of a certain kind of literary hero steeped in the tradition of the romantic literary hero. The ending of *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus*

(1966) pays homage to this kind of literary hero and strikingly echoes the ending to *L'Éducation sentimentale*. Having achieved his goal of saving for a duffle coat, Daniel remains an outsider. Eustache succeeds in instilling a sense of failure on Daniel's part in the same vein as Frédéric. In order to overcome the alienation felt, the end of the film sees Daniel together with his two friends chant in unison, "Au bordel, au bordel, au bordel !" as they seemingly head for a brothel. Eustache himself remarked how similar



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this ending was to that of *L'Éducation sentimentale* (Philippon 1986: 32). This is a poignant moment which echoes the failures in love and life of many Léaud characters. This idea is taken up in *La Maman et la putain* within a post-1968 context which can be seen as an extension of Daniel's existence in *Le*

Père Noël a les yeux bleus in which Véronika, a self-confessed 'whore', talks openly of the "maximum de types" she has encountered. Alexandre is only too willing to pursue her despite this revelation about her existence as a 'whore'. For Alexandre like other Léaud characters, to win over Véronika is an assertion of life in the face of crises that again render these characters vulnerable and weak as well as displaying an insatiable appetite for female companionship. Véronika is a complex character that embodies contradictory values of both the new sexual politics in the post-1968 era as well as more conventional Catholic values. Whilst she does not hesitate to inflect her speech with her 'gros mots' as often as she can, her final monologue is concerned more with individual desire rather than discussion of her sexual exploits. Placed between the 'mother' and the 'whore' in this way, this not only serves to weaken Alexandre's façade. It also steers him towards the conventional path of marriage. As Véronika seizes the 'parole', she kills off Alexandre's character reducing his speech to a proposal of marriage. The film has a cyclical quality beginning with a proposal of marriage from

Alexandre to Gilberte and ending in a proposal of marriage from Alexandre to Véronika. At first he must cope with rejection whilst at the end he must cope with acceptance.

One of Léaud's more recent films sees him play a filmmaker of pornographic movies in Bertrand Bonello's *Le Pornographe* (2001). Whilst not directly relating to prostitution, the display of the female body in this way that vicariously implicates the viewer can consequently be seen as a form of prostitution taking place before the very eyes of the spectator and places this analysis in the wider context of the sex industry. This can therefore be seen as an extension of the brothels frequented and prostitutes encountered by other Léaud characters. It can also be seen again as a kind of homage to Léaud's *nouvelle vague* persona. Léaud himself said that it is the very crudeness of the language together with a dignified character that makes for a beautiful film which he likens in this respect to *La Maman et la putain*. In *L'Affaire Marcorelle*, the encounter with Agnieszka causes the crisis of reality and illusion that Marcorelle must negotiate. Unknowingly at first, rather than asserting identity this serves to strip the character bare of his identity as a judge whilst paralleling his former Marxist revolutionary past. In so doing, various elements of Léaud's star persona are presented before the spectator who too participates in the negotiation of the cross-over between reality and illusion. Marcorelle's downfall sees him placed within a marginal context in which he can be seen to return to patriarchal authority of prison where Antoine first found himself in in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*.

In an after-screening debate at the Cinéma Saint-André des Arts following the release of *L'Affaire Marcorelle* in September 2000, Le Péron talked of how the narrative and the Marcorelle character were purposefully constructed around Léaud's persona. He also described the film as a sort of documentary on Léaud himself whilst remaining within the realms of fiction which extends the concept of *autofiction* to a focus on Léaud himself. He talked of how the character of Marcorelle evokes not only the troubled, restless Léaud characters of the 1960s but also such manic characters epitomised by

Henri Boulanger in Kaurismäki's *I Hired a Contract Killer*. Whilst he said it was not intended to be a Truffaldian tale nor Doinel in older age, Le Péron asserted that traces of these characters remain because they are part of Léaud himself.

THE FLANEUR

In Edmund White's *The Flâneur*, he quotes Balzac in giving a description of what makes the Parisian:

The Parisian is interested in everything and, in the end, interested in nothing... Intoxicated as he is with something new from one day to the next, the Parisian, regardless of age, lives like a child. He complains of everything, tolerates everything, mocks everything, forgets everything, desires everything, tastes everything, feels everything passionately, drops everything casually - his kings, his conquests, his glory, his idol, whether made of bronze or glass... (White 2001: 15)



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This description of the Parisian strikingly sums up the *flâneur* existence which defines many of Léaud's characters, none more so than Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain*. Alexandre assumes his wealth through his surroundings. Marie provides financial stability, Véronika represents Alexandre's desires, whilst the

Bohemian setting of Saint Germain des Près in Paris defines his very existence. Alexandre is self-indulgent to the extreme, living with and living off the slightly older Marie whilst wasting little time in pursuit of other women. He does not hesitate in chancing his luck in his proposal to former lover, Gilberte, at the beginning of the film.

Self-absorbed and narcissistic to the extreme, Alexandre assumes the role of the dandy, a mock intellectual who resolves to spend his time reading *Le Monde* as his 'occupation'. Nevertheless, he is incapable of any such activity and merely uses such props to justify his being, for the dandy existence is all about a state of mind and being. His indulgence is equally flamboyant none more so than when in the company of his friend played by Jacques Renard. This pretentiousness equally feeds into Alexandre's relationships, for what marks them most is his exuberance, his verbosity and above all his wildly manic protestations about love, as when he is spurned by Gilberte, interrogated by Marie as well as his intense monologues seen throughout the film.

Whilst the dichotomy of indoors and outdoors is present throughout the three hours and forty minutes of *La Maman et la putain*, Alexandre cannot remain in one place nor occupied with only one activity. He is constantly on the move, just as the *flâneur's* curiosity leads him to endless exploration. Walter Benjamin uses Edgar Allan Poe in distinguishing the philosopher from the *flâneur* which applies precisely to Alexandre's existence distinguishing what Alexandre purports to be and what he is in reality:

"The case in which the *flâneur* completely distances himself from the type of the philosophical promenader; and takes on features of the werewolf restlessly roaming a social wilderness, was fixed for the first time and forever afterward by Poe in his story "The Man of the Crowd"." (Benjamin 1999: 418)

Added to this is Alexandre's incessant verbalising which displays the extremity of his self-absorption, often demanding reassurance for his existence as *flâneur*, as he feeds off both the mother and the 'whore'. The cafés frequented by Alexandre in the film become his home ground, delineating the 'bohemian' Saint Germain des Près space that is at the heart of Alexandre's daily life. Benjamin goes on to state that:

"...if flânerie can transform Paris into one great interior - a house whose rooms are the quarters, no less clearly demarcated by thresholds than are real rooms - then, on the other hand, the city can appear to someone walking through it to be without thresholds: a landscape on the round." (Benjamin 1999: 422)

This *flâneur* existence is placed within the historical context of the aftermath of 1968 that is constitutive in the creation of the Léaud persona. Léaud's image had become symbolic of the *nouvelle vague* period and his presence during the events of 1968 compounded this image into that of the eternal *soixante-huitard*. For him to appear in a film focusing on the dystopia of the early 1970s having moved on from the utopian ideals of 1968 adds this additional layer to his screen image. Whilst the film is essentially about the individual desires of the three principal characters, it equally points to the new sexual mores of the post-1968 generation that accompanied this disillusionment. Philippon describes this in a Flaubertian sense as:

"...un gros plan sur trois individus, un plan moyen sur une micro-société, et un plan d'ensemble sur la société française de ce début des années 70." (Philippon 1986: 33)

Thus the theme of the triangular relationship that is seen in *Baisers volés*, *Domicile conjugal* and *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent* is continued no less, but within the more topical context of post-1968 France.

The *flâneur* seeks to intellectualise and moreover aestheticise aspects of the everyday which is central to Eustache's portrayal of the characters and décor in *La Maman et la putain*. Eustache plays between the real and appearances, the theatricality of the characters and their disguises. This theatricality is played out within the dialectics of euphoria and despair, life and death, tragedy and comedy, the body and

the mind. For Alexandre, his wordiness is his principal means by which to express desires as well as hiding behind them. Reader quotes Michel de Certeau in describing this verbosity in its historical context as "la prise de la parole" in the post-1968 era (Reader 1993: 91). Alexandre occupies the central position in the film up to the point at which he takes Véronika to Marie's flat at which point Véronika takes over the stage



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which culminates in her long hysterical monologue towards the end of the film, albeit alcohol-induced. Reader goes on to describe this as becoming "a nightmarish parody of the *prise de la parole*". For Alexandre, words and language need to be both intellectualised and aestheticised. They are his tool for seducing

women as well as defining his very self. The long scene that takes place in Marie's flat after Alexandre and Véronika have spent a night together in her absence sees Alexandre's verbalising reach a peak in the way he gives importance to trivialities:

"Personne ne dit: 'J'ai bu une excellente limonade à midi.'"

Alexandre's monologue continues as he makes the suggestion that they take breakfast in a café that opens at 5h25:

"A cette heure-là on voit des gens formidables, des gens qui parlent comme des livres. Comme des dictionnaires. En prononçant un mot, c'est la définition de ce mot qu'ils donnent... Parler avec des mots des autres, voilà ce que je voudrais. Ce doit être ça la liberté."

