RECONSIDERING
THE *POLITIQUE DES AUTEURS*:
A PRACTICE-BASED EXPLORATION

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Brighton for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2010

Reconsidering the *politique des auteurs*: a practice–based exploration.

This project reconsiders the *politique des auteurs*, especially the genesis, purpose and significance of that critical policy and method for film practice and criticism as conceived by François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette, Eric Rohmer and others in the pages of *Cahiers du Cinéma* during the 1950s. The hypothesis that the *politique* introduced a heuristic method for directorial personal expression is explored. Also considered are: the question of whether the designation *auteur* is solely within the means and authority of the director, or if the other creative collaborators, in particular the script-writer, might be designated a cinematic *auteur*, and, how specifically cinematic authorship might be constructed, or individual authorship might be achieved, within the collaborative process of filmmaking.

The method for this reconsideration is practice-based: first, in the form of a filmed experiment and then in the form of a cinematic analysis of the *politique* – an analytical documentary text. During the filmed experiment the *politique's* concept of mise en scene is used to "re-write" cinematically the first scene from John Huston's adaptation of Dashiell Hammett's novel *The Maltese Falcon*. Characterisation, the human element rather than the more plastic means of cinematic representation, is identified as the crucial aspect of that concept and the primary vehicle for directorial authorship. The re-shot scene is then compared with both Hammett's novel and Huston's original scene. Finally, there is an analysis of how ideas and understanding of the *politique* have been either changed or confirmed by the experience of practical filmmaking.

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The *politique des auteurs* was an idea of film that gave me a thread to follow as I headed into the unknown subterranean depths called "PhD research programme". I started my PhD because of that idea of cinema. I made a film as part of my PhD because of that idea of cinema. The *politique* is a manifesto available to those of us who want to make a film, and I had always wanted to make a film but, at my age? The opportunities were not always there, and the confidence never was. The *politique* offered me the opportunity. So I ventured to look through the camera eye-piece, to retrace the origins of cinematic creativity and I made my film – two in fact, by the end – and I completed my PhD.

I discovered that being a director on set **was** like being a writer or a painter – or a PhD student – standing before a blank page. It really was! There may be collaborators and the "apparatus of cinema" – all of that, but at the end of the day I was there, with the cast and crew all looking at me, waiting for the "idea", for the "vision", to know "what is it you want us to do?" I had to provide answers and start thinking through the story to be able to "write' that story on screen in cinematic language: I had to start directing. I must say that it is the most daunting – even intimidating business – directing, but, by the end, I was so elated that I had managed to experience the "temperature" on-set (desperation, sometimes, it must be said) and make a film.

Producing a PhD is somewhat like producing a film: one stands before an immensity of possibilities and wonders: "will I really be able to carry this off?" For a PhD student has no experience of the process. Only those with that experience know what it is like: exhausting, terrifying and seemingly never-ending; the sleepless nights, the worry, the moments of achievement and of despair. There is always doubt: doubt at the beginning, doubt still at the end. Both "productions" depend on the reception by an audience for their success – in the case of a PhD, that audience is the examiners – who will judge how successful that endeavour has been. Both sets of audience are unforgiving. There are no "ifs" or "buts" or "maybes". Either one has met expectations with the PhD, or film, or one has not.

The most important thing to bear in mind, as one starts along the perilous PhD path is to not only want, most desperately, to successfully reach the end and find answers, but to really care about the subject of enquiry and to want to make discoveries along the way (that is equally true of film according to Truffaut et al.). Some of those discoveries, of course, are about oneself: surely all PhD students hope for that, to discover something sound and creative about themselves? At the start, at the very start, a recent doctoral graduate advised an audience of new students, including myself, that in experiencing the PhD process we would become part of a community; because that process would take us deep inside our minds, into ourselves, so deep inside that we would find a little part of us had been changed forever. Only those who have completed that process have experienced that change and become part of that community. There were, of course my supervisors, who always sent me away, not with an answer, but a question. That question, though, was always directing me to an answer. A question I sometimes hadn't really grasped at the time but had to think through the detail to find and grasp, and then move on.

A PhD is very hard to "let go" of but here it is: my thesis; both literary and cinematic texts. If anyone were to ask me to sum up my PhD in one word, that word would be "honest": this thesis has been an honest effort. I have not tried to cut corners or "fudge" anything. It has been the best I could do. It may not be perfect; I would still like to re-edit – just a little – those two films, even film again the experimental scene. But, once a film has been produced, that is it. The technical and material requirements prohibit a return. Even with the literary text I am sure there are still flaws. I have re-read that text numerous times, and so have my supervisors, but I fear there may still be a few grammatical infelicities (I have a tendency to leave out a verb and split my infinitives you know, and the trouble is, ~~I can never tell~~ I never can tell.) I am so very pleased that I started down this pathway and have now arrived at the end. I do hope that this PhD does justice to the *politique des auteurs* and to all those referenced throughout both texts. But especially to the *politique des auteurs* and those young cinematic "commandos" in Paris, half a century ago, when "it was good to be alive" and there was "the screen and nothing but the screen …..".

Rosalie Greener
20th November 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge and thank the following people whose support and advice contributed to the completion of this thesis. First, thanks to Professor Stuart Laing and Bill Beech, who I was most fortunate to have as my supervisors. I am so grateful for their reassurance, guidance and calm understanding and, for taking a chance on me. The Head of the Faculty of Art's Research Student Division at the time, Professor Jonathan Woodham, also took a chance on me. He supported my project and my application for the funding necessary to make my films, and I am so grateful for that. I am also grateful to the School of Arts and Media for their contribution to the funding. To the two people for whom I worked in the International Office (Registry) at the University of Brighton: Brenda Kelly-Evans, and then Richard Spoor – and to Sharon Jones, Head of Registry. My thanks to all three for their support and for allowing me the flexible work schedule I sometimes needed, and thanks also to all my colleagues in the International Office for their understanding. Finally, I was grateful for the support and encouragement of my mother – Joy Greener, my sisters Gillian Rollings and Lynn Ellis and, in particular, my twin sister Margaret who first convinced me I could manage to do this, and was then the most constant support, sounding board and shoulder to cry on.

Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

Dated

<u>Introduction: A time of magic</u>

The *politique des auteurs* was born of a certain historical moment: a moment when, for Jean-Luc Godard, "It was a good time to be alive", because, "there still existed something called magic", and that something "was the screen, and nothing but the screen"; a moment when "A work of art was not the sign of something, it was the thing itself and nothing else".[1] This was a time – 1950s Paris – when Godard joined with François Truffaut, Eric Rohmer, Jacques Rivette and Claude Chabrol as the "*Cahiers* group" in the "front line of battle". They were "commandos" attempting a reformation, a cinematic reformation, to confront, discredit and then displace both the French critical establishment, and the established film-practice it admired, with their own idea of cinema – of cinema as art.[2] The first weapon to hand was their own polemical criticism published mostly in the pages of the film magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the second was the practice of filmmaking itself, when the *Cahiers* group became young directors of the *Nouvelle Vague*, and their idea of cinema progressed "…to its most logical conclusion: the passage of almost all those involved in it to directing films themselves."[3]

The *Cahiers* group's idea of cinema, of cinema as art, was not a beautiful image and complicated lighting effects, it was not cinema as literature with pictures added –that admired audacities in the script rather than those on the screen, it was not a cinema validated by the significance of the social message, but a cinema that used its own specific modes of articulation and expression to extend a state of mind onto the screen and bring into existence, "by some alchemy", a film's moral and aesthetic universe. That mind questioned the world as lived, rather than provided the answers given by ideology or a past literary era, and they identified that questioning mind as belonging to the director, the figure they ordained as cinematic artist and author: that figure was their *auteur*. Their idea was a cinema of personal expression, a cinema of directors and their manifesto was the *politique des auteurs*, a politics of cinematic authorship.

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[1] Jean-Luc Godard, Foreword, *François Truffaut Letters*, ed. Gilles Jacob, Claude de Givray and Gilbert Adair, trans. and ed. Gilbert Adair (London: Faber and Faber, 1989) ix-x.
[2] Godard, "Jean-Luc Godard in Interview," *Godard on Godard: Critical Writings*, ed. and trans. Tom Milne (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1972) 195.
[3] Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, quoted by Jim Hillier in his Introduction, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, vol. 1, ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1959) 4.

The *politique* remains the most persuasive method for claiming individual directorial authorship in film where that identification is complicated by the institutional environment and separation of writing and directorial functions amongst the creative personnel, that is, when the director is hired to direct a screenplay in the commercial environment of mainstream filmmaking, because it provided the means to explore creative ownership in terms of a specifically cinematic form – the mise en scene – that the director alone had the function and authority to compose with all the collaborative resources at his or her disposal. With this conception, the *Cahiers* group was also able to define the director as an artist distinct from the painter, the novelist and the playwright – and to be able to state why, because they had distinguished the seventh art from its predecessors.

This thesis reconsiders the *Cahiers* group's *politique de auteurs*, its genesis, purpose and significance; reconsiders the place of that idea in the history of cinema and in the history of film studies. It is a reconsideration of the outcome of the historical moment of 1950s Paris, not of *auteurism* in general and the subsequent developments, or distortions, of the policy – such as Andrew Sarris's so-called *auteur* theory in America, or the *Movie* and *auteur*-structuralist interventions in the UK. Those developments are not the primary focus and so are only included as they inform the discourse on the *politique*. The *Cahiers* group, however, existed within a wider writing collective at the magazine. Even after beginning their careers as directors they would return for round-table discussions with that wider group and to be interviewed by their successors. Therefore, statements made during those subsequent meetings and by other members of the *Cahiers* collective during the time in question, are also included where they directly comment on, or clarify, aspects of the original *politique*.

Of that wider group, there were Alexandre Astruc and Andre Bazin in particular. Astruc was the *Cahiers* group's predecessor. In an essay published in 1948, "The birth of a new avant-garde: *la camera stylo*", he had described how cinema was becoming a "means of expression" as personal as painting a picture or writing a novel and had suggested the director as the cinematic artist and mise en scene as cinematic form – the means to express

thought on screen.[4] Andre Bazin provided the critical, moral and aesthetic foundation for the *politique*. Bazin, however, was not so much one of the doctrine's authors as a critical *eminence grise* providing clear-headed correctives and reproofs summarised in his 1957 essay "On the *politique des auteurs*". Bazin's concerns did not stop him "… believing to a certain extent in the concept of the *auteur* and very often sharing their opinions, although not always their passionate loves", but he took his "young firebrands" to task for, amongst other things, what he judged to be, "…a critical 'false nuance of meaning'". He perceived the danger of an emerging "aesthetic personality cult" and its "exclusive practice [leading] to …the negation of the film to the benefit of praise of its *auteur*".[5]

The historical moment from which the *politique* emerged lasted for less than a decade. It began in 1954 with the publication of François Truffaut's "*Une certaine tendance du cinema francais*", the "real point of departure". In 1959, Truffaut's *Les quatres cents coups/The 400 Blows* (François Truffaut, 1959) was selected to represent France at the Cannes Film Festival, and Godard would write in the pages of *Arts* "… although we have won a battle, the war is not yet over".[6] By 1961, Fereydoun Hoveyda would write in the pages of *Cahiers* "The *politique des auteurs* has had its day: it was only a stage on the way to a new criticism."[7] Godard, in 1963, would state that there was "… no longer any position to defend. There used always to be something to say. Now that everyone is agreed, there isn't so much to say".[8] But everyone had not agreed and even those who had would soon do so no longer, as the ideas and beliefs of the *politique's* authors changed over time and with experience. Auteurism came under attack and increasingly, particularly post–1968, the "bourgeois" concern with identifying named individuals as authorial source and meaning was dismissed as a conservative, reactionary policy based on the Romantic ideal.