This recalls the same phrase that Fabienne Tabard pronounces to Antoine in *Baisers*

volés: "les gens sont formidable", as well as the many other references to books and literature in other films featuring Léaud. It also conjures up the image of the 'book people' in Truffaut's *Fahrenheit 451* (1965).

The dichotomy of theatre and reality is further compounded by the subtle camera movements that give the spectator the impression of reality together with a rigorously scripted screenplay that left no room for improvisation. In one sense, this further enhances the theatrical nature of the film whilst also instilling a very natural feeling, in effect giving the appearance of improvisation on the part of the actors. The actual construction of the narrative can be seen as a series of scenes as if being played out in a theatre. Yet the theatricality of the film is cinematic rather than mere theatre. Eustache's focus on the everyday is punctuated by a real time feel through minimal camera movement throughout the film. The everyday sounds as well as the various musical interludes accentuate this further. Douchet talks of this very aspect of *La Maman et la putain* as playing on the real and the imaginary in which the cinematic image captures the fiction of the lived moment as the spectator negotiates the confusion between the real and what we believe to be real (Douchet 1998: 5). Life is simply being played out before the spectator yet through a very rigorously scripted text. When talking about *La Maman et la putain* to me Léaud suggested that it is the very precise nature of the script that gives rise to an anti-natural and thus literary feel to the film pointing to the way Eustache constantly plays between such dialectics. As there is such minimal movement throughout the film, the characters are positioned quite firmly in their different environments which also plays a part in the construction of the characters.

The telephone is once again a prop giving Alexandre the means to act out his theatre. Through the telephone, Alexandre continues to pursue Véronika. The telephone also becomes a site at which verbal communication is privileged seen in particular when Alexandre eagerly reaches for the telephone following the incident of

Véronika's 'lost' tampon. So delighted in the situation, Alexandre calls his friend to recount the story. Yet, to Alexandre's disappointment his friend is not at home to receive the news.

Reader assimilates Alexandre's verbosity with the "cult of the dandy" (Reader 1993: 91). The dandy is equally about keeping up an appearance which is at the core of Alexandre's being. When he is seen frantically rushing to get up and get dressed in the very first scene, we see the pride he takes over his appearance played out before a mirror. He is almost always seen with a cravat and wearing a suit, that fit the dandy mould perfectly. Dyer talks of appearance as being one of the defining features that construct the character, both through the body and attire. This had already become an important stylistic element of *la nouvelle vague*, so to see Léaud in a more overtly dandyesque guise is not surprising. In *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* disguise is taken to the extreme with the Father Christmas outfit Daniel wears which ironically, is party to the ultimate disguise of the duffle coat he subsequently purchases having posed as Father Christmas in order to be able to afford it. The dark glasses he is often seen wearing in *La Maman et la putain* perpetuate this idea of disguise in the character. Philippon suggests that this element of disguise is not only a search for individual



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identity, but that it is equally about the relationship between disguise and passion as alluded to by Barthes in *Fragments d'un discours amoureux*⁴. Reader states that this

also alludes to Alexandre's threat of castration (Reader 1993: 96). This search for identity is reminiscent of the mirror scenes in the Doinel cycle which also imply a threat of castration. Indeed there are various mirror scenes in this film alone perpetuating Alexandre's narcissistic tendencies as well as questioning his existence. The culmination of this aspect of disguise comes when both Marie and Véronika play at 'feminising' Alexandre by applying make-up to his face. This is perhaps the ultimate threat of castration imposed upon Alexandre. He is no longer in control and he is no longer playing out his own narcissistic fantasy but is party to that of the two women he is caught between. Similarly when Véronika and Marie talk of Alexandre being endowed with "un bec de théière", this also serves to weaken Alexandre's representation of masculinity.

When Véronika takes over *la prise de parole* this serves to reinforce her as a strong female against the weakened Alexandre despite her hysterical monologue as her verbosity eclipses that of Alexandre. Not only do we question the boundaries for fiction and reality within Alexandre's character, but so too are we led to the same question regarding the construction of the character of Véronika. Philippon suggests that, "on ne sait plus si c'est l'actrice ou le personnage qui vacille" (Philippon 1986: 41). Alexandre is reduced to proposing marriage to Véronika which as Weiner states carries the subtext of the death of the character of Alexandre (Weiner 2002: 9). The threat of castration instils in Alexandre a desire to emerge from this and ultimately conform, obliterating his dandy existence.

The threat of castration is manifested in various ways. The abortion by Gilberte of what could have been Alexandre's child leaves him devastated as he is denied the fatherly role he may otherwise have assumed. This comes full circle with Véronika's pregnancy at the end of the film who is now in effect the pre-Oedipal mother signifying both masculinity and femininity (Reader 1993: 93). The many references to suicide in the film cannot only be seen to reinforce this threat of castration but regrettably as a

precursor to the suicide of Eustache himself several years later in 1981 - Jessa's attempted suicide, that of their mutual friend Michèle, Marie's attempt when swallowing a bottle of pills and the fact that Alexandre admits that on Gilberte's decision to leave him, he secretly hoped she would commit suicide. When talking of suicide with Jessa, Alexandre describes this as fear rather than indifference:

"Écoute, je n'arrive pas à ne pas prendre le suicide au sérieux, pas plus que la mort, ou pas moins. Comment faut-il dire ? Alors parle-moi de suicide tant que je veux mais si j'en ris c'est que j'en ai très peur."

Moreover, as Alexandre is squeezed out the '*parole*' by both Véronika and Marie, his virile position of power is further undermined which leads to an attempted (albeit dubious) fulfilment of the Oedipal trajectory through his proposal of marriage to Véronika.

LÉAUD'S CHARACTERS AND THE WORKING WORLD

Léaud's characters are often seen to participate in odd jobs and unlikely professions. Antoine is seen in a number of unusual occupations, private detective ironically disguised as shoe shop assistant followed by television repair man in *Baisers volés*, florist followed by operator of model boats in *Domicile conjugal* and ultimately as a writer in *L'Amour en fuite*. The status of Antoine's occupations was alluded to by Léaud himself in describing the character as not undertaking "quelque chose de précis"⁵.

Perhaps the most paradoxical occupation undertaken by a Léaud character is that of Father Christmas in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus*. This role takes the element of disguise to the extreme. Ironically, it is through the power that the disguise confers upon Daniel that he is able to seduce women leading them into a false sense of security

of a kind of 'father' as implied by his status as 'Père Noël' until his true self is laid bare at which point he has to suffer rejection. In a similar vein, Marc in *Le Départ* plays a hairdresser aspiring to be a racing car driver which also serves as a kind of disguise to hide behind. The ultimate goal of becoming a racing driver sees Marc's attempt to assert the masculine values denied him in the role of hairdresser. His occupation as a hairdresser is another way in which a feminising force is seen to undercut masculinity, this being a 'feminine' profession concerned with appearance. In one particular scene, a client inquires about Marc's mother which recalls the maternal desire of Antoine towards Madame Doinel in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*:

Client: Tu penses toujours à ta maman ?

Marc: Madame, je ne suis pas ici pour penser.

Such duality often causes conflict whilst also playing on the relationship between disguise and passion as discussed above in relation to Barthes. The more feminine role of hairdresser is undermined by the more masculine realm of fast cars that Marc is seeking to be part of.

Another interesting common thread to this aspect of these characters is found in the creative roles Léaud embodies, further fermenting the image of the intellectual hero that Vincendeau refers to (Vincendeau 2001: 111). In the Doinel cycle, Antoine's ultimate ambition is to be a writer following on from his love of literature which is also echoed in *Les Deux Anglaises et le continent*. Whilst the title, *Les Salades de l'amour*, pays an ironic homage to the troubled Doinel character, it equally draws together the literary influences that pervade the character and indeed Truffaut himself. Further resonances of this are found in *Out 1* whilst taken to a further level in Colin's obsession with 'les treize'. Yet whilst we are led to believe that Colin is deaf and mute, he is reduced to earning his way by playing his mouth organ in cafés at often indifferent

onlookers. This aspect of Colin's existence adds a further dimension of marginality to the character. Such creative roles see the character's desire to document experiences of life and more importantly love as the resolution to the 'salades' encountered and therefore Doinel's memoirs serve as the ultimate creation of the Doinel myth pieced together in *L'Amour en fuite*.

Other creative roles inhabited by Léaud are seen in *La Nuit américaine* in which Léaud plays the actor in the film within the film mirroring the life as art dialectic and as a film director in *Irma Vep*, *Last Tango in Paris* and *Le Pornographe*. These roles seek to perpetuate the *nouvelle vague* image of Léaud invoking the creative aspect inherent in Léaud's persona. The improvisational nature of his acting style is testimony to this. This creative quality also lends itself to the idea of madness as seen most manifestly in *La Nuit américaine* but also in *Last Tango in Paris* with Tom's frequent frenzied outbursts and in *Irma Vep* as René is pressured into sacrificing his creative integrity contradicting his creative ideals of what cinema should be. These creative roles often carry a subtext of having to resolve some such crisis whether it be about life or about art or both.

In various films, Léaud is seen to take on the role of an enforcer of the law. This idea alone stands in contrast to the marginal characters he has embodied that often find themselves subject to the patriarchal authority of the law as in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* and *Baisers volés*. In *Détective*, Léaud plays Détective Neveu who also takes on the role of the voyeur. As discussed above, this role of voyeur ultimately serves to weaken his position and his final act of mistakenly killing his colleague shows him to be unconvincing and unsuccessful in this role. The comic character of Bouvreuil in *Les Keufs* follows a comic tradition again reminiscent of Keaton whilst also displaying awkward attempts to seduce Inspector Molyneux, the main protagonist of the film. This also alludes to prostitution when he mistakes her under her disguise as a prostitute and asks how much she will charge. The result is to destabilise his character again proving to be unconvincing in the role of chief inspector. In *Une Affaire de goût*, *L'Affaire*

Marcorelle and *La Guerre à Paris* Léaud plays the role of a judge. Given that these three films were all released within a period of just over two years in France (April 2000, September 2000 and May 2002 respectively) they have established a certain image of Léaud's star persona in middle age at the beginning of the twenty-first century. His role in *Une Affaire de goût* is also a kind of voyeur through interrogation by his investigation of the intricate relationships of Frédéric, Nicolas and Béatrice as well as former employees of Frédéric in his search for understanding his manipulative force upon each of their lives. As discussed above, in *L'Affaire Marcorelle*, Marcorelle must battle with his inner self and former politically active past within this present, having been implicated unknowingly in the lives of Agnieszka and the other Polish immigrants in her world. Ironically, Agnieszka leaves her past as a prostitute behind her as she enrolls as a law student whilst ultimately Marcorelle finds himself in prison. However, when in prison, one scene sees Marcorelle and his fellow prison inmates reading the newspaper coverage of the 'affair'. He points to Fourcade not as the victor in the situation but rather the loser as he remarks, "C'est pas si simple, regarde sa gueule".

In other roles, Léaud is seen playing against strong females who are themselves inhabiting this patriarchal domain of the law. This is seen in Colette in *L'Amour en fuite* and Alice in *Pour Rire !*, and to an extent in Agnieszka in *L'Affaire Marcorelle* aspiring to such a role as well as Inspector Molyneux in *Les Keufs*. Each of these characters serves to destabilise the position of the Léaud character by a feminising process through the masculine nature of their occupations. Alice in *Pour Rire !* is also represented as a strong, powerful female character that reduces Nicolas to one of the weakest and most vulnerable of Léaud's characters.

In *I Hired a Contract Killer*, Henri Boulanger has to contend with the loss of his job. His despair in this situation only renders him even more marginal, whilst taking on the role of a foreigner positions him as an outsider. In order to resolve his plight, he sees his only solution in the criminal underworld placing him further on the margins of

society whilst paradoxically hiring a killer to put an end to his very own life. In *Out 1*, *La Maman et la putain* and *Pour Rire !*, the Léaud characters have no apparent job, reinforcing the marginal aspect to these characters. In *Out 1*, Colin is also seen as an outsider, both in his lack of apparent occupation and his position on the fringes of the group in his unrelenting search for 'les treize'. Whilst playing the deaf-mute in the first two episodes of the film, he resorts to harassing customers in cafés playing his mouth organ in order to make his living. Yet this is based on the assumption that he is deaf and mute and as the spectator learns of the falsity of this situation sympathy for the character dissipates. In *La Maman et la putain*, Alexandre pronounces that he will read literature and *Le Monde* as his occupation, taking on the dandy role and by extension, a *flâneur* existence. Yet this lack of apparent occupation is the essence of his very being for he is incapable of engaging in activity as his insatiable desire for female companionship and curiosity with the world around him leave him feeling restless in any such occupation. Marie's role within fashion and Véronika's occupation as a nurse serve to further position Alexandre in this way in that their roles are both concerned with appearance and indeed the body and care of the self in a protective, nurturing manner, fuelling the dandy aspect of Alexandre's character. The desire of a maternal figure feeds into this in both the role of the mother and the 'whore'. The self-absorbed Alexandre can only sap the life out of these two women in his life.

UNE VIE UNIQUE TOTALEMENT CONFONDUE AVEC LE CINÉMA...

The "nouveau type de héros masculin" that Gillain refers to encompasses various traits that all stem from a *nouvelle vague* persona of eternal *soixante-huitard* (Gillain 1991: 23), troubled in life and disenchanté in love, culminating in the incarnation of the *flâneur*. Léaud's embodiment of these characters represent an anti-hero that for Gillain is:

“désorienté, incertain, vulnérable, maladroit avec les femmes et incapable de socialisation, dont le personnage qu’il joue dans le film de Jean Eustache *La Maman et la putain* représente la version la plus fortement marquée par Mai 68.” (Gillain 1991: 23)

This points not only to the marginal anti-hero, weakened fragile male awkward with women, but also to the *soixante-huitard* persona that is inherently linked to these aspects of the Léaud persona.

In an interview with Marc Voinchet in May 2001⁶, when asked if he can recall a line from the films he has played in that makes him laugh, that always springs to mind, Léaud does not hesitate in responding: “Est-ce que les femmes sont magiques ?” Whilst nodding to the character of Alphonse in *La Nuit américaine* and indeed Truffaut himself, Léaud is equally acknowledging the sum of the roles he has incarnated for which the idea of woman as magic is intrinsic to the constitution of these characters.

Douchet claims that Eustache’s *Mes Petites Amoureuses* is an anti-*Les Quatre Cents Coups*, and *La Maman et la putain* is the opposite to Truffaut’s sentimental narratives (Douchet 1998: 4) but Léaud has the ability to bring these together. Alexandre is not Antoine but an extension of him. Antoine progresses into Daniel in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* into Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain*. But these are sentimental stories that are equally about vulnerable males being guided in their sentimental education by stronger empowered females.

In an interview with de Baecque and Péron, Léaud describes the Doinel character in the following way:

“Il n’a jamais été un jeune homme de son époque. Il n’est pas à la mode, il ne fait pas la révolution. Il ne travaille pas dans quelque chose de précis. Il n’est pas à l’aise dans

la société.”⁷



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He goes on to describe the many characters he has played as “personnages douloureux”. Not only is Antoine ill at ease within society, but as Toubiana points out, he in fact only appears to be at ease in extreme situations⁷. He goes on to describe Antoine as “le contraire d’un héros” further cementing the

idea of the anti-hero in the character of the same ilk that Gillain purports Léaud to be.

With the more recent body of work that Léaud has accomplished since the 1990s, it is not surprising therefore to see him incarnate roles that pay direct homage to the *soixante-huitard* persona so associated with his star image. These characters remain infused with various explorations of vulnerable, troubled men and whilst they may not quite be on the margins of society, these characters nevertheless remain marginal. Some of these more recent roles have seen Léaud not only playing for a newer generation of *Cahiers* critics turned cineastes but also alongside younger French male stars that in certain ways also portray troubled, vulnerable men. Mathieu Amalric is perhaps the most interesting actor in this respect. In *Le Journal d’un séducteur*, he inhabits a homoerotic role whilst also being demanding of Claire’s company, the central female character in the film. Ironically, he ends up seducing her mother shifting the focus to the older female/younger male construction that figures for a number of Léaud characters. Although the two actors are not in fact juxtaposed against the other in this film, the presence of both actors in the film affirms this association of the sentimental education of young troubled men with undercurrents of homoerotic desire that further destabilise conventional notions of identity and gender representations. In *L’Affaire Marcorelle*, Amalric as Fourcade functions to further undermine Marcorelle’s position whilst playing the younger lawyer eager to learn as against the older judge, seemingly

more experienced both in his profession and in life. Yet Marcorelle ultimately lays himself open to judgment by the others around him, none more so than Fourcade who ultimately plots his downfall.

The literary aspect to the roles Léaud has played further adds another facet to the Léaud persona that also brings together various aspects of these troubled characters. In *Jane B par Agnès V*, when asked by the director, Agnès Varda, who she would like to play alongside if she had the choice, Jane Birkin suggests Léaud for the 'damaged' and 'lost' kind of character he embodies. She too talks of him as '*un acteur fétiche*'. It is quite fitting then that the scene they act out is in fact taken from a poem by Paul Verlaine, incorporating the literary dimension to Léaud's short performance in this film where Léaud is simply playing himself. It is also interesting from the point of view of Varda as filmmaker. Before entering the cinema, she had established a career as a photojournalist in which the framing and capture of the image take on the utmost importance. It is not surprising, therefore, that her style of filmmaking takes on the same perspective which again points to the idea of framing of the subject. The same result is achieved in *Les Cents Nuits de Simon Cinéma* (1995) in which she uses an excerpt from *La Nuit américaine* in which Alphonse is being filmed playing his character in the film within the film. As the shot pans out in *La Nuit américaine*, the spectator gradually becomes aware that it is the film within the film (in this case within another film) that they are watching.

Whilst the heritage of *la nouvelle vague* is inherently linked to Léaud's star image, the crossing over of reality and the imaginary and of life and art is inextricably bound within a consideration of Léaud as star. Yet whilst the focus is on the actor above the character, Alexandre reverses this in *La Maman et la putain* in which Alexandre talks of the Belmondo double being more real than the actor himself. Has the character become more real than the actor? In a film that has such a hyperreal feel, it is not therefore surprising to see this cross-over between actor and character and the

confusion that arises. If we consider this question in relation to Alexandre/Léaud in *La Maman et la putain*, Léaud plays the *flâneur* who is both dandy and voyeur. A defining characteristic of the dandy is the idea of flamboyance, the desire for luxury. This idea of decadence is also considered as a constitutive element of the star, as Dyer points out (Dyer 1979: 38). The role of Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* can be seen as the paradox of the dandy and the star together which contributes to the very idea of the star as actor/star as character dialectic. In the Voinchet interview, Léaud himself makes direct reference to this dichotomy of actor versus character as he quotes Truffaut from *Le Plaisir de yeux*:

“Pour moi la personne qui joue le personnage est plus importante que le personnage.”⁸

Morin alludes to the role/self and life/art dichotomies stating that the star has to perpetually act out his own character hence the star is created. In so doing the myth of the character becomes inscribed upon the face and body of the star (Morin 1972: 145).