Even former commandos of the *Cahiers* group would repent, some recanting in favour of the new Marxist orthodoxy: in 1968 Rivette would stigmatise "the idea that there is an *auteur* of the film, expressing himself" – an idea to which he had been absolutely committed – as

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[4] Alexandre Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: *La Caméra Styló*," *The New Wave*, ed. Peter Graham (London: Secker and Warburg, 1968) 17-23.

[5] Andre Bazin, "On the *Politique des Auteurs*," trans. Peter Graham, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 249-58.

[6] Jean-Luc Godard, "Debarred Last Year from the Festival Truffaut Will Represent France at Cannes with *Les 400 Coupes*," *Godard on Godard* 147.

[7] Fereydoun Hoveyda, quoted by John Caughie in his Introduction to "Auteurism," *Theories of Authorship* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with the BFI, 1981) 9.

[8] Godard, "Jean-Luc Godard in Interview," *Godard on Godard*, 195.

"bourgeois" and would suggest that the "only thing we can do in France at the moment is to try to deny that a film is a personal creation."[9] In 1965 Rohmer – the more conservative, more Catholic member of that former band of brothers – had already retracted some of his old beliefs, not on ideological grounds, but for formal, technical reasons, as making films changed his ideas of filmmaking, as he advised that the films he " … made have everything to do with editing" and that his, " … concerns are the exact opposite of what they were once...". Rohmer also advised that Godard had asserted, *mise en scène* doesn't exist."[10] But Truffaut, the one who shot the first volley that mattered into the massed ranks of the French critical and cultural establishment in 1954, would still argue, just two years before his death in 1984, that, when watching a film by directors he had attacked at the time it was "…in the hope of liking it and having a 'pleasant surprise'. Unfortunately, nine times out of ten, I am disappointed and find myself with the same objections as before."[11]

By 1974 the *politique des auteurs* would be described as "…a justification couched in aesthetic terms, of a culturally conservative, politically reactionary attempt to remove film from the realm of social and political concern."[12] That was just one of many ideological and theoretical assaults on the policy as cinema was appropriated by academe for the purposes of academe and a film was no longer a creative work but a text and identifying the author as owner of a creative work was typified as a bourgeois concern. Increasingly, *auteurs* were no longer to be discovered on the screen as the creative source of their films, to be read out of the cinematic codes, strategies and techniques that they employed to "write" those films, but were to be analysed as theoretical constructs, functions or effects of the filmed texts; or as institutionally constructed agents for cultural imperialism or as a commercial strategy for marketing and distribution. The fact that the *politique des auteurs* was not only a critical method but a politics, or policy, for authorship, was often overlooked as the idea was enveloped within this academic discourse.[13] Along the way the "spectator-subject" was

[9]Jacques Rivette, "Time Overflowing," trans. Amy Gateff, *Cahiers du Cinéma 1960-1968: New Wave, New Cinema, Re-evaluating Hollywood*, vol. 2, ed. Jim Hillier (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul in association with the BFI, 1986) 319.

[10] Eric Rohmer, "The Old and the New: in Interview with Jean-Claude Biette, Jacques Bontemps, Jean-Louis Comolli," trans. Diana Matias, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1960s* 89, 91.

[11] Truffaut, *Letters* 544-45.

[12] John Hess, "La Politique des Auteurs, Part 1," *Jump/Cut* 1 (May/June 1974): 19.

[13] The following note on the translation of the term *politique des auteurs* was added by Edwin Carpenter who translated, at my request, the article "*Politique des auteurs, Politique de l'ecriture*" by Arnaud Macé, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, 592 (July/August 2004): 32-33. "From an interview with Berenice Raynaud

introduced to that discourse as Barthes pronounced the author dead and the "birth of the reader".

But the author, the "individual agent" making " … aesthetic choices … in particular circumstances", refused to die. [14] By 2000 Dudley Andrew would announce that, "After a dozen years of clandestine whispering we are permitted to mention, even to discuss the *auteur* again". Though in listing articles and publications of the early 1990s recognising the idea of the *auteur*, he added in a footnote, "Naturally none of the authors of those texts want to return to the critical paradigms of the 1950s and 1960s."[15] Those critical paradigms, however, the critical policy and method the *Cahiers* group introduced, were and are often aesthetically and methodologically misunderstood within film criticism and film practice – even within academic writings on the *politique*. The *Cahiers* group's specific idea of *auteur* is becoming a ghostly presence at the *auteurist* table. But the value of that idea of film for the student and the practitioner is lost if the idea is lost. That is why this project is returning to those original paradigms conceived in the pages of *Cahiers du Cinéma* more than half a century ago, when Truffaut would assert, "But the qualities of this film ... cannot possibly be seen by anyone who has never ventured a look through a camera eye-piece. We flatter ourselves – and it is in this that we are opposed to another form of criticism – that we are able to retrace the origins of cinematic creativity."[16]

The methodology for this reconsideration follows the *Cahiers* group's pathway from the page to the screen through a practice-based project that looks through the camera eye-piece. Initially, a filmed experiment was designed and conducted to interrogate the *politique* as a creative manifesto for cinematic artists, not only as a critical approach that was "a stage on the way to a new criticism".[17] As a "stranger" on set – a non-practitioner – I used my understanding of the *politique*, and my analysis of the *Cahiers* group's concept of mise en

http://cinemadmag.com/berenice.html. There is an aspect of French film criticism as it has been practiced by the *Cahiers du cinéma* people, that has been unfortunately translated by people like Andrew Sarris as 'the author theory'. We actually never talked about 'the author theory' – the original phrase was 'la politique des auteurs' which literally means 'the author politics' or 'the politics of authorship'". I decided to adopt the phrase "the politics of authorship" as my preferred translation based on this note.

[14] James Naremore, "Authorship," *A Companion to Film Theory*, ed. Toby Miller and Robert Stam (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 1999) 22.