The recent wave of films that has seen Léaud playing for a newer generation of filmmakers has perpetuated aspects of his *nouvelle vague* image in that these more recent films include a newer generation of *Cahiers* critics, namely Le Péron and Olivier Assayas - perhaps a kind of *nouvelle vague* as an extension of *la nouvelle vague*, whilst still paying homage to this *nouvelle vague* legacy. Le Péron has said that Léaud is not the child of *la nouvelle vague*, but the child of *les nouvelles vagues* in the plural⁹. In an interview about Léaud's role in *L'Affaire Marcorelle*, Thierry Jousse refers to this confusion as having been the essence of the character of Marcorelle:

“C'est à la fois Jean-Pierre Léaud mais en même temps ça ne peut pas être quelqu'un d'autre dans une certaine manière. C'est un des films où la mémoire de Jean-Pierre Léaud est indispensable pour que le personnage ait une crédibilité.”¹⁰

Perhaps the most significant of roles in this context is that which Léaud plays in *The Dreamers* in which he is seen as his modern day self inter-cut with archive footage from 1968 as the archetypal *soixante-huitard* taking part in the protests in defence of Henri Langlois in front of La Cinémathèque française. This very positioning of Léaud in this role and within this context points to the education based on the idea of being 'raised' within the *nouvelle vague* family as well as on screen. As Le Péron points out in *Léaud l'unique*, Léaud's life has become a melange of both life and cinema, "cette vie unique, totalement confondue avec le cinéma..."

¹ Spoken by Fabienne Tabard in *Baisers volés* (François Truffaut, 1968)

² Archives du Film du Carrosse [dossier CCH 68, April 1968]

³ François Truffaut, "Mes Deux Anglaises, mon onzième film" [*L'Avant Scène du Cinéma*, no. 121 January 1972: 11]

⁴ Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un discours amoureux* [Seuil, Paris 1977]

⁵ Antoine de Baecque and Didier Péron, "Léaud, retour à Doinel" [*Libération*, 31st August 2001]

⁶ Interview with Marc Voinchet [featured on *Le Pornographe* DVD]

⁷ Antoine de Baecque and Didier Péron, "Léaud, retour à Doinel" [*Libération*, 31st August 2001]

⁸ Presentation of *L'Amour en fuite* [featured on *L'Amour en fuite* DVD]

⁹ Serge le Péron, "Pourquoi Jean-Pierre Léaud est-il un acteur d'aujourd'hui" [*Télérama*, no. 2805, 15th October 2003]

¹⁰ *Le Cinéma de Jean-Pierre Léaud*, Canal Plus, 25th October 2001

CONCLUSION

In a consideration of Jean-Pierre Léaud as star of the French cinema I have attempted to define the star quality of an actor whose presence within the world of cinema has been unique. His existence within the cinema has also extended to work outside of France through collaboration with such directors as Jerzy Skolimowski, Aki Kaurismäki, Bernardo Bertolucci and Tsai Ming-liang exporting his body of work to a wider audience beyond France alone. This has translated into continued collaborations with various directors over more than four decades which has firmly rooted Léaud within the realm of auteur cinema and indeed an *art-et-essai* brand of cinema¹. As this has been an active choice on the part of Léaud it also feeds into an aspect of his star image in that this active choice has not only closely aligned him with the type of roles that his star image has come to represent but also leads to a consideration of the man himself². Thus Léaud's star image cannot be separated from the marginal aspect of both the roles he has incarnated as well as the cinema they belong to. This choice plays into the three defining characteristics of stars as identified by Edgar Morin which I have explored in detail in chapter one - the economy, the psychology and the sociology of stardom.

This choice of roles taken on by Léaud is indicative of his commitment to non-mainstream cinema and has in this way helped shape the economic aspect of his star image and is thus a constitutive element in the construction of his star persona. This leads to a certain expectation on the part of the spectator in expecting to find him in such roles. Whilst his films have not achieved the consistent box office success of such contemporary male stars as Jean-Paul Belmondo, Alain Delon and Gérard Depardieu or Jean Gabin before him, certain degrees of box-office success (*Les Quatre Cents Coups*, 1958, *Baisers volés*, 1968, *La Nuit américaine*, 1972) together with

critical acclaim have come to shape a certain star image in the eyes of the spectator. Moreover, today in 2004, he retains a certain presence and remains a mythic figure within French cinema, who at the age of sixty, is continuing to make films. As Barthes argues in *Mythologies* (1957), the creation of a myth is about the dissolution of a history made into a present that creates the idea of myth. Despite the fact that Léaud is best known for his role of Antoine Doinel in the Doinel cycle, the myth created through the portrayal of this character at various defining moments of his life is further fixed by the extension of this character in other roles (Paul in *Masculin-Féminin*, 1965,



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Daniel in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus*, 1966 or Colin in *Out 1*, 1970) and the homage paid to Doinel in more recent films most notably in *Ni neibian jidian/Et là-bas, quelle heure est-il ?* (2000).

For Barthes, myth is a signifying system, that represents reality illuminating a society's own history and culture. For Lévi-Strauss, the creation of a myth is intrinsic to the resolution of a contradiction (Cook 1985: 328). By extending this to the analysis of stars, they can be seen as mythic constructions through Richard Dyer's assertion that the star as a phenomenon holds the ability to reconcile contradictions. As discussed in chapter one, André S. Labarthe talks of Léaud as a sign and within this his star image can be seen as synonymous with the idea of myth as a form of communication and production of meaning within a certain historical context and cultural context.

Léaud's *nouvelle vague* image is intrinsic to this concept of his star persona, and whilst this belonged to a defined period in contemporary French cinema, the continued references made to this image in recent films in the last few years are testimony to this mythic aspect of his star image. Bertolucci's *The Dreamers* (2002) is the epitome of this image contrasting Léaud in 1968 to Léaud in 2001 bringing the two together through the representation of that period of French cultural history. Similarly in *Et là-bas, quelle*

heure est il ? Léaud playing himself is not merely a homage to *la nouvelle vague* and his participation in it but it is the recognition of a star whose career founded during this period has continued in a way so as to concretise the eternal adolescent, the eternal *soixante-huitard* and indeed his unique presence in the world of cinema. Léaud himself describes his image in *Le Pornographe* (2000) as almost an 'explosion' of his *nouvelle vague* image whilst maintaining that he takes much pride in having been a part of this revolutionary cinema³. Likewise, in *L'Affaire Marcorelle* (1999), as Thierry Jousse points out, the role of Marcorelle had to be played by Léaud, a role which brings together the political and revolutionary aspect of his *nouvelle vague* image with Léaud as he is now⁴.

If we return to the constitutive elements of the economy of stardom as defined by Dyer, we see how Léaud represents both the ordinary and the special. The range of ordinary characters inhabited by Léaud adds a further sense of 'ordinariness' to his star persona, whilst there remains something intrinsically special about these characters too. The quasi-biographical representations of some of Léaud's directors (Truffaut in the Doinel cycle, the representation of the politics of Godard, Eustache in *La Maman et la putain*, 1972, or the biographical representation of Bernard Dubois in *Les Lolos de Lola*, 1974), or the dandy 'par excellence' in *La Maman et la putain*, the mock deaf-mute in *Out 1*, the resolution of the Oedipal trajectory through the hope of marriage that by all accounts often ends in failure (*Masculin-Féminin*, *Baisers volés*, *L'Éducation sentimentale*, 1971, *La Maman et la putain*, *La Nuit américaine* and *Déetective*, 1984) or the ordinary man losing his job in *I Hired a Contract Killer* (1990) all portray representations that can be perceived as 'ordinary' that have been transposed onto Léaud's star image. Interestingly, when I asked Léaud which of his characters he feels most resembles him in life, after some contemplation he responded by talking of the role of Henri Boulanger in *I Hired a Contract Killer*.

The very nature of Léaud's style on the other hand has created something of an enigmatic figure and in this sense the star image of Léaud can be seen as special. The

very concept of extravagance and decadence often associated with the star is at the heart of Alexandre's dandy existence in *La Maman et la putain*. Similarly, Léaud in fact takes on the role of a star in *La Nuit américaine* (actor), *Dialóg 20-40-60* (1968) (pop-star) and *36 Fillette* (1987) (concert pianist). This blurring further complicates the character/actor/star relationship.