[15] Dudley Andrew, "The Unauthorized Auteur Today," *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Robert Stam and Toby Miller (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 27.

[16] François Truffaut, "A Wonderful Certainty," trans. Liz Heron, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 107.

[17] Hoveyda, quoted by Caughie, *Theories of Authorship* 9.

scene, to "re-write" cinematically the first scene from John Huston's adaptation of Dashiell Hammett's novel *The Maltese Falcon*. I identified characterisation, the human element rather than the more plastic means of cinematic representation, as the crucial aspect of that concept and the primary vehicle for directorial authorship.

A cinematic definition of the policy was also constructed to analyse it as a critical method for evaluating films as cinematic art. That analysis was based on a visual interrogation of the cinema directed by the *Cahiers* group's *auteurs*, the cinema that Godard called "magic" on screen. It was an analysis of how those *auteurs* used cinema's own specific "language" for personal expression through the mise en scene. With these two pieces of practice I attempted a return to specificity. That is the intention of this project: a reconsideration to provoke a return, a return to the *politique des auteurs* as a specific idea of cinematic art and a specific heuristic method for reflective practice.

Chapter 1: *La politique des auteurs*

Introduction

The *politique des auteurs* was not a carefully defined and agreed manifesto but an idea of film to be read out of a collection of essays written mostly from 1951 to the early 1960s by the "*Cahiers* group". The *Cahiers* group were young critics, and intending filmmakers, at *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the French film journal established in 1951 with André Bazin and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze among its founding editors. The most notable of these young critics were François Truffaut, Claude Chabrol, Jean Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette and Eric Rohmer. There were other critics at *Cahiers*, such as Fereydoun Hoveyda who, in 1960, wrote two clarifications and defences of the policy that were, in effect, post-scripts introducing a period of reflection and review. Some of the *Cahiers* group wrote for other publications. In particular, Truffaut and Godard wrote for *Arts* magazine, but the magazine identified with the *politique* was *Cahiers du Cinéma*, and the "*Cahiers* group" most identified as the *politique's* authors were the young critics who became admired directors of the *Nouvelle Vague* and beyond: Truffaut, Chabrol, Godard, Rivette and Rohmer.

To begin to understand the *politique des auteurs* one must first know of its young authors' directorial ambitions, as well as of their cinematic loves, and must know of the established critical and cinematic traditions customary in France at the time that were aesthetically and institutionally structured against those ambitions. Within this historically specific environment, the articles published in the pages of *Cahiers* were used to fashion a different understanding and evaluation of film, and a different idea of cinema. The institutional barrier and the youth, practical inexperience and creative intentions of these aspiring directors, all contributed to an aggressively hostile policy, with the result that the views expressed in many of these articles were neither critically objective nor creatively tolerant.

The *Cahiers* group's purpose was to create not only regard for their preferred filmmakers but also space and regard for their own nascent directorial ambitions. They were intent on defining cinema as a vehicle for directorial personal expression and on identifying the primacy of the director as cinematic artist within the collaborative practice of filmmaking.

But they were not only intent on bringing to the fore the primary creative function of the director at the expense of the other collaborators within the filmmaking process, most notably the scriptwriter. They were also intent on promoting an idea of cinema as a narrative art form technically and aesthetically distinct from all other, more traditional and established, narrative art forms – both visual and literary, and on promoting both recognition and evaluation of the cinematic artist, their director *auteur*, by a heuristic analysis of a cinematic text's form and aesthetic.

Une certaine tendance du cinéma français

François Truffaut's essay *"Une certaine tendance du cinema francais"*, published in *Cahiers du Cinéma* in January 1954, is seen as the *politique's* founding manifesto, and it exhibits tendencies of both the committed cinephile, whose tastes are opposed to the established mode, and of the frustrated would-be director. Truffaut began with a misleadingly modest, and moderate, statement of intent, "These notes have no other object than to attempt to define a certain tendency of the French cinema - a tendency called 'psychological realism' -and to sketch its limits."[18] This misleadingly modest statement introduced an incendiary piece of writing, savagely extreme, that has been most typically termed a "polemical" article that "scandalised" the French critical establishment it attacked.[19]

Truffaut's doctrinaire statement was neither the first writing to champion the director, nor the first to do so within the pages of *Cahiers* (or even its predecessor *Revue du Cinema*)[20]. However, that essay is the starting point for the *politique des auteurs*, for *auteurism* as a polemical politics of authorship, because Truffaut was not suggesting an alternative critical approach, he was drawing a line in the sand between those adhering to his concept of film as art and of cinematic authorship, and those adhering to the prevalent fashion of filmmaking and the French critical establishment which admired that idea of cinema. The following

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[18] François Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema," *Movies and Methods: An Anthology*, vol.1, ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley, Calif., London: University of California Press, 1976) 224.

[19] For instance, Caughie, *Theories of Authorship* 36; Hillier, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 21.

[20] Jim Hillier provides a brief history of the contemporary cultural and critical background at the time *Cahiers du Cinéma* was founded, and of its precursor the *Revue du Cinéma*, in his introduction, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 1-8.

quote reflects Truffaut's uncompromising attitude: "I do not believe in the peaceful co-existence of the 'Tradition of quality' and an '*auteur's* cinema'."[21] This historical turning point was recognised in 1959 by Doniol-Valcroze:

> … the publication of this article marks the real point of departure for what, rightly or wrongly, *Cahiers du Cinéma* represents today. A leap has been made, a trial begun with which we were all in solidarity, something bound us together. From then on it was known that we were *for* Renoir, Rossellini, Hitchcock, Cocteau, Bresson ... and against X, Y and Z. From then on there was a doctrine, the *politique des auteurs*, even if it lacked flexibility.[22]

Truffaut believed that France's institutionalised film practice was locked into a rigid, hierarchical and moribund tradition of studio bound filmmaking that was not only a source of frustration for a young intending director with limited means, experience and influence; it also encouraged a stylistic preference for the "tradition of quality". This tradition was a form of filmmaking characterised by "scholarly framing, complicated lighting-effects, 'polished photography'", and was a preference for films based on works of literature that raised serious social, political and religious concerns expressed through the ideologically driven prism of "psychological realism".[23] Truffaut asserted that these characteristics did not reflect the real world but resulted in films with either an ideologically imposed meaning, or which were only repetitive filmed reproductions of French life as lived in the past, not the present.