As for the notion of the lucky break, Léaud himself described his meeting with Truffaut to me as a miracle that they ever came to meet. Through this meeting, not only did Léaud find a mentor and surrogate father figure but equally the other *Cahiers* critics became a 'family' for him. I would describe this not only as a lucky break but also the beginning of Léaud's education of the cinema that would not only construct his career but continue to foster his close association with the cinema that he has become synonymous with. Coupled with this is a continued commitment to various directors, Truffaut, Godard, Skolimowski, Garrel, Eustache, Dubois, Assayas and more recently Le Péron who has become a constructive force in Léaud's career today, continuing a close relationship between actor and director as he has consistently done previously with other directors. Just as Truffaut talked of the ease with which he is able to write for Léaud⁵, so too has Le Péron acknowledged the fact that he can write for Léaud with him already in mind⁶. Similarly, Eustache talked of having Léaud in mind when writing the script for *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* (Collet 1967: 50).

This psychological aspect of the creation of the star is further compounded by the blurring of the distinction between actor and character as seen most evidently in *La Nuit américaine* which brings together the close relationship between Léaud and Truffaut, the notion of being unlucky in love and in life and a continued sense of adolescence even hinting at madness. Equally his performances in *Baisers volés*, *Out 1* and *Pour Rire !* (1996) have opened up the actor through his unique acting style that also draws the spectator further into the illusion of the cinematic image. I would also argue that Léaud's role as Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* is the pivotal role of

Léaud's career. Despite the meticulous nature of the film text that the actors had to interpret, the spectator is invited into the vicarious position of holder of the gaze and thus desire is projected onto and through the characters on screen. Having to work with such a precise text stood in sharp contrast with much of Léaud's previous work in which



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improvisation played a major part in his incarnation of a role. Moreover, the long, carefully scripted monologues together with financial constraints of the making of the film made this a demanding role⁷. Despite this Léaud gives the spectator arguably his best performance, inflected with his wide

vocabulary of gestures, movements and words coupled with the attire and props that are not only indicative of the dandy but also a kind of continuation and amalgamation of his previous roles. The troubled Antoine in the Doinel cycle, Daniel in *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus* and Paul in *Masculin-Féminin* display their obsessive quest for female companionship. In *Le Père Noël a les yeux bleus*, we also see the element of disguise at the fore together with the final scene in which the three young men suggest heading for a brothel. Both themes are taken up in *La Maman et la putain* and explored further. The politically motivated characters of Paul in *Masculin-Féminin*, Guillaume in *La Chinoise* (1967) and Émile in *Le Gai Savoir* (1968) are also echoed in a certain way through the character of Alexandre within a post-1968 context carried through a kind of interrogation that adds a sense of theatricality and furthers the idea of the framing of the character. All of these roles can be seen to have come together to a greater or lesser extent whilst at the same time Léaud's propensity for 'mimétisme' together with his unique expressiveness create an additional layer to the character in which the character and actor both take on equal importance.

How then does this position the spectator? As discussed in chapter one, the

spectator's relationship to the cinematic image negotiates the pre-projection process of familiarity and expectation and the projection process in which the spectator seeks to identify with the star image. The post-projection perpetuates the star image through the media which exists in conjunction and in isolation of the film, further fixing the star image for the spectator. In an exploration of Léaud as star, the spectator is drawn into the character's world through defining characteristics of his acting style which feed into the spectator's recognition of certain traits and continuity within his characters. A certain equilibrium is established between appearance (the body on display), props (extension of the body) and environment (décor). This is seen through the frequent presence of Paris as almost an additional character, props such as books giving rise to the literary hero, *Le Monde* as in *La Maman et la putain*, guns as in *Détective* and *Le Journal du séducteur* (1995) and even in *La Nuit américaine* (even though the use of the gun is in the film within the film and is rendered all the more ironic in that it is a toy gun) or cars in *La Nuit américaine* and *Le Départ* (1967) or simply through attire, again most pronounced in *La Maman et la putain*. Moreover, the use of such props often serves to further destabilise conventional gender representations within these characters. The idea of the literary hero focuses on a very different kind of hero to that incarnated by more macho male actors such as Belmondo or Delon. The use of cars or guns does not serve to affirm masculinity but in effect subverts such idealised masculinity, touching upon the idea of madness as well as vulnerability. This destabilisation of conventional masculine values in which the feminine sphere is seen to undercut the masculine side of the male protagonist is a tradition that has been present in French cinema. Jule Berry's somewhat camp mannerisms, Alain Delon's outstanding beauty and feminisation through the body on display and the more effeminate roles played by Gérard Depardieu's giving rise to ambiguous gender representations are some examples. In this sense it is therefore not surprising to find Léaud inhabit such roles nor is it surprising to see the star image within the actor who does not conform to

traditional societal norms both in terms of masculinity as spectacle - the body - or in terms of vulnerability and fragility within the character - the mind. As Gillain points out, Léaud has succeeded in establishing a new and different kind of hero (Gillain 1991: 23).

The energetic, animated style that is very much Léaud's own adds to the enigma of his star image whilst also drawing the spectator further into the character's psyche. Certain elements of mise-en-scène also play into this through close-ups or the freeze-frame. The constitutive elements of lack and desire play into this in establishing the spectator as film construct. This is played out within the cross-over of the real and the illusory, life and art, public and private spheres, the body and the mind. The role of Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* draws all of these elements together whilst I would argue that in particular *La Nuit américaine* and *L'Affaire Marcorelle* are defining roles for Léaud's star image in this context. The mirroring of life through art that is the subject of *La Nuit américaine* calls into question the boundaries between reality and fiction. The very concept of the star playing the role of a star is intrinsic to this confusion whilst the many intertextual references that pervade the film only play on this further. In *L'Affaire Marcorelle*, the narrative plays on the very idea of reality and illusion in the construction of the subject both within the cinema as site of pleasure and desire and within the star as signifying element of the cinema, drawing the spectator further into the world of the character and indeed the actor and hence the star himself.

In an ideological sense, the creation of Léaud's star image raises issues surrounding the ambiguity of gender representations. His non-macho presence and incarnation of vulnerable, weak males has created a kind of anti-hero typical of many of Truffaut's males but also of many other characters Léaud has inhabited outside of his work with Truffaut. The display of the body is unlike that of more idealised male stars calling into question gender issues surrounding masculinity as spectacle and in Léaud's case destabilising this aspect of what is expected of stars. However, looking at the display of the body as spectacle is, as I have already analysed in chapter one, a

feminising force and in examining Léaud's star image this only feeds into his star image further in that the characters he has incarnated fit within a certain mould of the troubled, fragile male both emotionally and physically. Therefore for the spectator, whilst this creates ambiguities and contradictions within the star image, it also offers a degree of consistency within Léaud's characters and his screen image that further concretises the notion of the star through his performances.

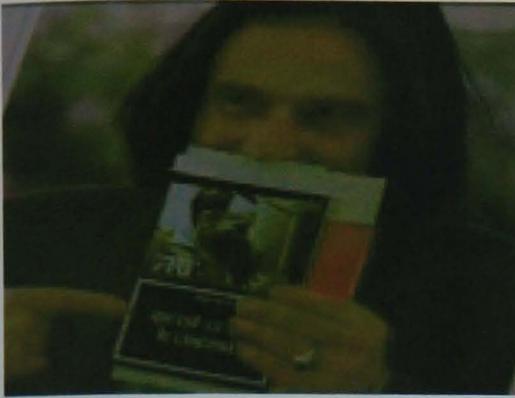
The appeal of stars is gendered in that the gaze is, according to Laura Mulvey, essentially a male gaze objectifying female bodies through scopophilic and fetishistic modes of looking. Consideration must however be given to the position of the female spectator as well as the spectacle of the male body juxtaposed against fetishised female bodies. Moreover, the sociological function of stars gives way not only to societal norms and the ideology surrounding this but also each set of values brought to the screen by the individual spectator. Whilst it is difficult to say whether Léaud's appeal lies more with the male or the female spectator, his image incorporates aspects of both the masculine and the feminine. His roles often display the conventional masculine behaviour of voyeur and adorer of women exerting the male gaze upon female objects. The objectification of the masculine body, whilst also positioned against strong female images, often stars in their own right, further diminishes the position of strong male and thus feminises and weakens this position. This also serves to further fix a strong star image even if not fitting conventional ideals of masculinity through consistency of the type Léaud has become associated with.

The dandy aspect alone within the star image of Léaud is itself a feminising force giving rise to an ambiguous representation of masculinity. Seen to full effect in *La Maman et la putain*, the attention to details and pride taken in appearance display a more 'feminine' side to Léaud's star image as perceived through the incarnation of Alexandre. This is further concretised by the role of Marie working in the domain of fashion and the role of Véronika as nurse. Both roles are thus defined as caring and

nurturing in relation to the body which further feminise Alexandre's presence within the narrative. This 'dandy' image was used by fashion designer, Emanuel Ungaro, for his men's collection in 1997 for which he used Léaud's dandy image as its motif. Ungaro himself described the concept behind his work as 'anti-macho'⁸. In the television footage of the fashion show displaying this collection, Léaud is seen on stage with Ungaro at the end of the show which not only pays homage to this aspect of Léaud's star image but further fixes this image by being positioned in this context. Ungaro was also credited as costume designer for Léaud's recent screen role in Jacques Richard's *Léaud de hurle-dents* (2003). The idea of the dandy and the idea of the star are at play simultaneously making for a star image that is firmly placed as a dandy.

If we return to Ginette Vincendeau's formulation of the star in French cinema as retaining a kind of omnipresence, this does call into question Léaud's star status in that his career underwent something an eclipse during the 1980s. Nevertheless, a revival of interest in Léaud as well as newly forged relationships between the actor and directors (most notably Le Péron) has certainly seen Léaud grace the screen quite regularly since 2000. At the Cannes Film Festival in 2000, Léaud was present for both his role in Le Péron's *L'Affaire Marcorelle* and Tsai Ming-liang's *Et là-bas, quelle heure est-il ?* Having now entered his sixties, Léaud's recent screen presences have brought together various elements of his star image that confirm his position in contemporary French cinema. French arts magazine, *Les Inrockuptibles*, described this presence in the opening sentence of a supplement published on Léaud that coincided with the release of *Pour Rire !*:

"...pour nous, Jean-Pierre Léaud a toujours été là. Avant même que notre simple plaisir de spectateur ne se transforme en une passion dévorante, nous connaissions son nom, sa silhouette en perpétuel mouvement, sa mèche folle et son regard inquiet..."



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As discussed in chapter two, the Bazin-Truffaut-Doinel-L aud line of descent is constructive in the way L aud's career was established from the outset and there is no question that this was the founding site of his early career.

Equally, the close relationship forged between actor and director is instrumental in a certain understanding of L aud the person. The opening scene of *L aud l'unique* sees L aud at Cannes before a parade of photographers in which he partially covers his face with Bazin's *Qu'est-ce que le cin ma ?*⁹ whilst also directly pointing to the book as if to take the focus away from his own profile repositioning the object of the photographers' gazes to Bazin, the founding father of the Bazin-Truffaut-Doinel-L aud lineage as well as of the *Cahiers* 'family'. This image alone is quite telling of the family L aud was born into through his role in *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. In the screen tests for *Les Quatre Cents Coups*, even at this early stage in his career, the intense desire to be a part of the cinematic world is evident which also lays open something of the actor's own personality:

Truffaut: Dans la vie, tu es plut t gai ou triste ?

L aud: Moi, je suis gai. Je suis pas triste !

His response was instant without any hesitation also displaying an aspect of L aud's expressiveness. Another of the screen tests shows L aud and Patrick Auffay who was to play Antoine's friend, Ren , in conversation about what they hope to do when they are older:

L aud: Le cin ma,  a m'int resse. J'esp re...

Auffay: Vedette de cinéma ?

Léaud: Réussir là dedans. Parce que... enfin... j'aime bien ça.

The scene sees Léaud take the lead in their discussion as well as reinforcing his intensity of desire to succeed. Throughout the screen tests with Léaud, not only do we see his intense, nervous desire but a certain expressiveness that displays certain traits and mannerisms that the spectator would come to recognise in his performance style.

At the age of fourteen Léaud found himself at the heart of the *Cahiers* group and he has consistently talked of this period as being singularly influential in his education of the cinema both as actor and as cinephile. Unlike other actors of his generation who did undergo formal acting training, Léaud has stated that his true education came from the *Cahiers* critics. In both *Léaud l'unique* and *Léaud de hurle-dents*, he talks of Jacques Rivette as having been his '*maître*'. When talking to me of the impact this period had upon him at this impressionable age he states quite emphatically:

"Je suis rentré dans une famille. J'étais élevé par des critiques... C'était les grosses têtes. J'avais quatorze ans !"

In an interview at Cannes in 2001 he takes this one step further by proclaiming that he too is a 'critic' in a certain way¹⁰. This can also be seen from the very choice on Léaud's part of the roles he has taken on.

The success of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* at the Cannes Film Festival in 1959 points not only to the success of one of the first films of *la nouvelle vague* but also the unusual position Léaud found himself in of a child star at the age of fourteen who became not only the darling of the festival that year but the darling of *la nouvelle vague* itself. Bernardo Bertolucci said of Léaud that he was not only the 'son' of Truffaut but also the 'son' of *la nouvelle vague*¹¹. In an interview with Marc Voinchet when asked

whether he is in any way put off by this continued association of his image with *la nouvelle vague*, Léaud replies to the contrary that he is very proud of the heritage of *la nouvelle vague* of which he was a part¹².

Whilst *la nouvelle vague* was self-referential in many ways, the star image of Léaud too can be seen as intertextual. As discussed in chapter four, *La Nuit américaine* epitomises this, not only by its very nature of filming Truffaut and Léaud playing actor and director within a film, but equally by the many references to other Léaud performances for Truffaut. Liliane's presence in the film causes a certain confusion with her character in *L'Amour en fuite* (1978), also named Liliane. Alphonse is also the name of Antoine's son in *Domicile conjugal* (1970) and *L'Amour en fuite*. When Julie interrogates Liliane on her decision to leave for London with the stuntman, Liliane responds by saying that Alphonse cannot make everyone else pay for his troubled childhood alluding to the character of Doinel. This scene is also reminiscent of the scene in *Domicile conjugal* when as Christine waits for her taxi, she questions Antoine's artistic integrity in documenting his troubled relationship with his family for a wider public to read.

Another interesting point stems from a consideration of *La Nuit américaine*. Towards the beginning of the film, the cast and crew watch the rushes of one of the scenes that has been filmed. This sees Alphonse watching himself on screen as he plays his role in the film within the film, whilst the spectator sees Alphonse watching himself. This again raises the question of who is looking at whom and who identifies with whom? A similar scene appears towards the end of *Irma Vep* (1996), although on this occasion, Léaud as the director, René Vidal is absent. This narcissistic element is present in Kaurismäki's *La Vie de Bohème* (1991) in which Léaud as Blancheron asks Rodolfo to paint his portrait. Delighted by the result, Blancheron returns to see Rodolfo, proclaiming that he wishes to become a collector of his work. Interestingly, Léaud told me that in reality he never watches rushes or watches himself in films in which he has

appeared as he does not like to be confronted with his own profile. He has also talked of the idea of watching back rushes as placing him in a position which would force him to take too critical a point of view¹³.

The various occasions when Léaud is seen to play alongside the same acting partners adds continuation to his characters: Claude Jade and Marie-France Pisier in the Doinel cycle, Anne Wiazemsky in *La Chinoise* and *Il Porcile* (1969), Juliet Berto in *La Chinoise*, *Le Gai Savoir* and *Out 1*, Michael Lonsdale in *Baisers volés* and *Out 1*, Bernadette Lafont in *Paul* (1968), *Out 1* and *La Maman et la putain*, Julien Dubois as Antoine's son in *L'Amour en fuite* and as himself (the son of Bernard Dubois) in *Les Lolos de Lola*, Lou Castel in *Parano* (1978), *La Naissance de l'amour* (1992) and *Irma Vep*, Dominique Raymond in *La Naissance de l'amour* and *L'Affaire Marcorelle*, and perhaps most poignantly Françoise Lebrun in *La Maman et la putain* and twenty years later in *Pour Rire !*

The idea of the star as intertextual is crystallised in *The Dreamers*. The film is pervaded with other references to the *nouvelle vague* period implicating Léaud. When Theo, Isa and Matthew are seen walking away from the Cinémathèque française eating their sandwiches, the theme music carried through much of *Les Quatre Cents Coups* plays in the background. A poster of *La Chinoise* adorns one of the walls of Theo's bedroom, whilst a still from *Les Quatre Cents Coups* of Antoine Doinel writing his lines on the classroom blackboard is pinned against it. Whilst Léaud's presence in the film is restricted to the early part of the film, his continued subtle presence through such intertextuality cements a sense of the star particularly in relation to his *nouvelle vague* image. Moreover, as the film is centred around the lives of three cinephiles caught up in the political climate of 1968, this adds a further poignancy to Léaud's presence in the film.

Within the context of Léaud's *nouvelle vague* image and continued references to it in recent films this plays within both the cultural and historic specificity of his star

image. This allows for further signification of the star image for the spectator bringing a set of beliefs and expectations that the spectator is already familiar with in relation to Léaud's body of work from this period. The very fact that he has been cast as himself in *The Dreamers* and *Et là-bas, quelle heure est-il ?* and equally *Jane B par Agnès V* (1987) leads the spectator to consider the role as one that is occupied by a star. This ideological function of the star that plays within cultural and historic specificity is integral to the reception and interpretation of that image for the spectator. The cultural and historic specificity is not only inherent within the star but also within the set of values that the spectator brings to the image. In terms of the star, Dyer describes this as "defining what a person is" (Dyer 1979: 161). For an actor such as Léaud whose career spans over several decades, the way that his star image may have changed over time is also integral to the articulation of that image. It has often been said that Léaud represents a kind of eternal adolescent figure. There is no doubt that his portrayal of Antoine in *Les Quatre Cents Coups* remains one of the most enduring images of *la nouvelle vague* and there remains something of an adolescent quality even in his roles in middle age. Truffaut himself has talked of the childhood which remains part of Léaud as an actor¹⁴. Léaud also said to me that now having just entered his sixties, it is as if he has bypassed "l'âge adulte", passing from adolescence straight to "le troisième âge". This is telling of the adolescent streak in his characters and performance style but also points to the fact that his presence is firmly rooted within French cinema. Through this transition, his star image has negotiated and come to represent *la nouvelle vague* and 1960s French youth, the political preoccupations of 1968 and its aftermath as well as an end of the century/turn of the century notion of French national identity within French cinema. Through the star's ability to unify such sites of contradiction, the spectator's 'crisis' is reconciled through this ideological function of the star. It is for this reason that we may say about certain roles played by Léaud that they could not have been inhabited by anyone else.