He identified as his enemy and target a handful of directors and script-writers who were most admired for this type of filmmaking: the directors Jean Delannoy, Yves Allegret, Claude Autant-Lara, Rene Clement and Marcel Pagliero, and the writers – or "scenarists" – Pierre Bost and Jean Aurench. Truffaut was contemptuous of these men's filmed adaptations and of the critical reception those adaptations received, not because their films were based on works of literature, but because they had been authored by men of literature – the "scenarists" – rather than by their directors, who he viewed as little more than technicians transferring the scenarists' scripts to the screen. He stated, "When they hand in their scenario, the film is done".[24] Truffaut's particular evidence for this point was the

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[21] Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" 234.
[22] Doniol-Valcroze, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 4.
[23] Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" 230, 225.
[24] Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" 233.

writers' substitution of scenes in the novels considered un-filmable with scenes they believed were filmable. Truffaut dismissed the scenarists' claim that the re-written scenes were faithful to the spirit, if not the letter, of the novels and, were therefore, "invention without betrayal", as they exhibited a "constant and deliberate care to be *unfaithful* to the spirit as well as the letter".[25] This "betrayal" meant that they were substituting their own world-view for that of the literary author, and through this substitution, effectively becoming the authors of the cinematic work, as if it were their perspective of the world – often expressed in rewritten scenes in the psychological realist style – that was portrayed on screen. Truffaut argued that if the adaptations had been written and directed by true "men of cinema" (*auteurs*) then no scene would have been deemed un-filmable but would have been expressed cinematically through the mise en scene (which the scenarists were unable to do as they were literary men with only literature's resources at their disposal), and the films could then have reflected the director's perception of the filmed world.

The base expressions and anti-clerical, anti-militaristic ideology characteristic of psychological realism, deeply offended Truffaut's conservative and Catholic sensibility: "In one single reel of the film, towards the end, you can hear in less than ten minutes such words as: *prostitute*, *whore*, *slut* and *bitchiness*. Is this realism?"[26] These expressions of distaste produced accusations of reactionary conservatism on his part. The statement's significance, however, is not to be found in his overt moral antagonism towards those perceived vulgarities, but in his antagonism towards the writers' perceived pseudo-realist pretensions. His distaste for the studio-based aesthetic and for the preference for literary subject matter, of the tradition of quality have already been mentioned, but the deeper moral objection that informed his aesthetic preferences is to be found in his statement that the films were neither realistic in style nor subject. Truffaut attacked the adherents of psychological realism for failing to be truly realistic rather than just ideologically driven because they "lock" the characters "... in a closed world … instead of letting us see them for ourselves, with our own eyes. The artist cannot always dominate his work."[27] This objection reflected Andre Bazin's ideas on an alternative cinematic realism (discussed in more detail later in this chapter) that

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[25] Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" 226, 228.
[26] Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" 231.
[27] Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" 232.

the artist should not "impose an interpretation on the spectator". It was a moral perspective realised as an aesthetic style.

Even more significant, was Truffaut's resentment of the critical establishment's admiration for the "audacities" of the scenarists' scripts and subjects when he believed that the true audacities of cinema should be found in the director's mise en scene. *"Une certaine tendance du cinema francais"* scandalised the critical and filmmaking establishments for two reasons: first, because of Truffaut's abusive and uncompromising attack on members of that establishment; secondly, because he suggested that the notion of the artist, as applied to the painter and the writer –– individuals engaged on a singular exercise –– could also be applied to the director of a film – a collaborative enterprise, not in terms of the beautiful image created by technical ability, but in terms of recognising his or her personal expression and individual contribution to the meaning of the film through an identifiable style and techniques – peculiar to him or her – forming the mise en scene. This is at the heart of the *politique des auteurs* and its significance to the history of film, and to the history of art. Truffaut later expressed dissatisfaction with the article but the propositions he introduced within this ardent, often clumsy and inelegant, essay would continue as live issues for debate at *Cahiers*. [28] They became the critical positions underpinning the *politique des auteurs*, and which made the policy, in turn, perhaps the most significant statement on cinema to have been written by a collection of film critics.

The significance of the *politique des auteurs*

The significance of the *politique* was not that artistic achievement in film was identified: that recognition had already been granted to art house cinema where the director typically wrote the original screenplay and was believed to have considerable artistic freedom and control over the production environment. Artistic achievement had also been recognised in the visual image or when the script was based on serious sociological subject matter. The *politique* was also not the first doctrine to tie a concept of the cinematic *auteur* to an evaluative criticism of film as art, nor the first to propose the director, rather than the scriptwriter, as author of a film, nor the first to propose the director as site of cinematic

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[28] Truffaut in a letter to Luc Moullet, March 1956, wrote, "An article with which I'm still not too satisfied … [it] took me several months to write and five or six complete revisions", *Letters* 86.

artistic expression by reason of his or her function as creator of cinematic form. There had been debate about the use of the term *auteur* in film writing since the early 1900s and Lindsay Anderson had written about the director as the "man most in a position to guide and regulate the expressive resources of the cinema" in *Sequence* in the late 1940s.[29] But Anderson, and other previous critics, had not developed a cinematically specific method of critical analysis and creative practice to support their ideas, a method that could also be used as a manifesto for cinematic authorship and for evaluating the artistic achievement in films on the basis of an identifiably distinct cinematic aesthetic.

To establish film texts as specifically cinematic art works, to distinguish them from theatrical, literary or photographic works, required identification of such a specifically cinematic form of expression that could be distinguished from the traditional literary or visual narrative and aesthetic techniques with which meaning and authorial intent could also be expressed on the screen – such as plot, dialogue and photographic representation and required identification of a specifically cinematic artist. The authors of the *politique des auteurs* identified the first as the mise en scene and the second as the *auteur*. This was the significance of the *politique*: specificity, its insistence on an understanding of the creative processes of filmmaking, its codes and techniques – to force a specifically cinematic understanding and appreciation of the result of that process – the cinematic work.[30]

With this specific idea of cinematic form, the *Cahiers* group were able to recognise directorial authorship, and singular artistic ownership, of a cinematic work when that identification was complicated by the institutional environment and separation of writing and directorial narrative functions amongst the creative personnel. In other words, the idea recognised directorial authorship when the director was hired to direct a screenplay in the commercial environment of mainstream studio filmmaking. Consequently, the *politique* forced recognition of Hollywood as a site for the seventh art. Truffaut's article had been directed at French filmmaking, not Hollywood, and *Cahiers* "dearest masters" were European: Bresson, Dreyer, Murnau, Renoir, Cocteau and Rossellini (Truffaut's "Italian father") but it was the Hollywood filmmaking tradition that benefited the most from the

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[29] Historical and cultural overviews are provided in Jim Hillier's introduction to *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 1-17; and by Susan Hayward, "Auteur/Auteur Theory," *Cinema Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), 2000) 19-22.

[30] Jim Hillier stresses this point in his introduction to *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 10.

politique des auteurs as Hollywood *auteurs* became a significant focus of the *Cahiers* group – most notably Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock and Nicholas Ray.[31]

Therefore, to understand the *politique* and its significance, one must first have grasped its definition of mise en scene and then the dependent definition of *auteur*. But the authors of the *politique* invested each term with a meaning unique to this policy without ever agreeing clear definitions of those terms. Since its inception, debate on the doctrine has focused on a conceptual paradigm conceived, and broadly understood, by its authors but also, often whimsically, individuated by each with no settled definition being agreed upon by all. They argued without articulating and presented ideas in over-theoretical terms while never properly grounding them in theory. But then, as stated by Bazin, Rohmer and Truffaut, – and as recognised during a 1965 round table discussion by their successors at *Cahiers* entitled: "Twenty Years on: A Discussion about American Cinema and the *politique des auteurs*" – the *politique* was formed on the grounds of an aesthetic and moral taste. So the issue is to fully grasp abstract ideas animated by "taste".[32] Perhaps it was this most nebulous of foundations that resulted in the lack of clear and agreed definitions within the *Cahiers* clique itself.

It is an academic commonplace that the *politique* was not a theory but a critical method that provided few criteria or rules for theoretical debate and elucidation. A more fundamental issue may be that the *politique* has often been misunderstood and misrepresented, both in academic and popular writing, because of this failure to clarify and agree on the meaning of its defining elements: the *auteur* and mise en scene.[33] Consequently, the *Cahier* group's *auteur* is now regularly used to typify directors with no apparent reference to, or understanding of, the principles asserted by that group in their *politique*.[34]

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[31] François Truffaut, in a letter to Helen Scott, August 1965, referred to Rossellini as "my Italian father", *Letters* 276; and Eric Rohmer talks of Murnau, Dreyer, Eisenstein, Renoir and Rossellini as his "dearest masters" in "Rediscovering America," trans. Liz Heron, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 93.

[32] Jean-Louis Comolli, Jean-André Fieschi, Gérard Guégan, Michel Mardore, Claude Ollier and André Téchine, "Twenty years on: a discussion about American cinema and the *politique des auteurs*," trans. Diana Matias, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1960s* 196-209.

[33] François Truffaut, in a letter to Jim Paris, 3 May 1982, wrote "I do feel that the polemical work engaged in by *Cahiers du Cinéma* during the 50s has not always been correctly understood in America, any more than the notion of the 'politique des auteurs'", *Letters* 544.

[34] This suggestion is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

The *politique's* concept of *auteur*

A *politique auteur* is a duality – both author and artist – and careful attention must be paid to each element of that duality to understand the concept. A distinction must be made between the terms even though they were often used interchangeably by the policy's authors and continue to be so used in writings on the *politique* (as also occurs in this document). The *Cahiers* group did not argue that the director was the only figure who could claim to be the author of a film. Authorship by the writer, or other filmmakers such as the producers and the actors, was recognised but scorned as inferior filmmaking – that was the primary point of *"Une certaine tendance du cinema francais"*. They argued, however, that only the director could also be the cinematic artist because only the director had the function to organise and compose the *mise en scène*, and so only the director could be an *auteur*. An *auteur*, however, did not control and compose the mise en scene only for stylistic effect but as his or her means to "speak in the first person". [35] An *auteur* was a director who had something to say and said it, not primarily through the traditional literary narrative strategies of plot and subject, but through an identifiable style and use of cinematic techniques evident in the mise en scene. It is in this sense the *politique's auteurs* are both authors **and** artists of their films because they use cinematic form as their primary means of personal expression and that dual concept of personal expression – authorship, primarily through cinematic form – artistry, must be present in a film for its director to be regarded as a *politique auteur*.

This duality is the essential difference between an *auteur* and other lesser directors, such as a *metteur en scène*. In the *Cahiers* hierarchy, *metteur en scènes* did not use their technical ability to express their own world-view on screen, but were expert functionaries through which another person's world-view – such as the script-writer's or the producer's – could be transferred to the screen. Cinematic form in the hands of a *metteur en scène* then, was used merely to effect that transfer and any identifiable style became merely a decorative flourish rather than a strategy for signifying. Rivette's statement in 1957 represents the *Cahiers* group's attitude:

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[35] Andre Bazin, citing Jacques Rivette's description of an *auteur* as someone "who speaks in the first person", "On the *Politique des Auteurs*" 255.