Whilst much focus on Léaud has positioned him in the context of *la nouvelle vague* in relation to his films for Truffaut, his work for Godard is equally important. During the 1960s Léaud was to make five films with Godard as well as taking on minor roles in a number of his other films and also working as assistant director on several Godard films of this period. He described this collaboration to me as the true pleasure of a cinephile to be able to work with Godard in this way also stressing: "J'aime bien son côté exclus." This also points to the identification Léaud was able to give with these characters and thus act as Godard's mouthpiece. Whilst his work with Truffaut often focused on the sentimental education of the young male, Léaud's work with Godard added the political, revolutionary aspect to his star image. This is particularly poignant in *La Chinoise* which preceded and anticipated the events of the following year. Although these films are of a more political nature than other roles inhabited by Léaud during this period, he was often placed alongside other female stars of the period that again play on gender representations through the juxtaposition against strong female roles - Chantal Goya in *Masculin-Féminin*, Anne Wiazamesky in *La Chinoise* and Juliet Berto in *La Chinoise* and *Le Gai Savoir*. Godard's cinema also played a part in establishing the star system of *la nouvelle vague*. Through recurrent use of certain actors in his films Godard not only contributed to the star system within *la nouvelle vague*, but perpetuated the myths around his characters, particularly in the case of Anna Karina giving rise to a similar relationship between director and actor as Josef Von Sternberg had done with Marlene Dietrich. Within the system so too can Léaud be seen as one of the stars of Godard's cinema. One of the defining characteristics of Léaud's characters in these films is the idea of interrogation both in his relationships with these women and in expressing a political sensibility symptomatic of the period. Together with this is a certain theatricality in Godard's style which is played out through Léaud's unique expressiveness feeding into the idea of being unlucky in love as in *Masculin-Féminin* and a need for a political forum for questioning and debate as in *La*

Chinoise. The scene in *La Chinoise* in which Léaud's face is bandaged shows this to the full in the contrast between his frenzied hand gestures and the calmness with which he declares that it is all a question of theatre once he has removed the bandage from his face:

"Ils avaient rien compris du tout. Ils avaient pas compris que c'était du théâtre, du vrai théâtre - une réflexion sur la réalité."

Similarly in *Week-end* (1967) the scene in the telephone booth and when he is playing the revolutionary character of Saint-Just (who also appears in *La Chinoise*) show off this sense of theatricality.

Whilst there were marked differences in the styles of Truffaut and Godard, Léaud became the unifying force reconciling the differences between the two. This is another way in which, according to Dyer's formulation, the star image brings together opposing values that dissolve into the unifying force of the star. Le Péron described this unity between these two directors in that when they would talk of Léaud, the tone of their speech would warm, Léaud being the common point of reference for them both whilst in many other respects they were poles apart¹⁵. In sharing Léaud as the protagonist of a number of their films of the period, Léaud became a reconciling force between the revolutionary and the conformist leading to a certain theatricality inflected by disappointment and failure in love and life together with a certain need to fight for a cause. In Truffaut's films this is displayed through the negotiation of the Oedipal course albeit often faced with failure. In *La Nuit américaine* Alphonse resolves to leave the cinema completely following the breakdown of his relationship with Liliane and ultimately rejection of marriage. This also adds a sense of comedy and irony when Joëlle responds in a very matter of fact manner, "Très bonne idée. Abandonner le cinéma." In the Doinel cycle, the ending of *L'Amour en fuite* sees Antoine finally emerge

from his failures in love and life in accepting the possibility of his relationship with Sabine. In Godard's films this is expressed through the need to continue to strive towards certain political goals fighting against institution often displayed through marginal characters not too dissimilar from Antoine in the Doinel cycle.

Towards the beginning of *Léaud l'unique*, Léaud is seen in conversation with Le Péron in which he talks about his life being "une gifle". The scene is quite telling about not only this life so confused with the cinema but also the dramatic beginning to his career with *Les Quatre Cents Coups*. Le Péron takes this up in saying:

Le Péron: Une gifle que tu as pris dix ans plus tard en '58 dans *Les Quatre Cents Coups*



et celle-l  c tait la bonne puisqu'elle est rest e dans toutes nos m moires. C'est l'id e qu'il faut prendre forc ment toutes les claques. Il faut prendre la bonne.

L aud: La vie est une claque. Il faut prendre la bonne !

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There is no doubt that it is this image of L aud that has remained in the memory. Yet it was only the beginning of a career that has spanned more than forty-five years, a career that has become confused with the cinema itself. The spectator has been placed in the unique position of observing the actor progressing through adolescence to adulthood in tandem with his characters on screen. Within this confusion, we are led to question: to what extent is L aud playing himself in the roles he has inhabited over the years? This confusion over life and art, the real and illusory is central to the performances of L aud and leads to a consideration of both the man and his characters. He has often talked of giving much of himself to his roles. In a recent interview when talking about the character of Marcorelle and the crisis he negotiates in the film he

says:

"C'est de la crise existentielle si vous voulez. Moi, je me mets beaucoup de moi-même dans mes films. Elle vient de moi la crise !"¹⁶

When talking to Léaud about his unique acting style, he stressed that rather than making representations of his characters: "C'est les personnages qui me représentent le mieux", thus playing on the very cross-over between actor and character. Léaud's propensity for improvisation is fundamental to this. However, his role as Alexandre in *La Maman et la putain* is perhaps the role which displays this idea most evidently despite being scripted so rigorously. Through Léaud's incarnation of the character he manages to in effect transcend the character, achieving the apotheosis of his stardom. He mentioned to me that he believes one of his qualities as an actor is "la locution de la phrase - j'incarne la parole". It is the 'parole' that is so integral to Léaud's style and it is the way that he provides a certain rhythm to his words inflected by body movements that makes for a unique performance style that is almost musical. Whilst spoken language is integral, it is the harmony achieved between the spoken word and the body that sees Léaud incarnate his roles through giving much of himself and therefore the characters in turn reflect themselves upon the actor. Talking about a particular scene in *L'Affaire Marcorelle*, Léaud described this interaction in the following way:

"C'est plus la tête. C'est le corps qui se met en mouvement avec à la fois les mots, le langage et le décor."¹⁷

The use of the word "gouailleur" in the screen tests for *Les Quatre Cents Coups* is significant in this respect. It points to this very central aspect of Léaud's acting style and indeed verbosity plays an important part in the construction of many of Léaud's

characters. In Jacques Richard's *Léaud de hurle-dents*, this integral part of Léaud's acting style is called into question. He explained to me that at the time he was undergoing a significant course of dental treatment that felt like his very sense of existence was being stripped away being denied his 'parole'. He takes the opportunity to vent his anger towards his dentist in between his recitations from Truffaut's *Le Plaisir des yeux* (1987) in relation to the events of 1968 which adds a few maniacal interludes to his emotive recollections of various memories of the French cinema which are injected with his trademark spontaneous outbursts of laughter.

Léaud has given much credit to the directors he has worked with in respect of his different performances. Some archive footage in *Léaud l'unique* sees an interview with Léaud during the 1960s in which he talks about the constructive influence his directors have had upon him:

"Je change de film en film. Il y a des petites nuances et ça tient à la personnalité du metteur en scène parce que c'est au-delà de la direction de l'acteur... C'est la personnalité du metteur en scène vraiment qui est quelque chose d'impalpable et qui se dégage sur le plateau et qui nécessairement passera sur le plateau."

This is a constitutive aspect in terms of Léaud's performances in that he has consistently committed himself to various directors establishing strong working relationships between actor and director. This plays into his performances in the way he describes above as the personality of the director feeding into the way he incarnates his roles. A further extension of this is seen in Léaud's ability to take on certain character traits of the directors themselves which also plays on the biographical aspect present in many of Léaud's films. This idea of '*mimétisme*' is an inherent quality of Léaud's that he brings to his performances. Bernadette Lafont described this ability to take on traits of his directors in the following way:

“Léaud a toujours été un caméléon, un acteur presque médiumnique. Il était capable de devenir le metteur en scène qui le dirige. Il était capable d’être successivement Truffaut, Godard, Pasolini; là, il devenait Eustache, y compris dans son habillement.”¹⁸

In *Léaud l’unique*, Kaurismäki talks of how as a young actor himself he took Léaud as a model and tried to act very much in his style. He goes on to talk about how in directing Léaud it was almost as if he was asking Léaud to imitate himself imitating Léaud! Léaud talked of his collaboration with Skolimowski as imitating his gestures rather than his voice due to the language barrier then sprinkling “on a little Léaud powder for the cameras” (Dawson 1973/1974: 47). Léaud told me that despite the precise nature of the script for *La Maman et la putain* he was still able to appropriate the mannerisms of Eustache in his incarnation of Alexandre. Likewise, Truffaut has also remarked on this ability of Léaud’s to emulate his directors in his roles (Roullet 1968: 96).