You could say that in spite of their great successes, Clouzot, Clément and Becker failed because they thought that finding a style was all it took to create a new soul for French cinema. It's quite clear, on the other hand, that Italian neo-realism wasn't first and foremost a search for a style. It became a style; but it was part of a conception of the new world.[36]

The *Cahiers* group's primary method for recognising the signifying marks of an *auteur* and for distinguishing an *auteur's* films from those of lesser directors, was to "read the language" of film **on the screen** and evaluate a film and director by his or her **use of that language**. If consistent themes and concerns, expressed through consistent stylistic marks identifying the presence and commitment of the director, were discernable, then, irrespective of subject and plot, or who wrote the script, of creative personnel or conditions of production, the director could be identified as the *auteur* – both author and artist of the film.

That authorial signature, however, could not be recognised from the reading of only one or two films but had to be recognisable across the body of a director's work. With this conception of *auteur*, the director could be conceived as a solitary artist, the site of meaning in his or her work and in control of that work, similar to the painter or novelist, despite the collaborative nature of film-making and irrespective of the institutional environment. There are several instances where this artistic comparison is explicitly stated, such as Rivette's 1954 comparison of a director's use of Cinemascope, colour and sound with Michelangelo's fresco technique and Bach's fugue technique.[37] The director as sole site and organiser of meaning is also present as an un-stated assumption throughout *Cahiers* articles of the time, for example, when Rohmer and Truffaut advised that, "The message contained in the recent films of Roberto Rossellini gave rise to interpretations so diverse that a clarification by the Director himself seemed to be called for."[38]

The *Cahiers* group were criticised for their emphasis on stylistic and thematic consistency, which was often typified as a pointless search for mere repetition as evidence of directorial authorship. This criticism is addressed in more detail in the literature review, but one

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[36] Andre Bazin, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Pierre Kast, Roger Leenhardt, Jacques Rivette and Eric Rohmer, "Six characters in search of *auteurs*: a discussion about the French cinema," trans. Liz Heron, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 34.

[37] Jacques Rivette, "The age of *metteurs en scène,*" trans. Liz Heron, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 277. This assumption is noted by Jean-Louis Comolli in, "Twenty Years On"197.

[38] Rohmer and Truffaut, "Interviews with Roberto Rossellini," trans. Liz Heron 209.

answer to that criticism was Bazin's clarification that each *auteur's* films were not necessarily telling the same story but "had the same attitude and passes the same moral judgements".[39] This statement clarifies Truffaut's admiration for Nicholas Ray as, "an *auteur* in our sense of the word. All his films tell the same story". It also clarifies his attack on the scenarists Pierre Bost and Jean Aurenche in "*Une certaine tendance*" for their ability to adapt a diversity of literary works, which he had criticised as evidence of a "suppleness of spirit" and an "habitually geared down personality".[40]

Bazin's clarification makes clear that the *politique* was as much a moral perspective realised as an aesthetic style, as it was a critical method and on this point it also informs another criticism of the *Cahiers* group. This was that, far from admiring directors who used the language of film to author a work and express their perception of the world on screen, they privileged those directors whose world-view, a peculiarly American world-view, agreed with their own. Both Richard Roud in 1960 and John Hess in 1974 made this criticism. Roud typified it as an appreciation of the brutal, the dispossessed and the irrational; Hess as "…a world of *solitude morale*, of characters in physical, psychological and spiritual isolation".[41]

The *Cahiers* group might have disagreed with the intent behind those statements but would most probably not have disagreed with their descriptive accuracy. Hoveyda, in his article on Nicholas Ray's *Party Girl*, identified the same universal themes in Ray's film as those identified by Hess and Roud; themes of "Solitude, violence, moral crises, love, struggles against oneself, self analysis ...".[42] Too much emphasis on the privileging of this particular world-view, however, removes the focus from the more important, defining idea – the mise en scene: the formal means by which the *auteur* became both author, and artist, of the work by expressing that world-view on screen and so "overwriting" the literary author's expression of subject and perspective in the script.

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[39] Bazin, "On the *Politique des Auteurs*" 255.
[40] Truffaut, "A Wonderful Certainty," 107; and "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" 226.
[41] Richard Roud, "The French Line," *Sight and Sound* 29. 4, (Autumn 1960): 168; Hess, "La Politique des Auteurs, Part 1" 19.
[42] Fereydoun Hoveyda, "Nicholas Ray's Reply: *Party Girl,*" trans. Norman King, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1960s* 130.

The mise en scene

To understand the *politique's* idea of mise en scene is to understand that doctrine's idea of cinema, of cinema as art, of Hollywood cinema as art. It is for this reason that the concept of mise en scene is the most significant of the *politique*, because it both identified the specifically cinematic form that distinguishes cinematic art from other narrative and visual art forms " … the specificity of the cinematographic work lies in its technique and not in its content, in its *mise en scène* and not in the screenplay and the dialogue …", and so allows for identification of the cinematic artist: " … it is nothing other than the technique which each *auteur* invents in order to express himself and establish the specificity of his work."[43] But, if there was confusion about the meaning of *auteur* there was even greater confusion about the meaning of mise en scene. The confusion was magnified by what appeared to be an almost wilful refusal of the *politique's* authors to establish an agreed definition, and the tendencies of some to describe that concept in terms of almost metaphysical inscrutability. This tendency was exemplified by Rivette's 1954 statement that to ask what was mise en scene was, " … a hazardous question [which he had] … no intention of answering … [though] should the question not always inform our deliberations?"[44] Jean-Louis Comolli identified the problem for students of the *politique* in his opening statement to the 1965 round-table discussion at *Cahiers*, "Twenty years On", "In short, if you ask what characterises an *auteur*, what makes a filmmaker an *auteur* in the strong sense of the term, you fall into a new trap: it's his 'style', in other words the '*mise en scène*', a notion as dangerous, risky, infinitely variable and impossible to pin down as *auteur*."[45] But the question of definition must be answered for, if the *politique* at its most extreme could be labelled the cult of the *auteur*, then mise en scene was its Holy Grail, a "mystery that is not contained in the script" and "a truth that is purely cinematic".[46]