In a future collaboration with Le Péron to be filmed towards the end of 2004, Léaud is to take on the role of the director Georges Franju in a depiction of the Ben Barka affair, *J’ai vu tuer Ben Barka*. Franju was to make a film on decolonisation which was to be written by Marguerite Duras. However, in so doing, Franju became implicated in the Ben Barka affair, having witnessed Ben Barka’s capture by the French police in front of the Brasserie Lipp in Saint Germain des Près where he was in fact waiting for him. The film is to relate the mystery surrounding the affair and the involvement of Franju and Duras as witnesses to this controversial historical event. This adds another layer to the lineage of Bazin-Truffaut-Doinel-Léaud, Langlois and the *Cahiers* ‘family’, Franju having been co-founder together with Langlois of the Cinémathèque française. This role will also see Léaud continue his commitment to collaborating with Le Péron in what will be their third film together, playing alongside Josiane Balasko as Duras with whom he also starred in Balasko’s *Les Keufs*.

Susan Weiner describes Léaud's star image as incorporating the idea of the literary hero and French national identity through a certain kind of masculinity:

"Léaud's screen persona bears witness to the persistence of romantic malaise as one of the models of masculine identity, a model that may even be quintessentially French."
(Weiner 2002: 2)

An extension of this would be the *flâneur*, as discussed in chapter four and I would suggest that it is within the *flâneur* construction that Léaud is able to bring together the various elements of his star image that also draw various ambiguities together, reconciling the crisis of masculinity presented by his screen image. Through the fusion of Léaud's characters and his animated, exuberant performance style, he brings together the comic and the tragic, euphoria and hysteria, voyeur and adorer of women, represented most evidently in *La Maman et la putain*. This *flâneur* creature re-emerges in many of Léaud's roles that in drawing together these sites of contradiction has become unique. This is summed up in Benjamin's discussion of the *flâneur*:

"At the end of Baudelaire's essay on Marceline Desbordes-Valmore emerges the promeneur, who strolls through the garden landscape of her poetry; the perspective of the past and future open before him. "But these skies are too vast to be everywhere pure, and the temperature of the climate too warm... The idle passerby, who contemplates these areas veiled in mourning, feels tears of hysteria come to his eyes." The promeneur is no longer capable of "meandering capriciously." He takes refuge in the shadow of cities: he becomes a flâneur."¹⁹

Overall pleasure in Léaud's star image is derived from the totality of his screen performances that have constructed a unique image of the male in French cinema - "un

nouveau type de héros masculin” as Gillain so describes (Gillain 1991: 23). His gestures, verbosity, manic declarations of love, representations of troubled adolescence and young adulthood associated with the 1960s youth generation in France together with an inherent comic quirkiness have only rendered Léaud’s star image all the more unique. Through his performances, Léaud has achieved the bringing together of the comic and the manic, voyeur and sufferer at the hands of loves confusions, eternal *soixante-huitard* and eternal adolescent, the psychological and the physical, the intellectual and the political, the dandy and the *flâneur* to create a certain fusion/confusion that constantly plays between the real and the illusory. Through this confusion there is a constant dialectic at play that shifts between the internal and the external, the body and the mind as one complements the other to establish a certain equilibrium having negotiated a shift in the balance in order to achieve this. In an interview with Philippe Garrel about *La Naissance de l’amour*, Garrel talks of this equilibrium in Léaud’s acting style:

“Le jeu de Jean-Pierre Léaud est toujours une affaire d’équilibre, et de ce fait, entre toujours chez lui en rapport avec le déséquilibre. C’est la suggestion d’un déséquilibre qui génère la panique et c’est grâce à elle qu’il acquiert une très grande présence.”²⁰

Whilst Mulvey’s assertion that the power of the male star lies in a “more perfect, more complete, more powerful ideal ego conceived in the original moment of recognition in front of the mirror” may be true of a more idealised type of male star (Mulvey 1975: 20), the unique style defining Léaud as star has not only created an aura around the marginal types he has incarnated but has equally transcended any such type to become both unifying and unique whilst remaining committed to an auteur cinema. The recognition before the mirror often takes place not before the screen for the spectator but for Léaud’s characters on the screen itself, thus displacing the

traditional Oedipal view of identification with the ideal ego of the spectator. In so doing, a certain framing takes place of the star on screen that is projected back upon the spectator, playing on notions of narcissism and acquisition of self-identity. Léaud has talked about the auteur approach as a kind of authenticity that shows life how it really is (Dawson 1973/1974: 46). He also equated the acting process to the occupation of an archaeologist in that it necessitates digging deep into one's own self. He goes on to conclude that acting has to go beyond the "narcissistic stage of performing just for yourself and the director. We have to go beyond the looking-glass" (Dawson 1973/1974: 47) invoking the very idea of framing that takes place within the signifying system of the cinema.



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L aud does not singularly embody any one 'type' but represents an amalgam through the sum total of his screen performances that, as Le P eron describes in his documentary about L aud, renders him unique. Thus the articulation of such contradictions contained within the star serve to reinforce that star image. His ability to punctuate and articulate a film text have resulted in L aud being a kind of auteur in his own right. Integral to this idea of framing of the actor and the character through the actual framing of the cinematic image is the concept of theatricality which is intrinsic to his performance style. Likewise his ability to take on physical mannerisms and the expressiveness of some of his directors not only illuminates their creative sensibilities but equally concretises his own. This also plays directly into the idea of autocritique and by extension *autofiction*. Whilst his characters are often unpredictable so too are they sometimes reassuring. Whilst the androgynous nature of L aud's image calls into question issues surrounding traditional masculine values, so too can a certain beauty be seen in his image. Yet, there remains something melancholic within the articulation of L aud's image that exists in tandem with the

comic side to his characters. On meeting Léaud in person, at one point he came out with a telling phrase that can be seen not only as a subtext to his many incarnations on screen but also to the man himself:

“Je ne sais pas pourquoi les gens aiment tellement la vie. C’est un mystère.”

The result of this synthesis is a star and Léaud quite rightfully deserves the status of a true star of the French cinema. As Tsai Ming-liang, director of *Et là-bas, quelle heure est-il ?*, said of Léaud, “Le visage de Jean-Pierre, c’est plus qu’une expérience cinématographique.”²¹

¹ It is interesting to note that Agnès Varda talks of the César d’honneur that she received and those received by Léaud and Jean-Luc Godard as somewhat ironic. She says that the profession would never confer upon them a César otherwise, alluding to the marginal cinema to which they all belong and indeed the family that Léaud was born into upon the birth of his career within *la nouvelle vague*

² Léaud told me himself that the roles he takes on stem from an active choice on his own part determined by the scripts he is presented with

³ Interview with Marc Voinchet [featured on *Le Pornographe* DVD]

⁴ *Le Cinéma de Jean-Pierre Léaud*, Canal Plus, 25th October 2001

⁵ Archive footage of an interview with François Truffaut in *Léaud l’unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001)

⁶ Le Péron talked of the fact that he wrote the script for *L’Affaire Marcorelle* with Léaud in mind at an after-screening debate on *L’Affaire Marcorelle* at the Cinéma Saint-André des Arts in Paris following its release in September 2000. Léaud also talked to me of this aspect of his working relationship that has developed between himself and Le Péron

⁷ On meeting Jean-Pierre Léaud, he spoke in detail of the demands of the script and working conditions. When having to recite long monologues of up to ten minutes at times, the time constraints imposed by the low budget of the film required an extreme concentration, one or two takes often being all that could be afforded

⁸ *Collection Ungaro, Le Journal 20h00, France 2, 26th January 1997*

⁹ First published in 1962

¹⁰ *Le Journal de Cannes, Canal Plus, 20th May 2000*

¹¹ Interview with Bernardo Bertolucci in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001)

¹² Interview with Marc Voinchet [featured on *Le Pornographe* DVD]

¹³ *Le Cinéma de Jean-Pierre Léaud, Canal Plus, 25th October 2001*

¹⁴ Paul Krellstein, *Qui est Antoine Doinel ?* [featured on *Domicile conjugal* DVD]

¹⁵ *Le Cinéma de Jean-Pierre Léaud, Canal Plus, 25th October 2001*

¹⁶ *Le Cinéma de Jean-Pierre Léaud, Canal Plus, 25th October 2001*

¹⁷ Interview with Jean-Pierre Léaud in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001)

¹⁸ Interview with Bernadette Lafont by Patrick Lebouffe and Charles Tatum Jr

¹⁹ Charles Baudelaire, "Marceline Desbordes-Valmore", [*L'Art romantique*: 343] quoted in *Baudelaire as a Literary Critic*, trans. Lois Boe Hyslop and Francis E. Hyslop, Jr. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1964): 338-339]

²⁰ Interview with Thierry Jousse in production notes for *La Naissance de l'amour* (Philippe Garrel, 1992)

²¹ Interview with Tsai Ming-liang in *Léaud l'unique* (Serge Le Péron, 2001)

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Le Testament d'Orphée, Jean Cocteau, 1959

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Un Homme marche dans la ville, Marcel Pagliero, 1949

Assistant Director Filmography

Made in USA, Jean-Luc Godard, 1966

Alphaville, une aventure étrange de Lemmy Caution, 1965

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Theatre:

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Silence, labret remue encore, François Billet-doux [Festival d'Avignon 1967,
Production: Antoine Bourseiller]

Writing Credits:

Central Park, Paul Planchon, 1984

Awards:

Césars du cinéma français 2000 - César d'honneur

Berlinale Internationale Filmfestspiele 1966 - Best Male Actor (*Masculin-Féminin*)

Awards for films featuring Jean-Pierre Léaud:

La Nuit américaine: The British Academy of Film and Television Arts 1974 - Best Director (François Truffaut)

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