Mise en scene is not a term introduced by the *Cahiers* group but one that originated in the theatre and referred to the staged scene and all the elements put into that scene. Other media subsequently adopted the term, including cinema. In its more commonly accepted cinematic sense, mise en scene signifies the world composed for the camera frame and all the elements

[43] Hoveyda, "Sunspots," trans. Jill Forbes, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1960s* 138, 142.
[44] Jacques Rivette, "The Essential," trans. Liz Heron, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 134.
[45] Comolli, "Twenty Years On" 205.
[46] Rivette, "The Essential" 133-34.

included within that frame, and how they are positioned, to constitute that world and reveal its story – the lighting, sets, (sometimes) editing, camera shots, costumes, the movement of the actors. This, however, is to describe mise en scene as physical arrangement and movement on set, and the diegetic and non-diegetic re-arrangements and additions post-production. This description does not adequately describe the concept as conceived and developed in the *politique*.

The *politique's* conception of mise en scene is not so much plastic representation as stylistic expression of directorial ideas and beliefs to form a perspective on the world. Mise en scene in the former sense would be merely a cinematic re-telling of the plot, such as a *metteur en scène's* transfer of the script to the screen. But, in the latter sense used by the *Cahiers* group, it becomes both the means and the end. It is the synthesis of the constituent elements in each shot, the " … precise complex of sets and characters, a network of relationships, an architecture of connections, an animated complex that seems suspended in space."[47] That "precise complex" becomes the expressive dynamic that directly represents an *auteur's*, " … intellectual operation which has set to work an initial emotion and the general idea".[48] Alexandre Astruc, in his 1948 article, "The birth of a new avant-garde: *la camera stylo*", had initially proposed the idea of mise en scene as the director's primary " … means of expression, just as all the arts have been before it, and in particular painting and the novel … it is gradually becoming language. By language, I mean a form in which and by which an artist can express his thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate his obsessions exactly as he does in the contemporary essay or novel."[49] The emphasis was on the "how" on screen not the "what" on paper. In a later essay published in 1959 in *Cahiers* entitled "What is *mise en scène*", Astruc subsequently described that concept as, " … a certain way of extending states of mind into movements of the body". [50] An analysis of this later essay reveal that the crucial element of that animated complex was characterisation; the *auteur's* realisation of ideas, beliefs and intentions through the human element of the dynamic, "Watching how people act? … Not exactly. It could more aptly be described as presenting them, watching how they act and at the same time what makes them act."[51]

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[47] Rivette, "The Essential" 134.
[48] Hoveyda, "Sunspots" 142.
[49] Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde" 17-18.
[50] Alexandre Astruc, "What Is *Mise en Scène*?" trans. Liz Heron, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 267.
[51] Astruc, "What Is *Mise en Scène*?" 266.

Similarly, a review of the *Cahiers* group's essays during the period in question, reveal that, while the *politique's* authors gave attention to cinema's plastic means of expression and representation – such as camera movements and new technologies – their writings privilege cinematic characterisation as the most significant strategy. [52] In a 1954 article Truffaut had written, "what happens to Becker's characters is of less importance than the way it happens to them", and in 1955 Chabrol, in an essay on *Rear Window*, wrote it is the, "… position of the author, which, combined with the artistic factors imposed by the very nature of the enterprise, is developed through the characters directly presented". [53] The emphasis is on the direction and presentation of the actors in relation to their environment and each other – and so cinematic, as opposed to literary, characterisation. It was the strategy by which the director could transcend subject and script to "re-write" not only the characters, as scripted by the writer, but also the writer's literary narrative strategies and narrative structure – the plot.

Script and subject

The idea of mise en scene as cinematic articulation "over-writing" the script may have provided a means for analysing and evaluating a film in purely cinematic, rather than literary, terms because the meaning of a film was to be found primarily in the form of the film, not in the literary subject matter or the script, but it led in certain cases to excessive formalism. Some at *Cahiers* asserted that the subject of the film – the content – was not a criterion of value and that, in fact, the poorer the script the more room for the director to express his personality through stylistic cinematic language. Bazin disagreed with this extreme position, " ... the more outspoken and foolhardy ... will admit that it very much looks as if they prefer small 'B' films, where the banality of the scenario leaves more room for the personal contribution of the author."[54]

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[52] See Truffaut, Rivette and Rohmer's articles on Cinemascope in *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* as examples of their consideration of cinema's plastic means of expression: Truffaut, "A Full View" 273-274; Rivette, "The Age of *Metteurs en Scène*" 275-279; Rohmer, "The Cardinal Virtues of Cinemascope", trans. Liz Heron 280-283.
[53] François Truffaut, "The Rogues Are Weary," trans. Liz Heron, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 29; and Claude Chabrol, "Serious Things," trans. Liz Heron, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 137.
[54] Bazin, "On the *Politique des Auteurs*" 255.

Hoveyda seemingly exemplified this attitude to both script and subject three years later in his 1960 essay on Nicholas Ray's *Party Girl*. Hoveyda asserted that the film " … has an idiotic story. So what?" By comparison he wrote of mise en scene as "… the essence of cinema … It is *mise en scène* which gives expression to everything on the screen, transforming, as if by magic, a screenplay written by someone else and imposed on the director into something which is truly an author's film."[55] The core of his argument, however, and that of the *Cahiers* group, was not that subject was irrelevant, but that mise en scene could "breathe real content into a seemingly trivial subject".[56] Therefore, while form was the crucial element because it was within the director's control, the issue was not the creation of form in isolation but how that form was used to express and signify the content. A reading of essays by Rivette, Rohmer, Chabrol, Truffaut and Godard all emphasise this attitude to form. As stated by Godard, writing in *Arts* magazine in 1959, "… the principal form of talent in the cinema today is to … answer first of all the question 'Why?' in order then to be able to answer the question 'How?'. Content, in other words, precedes form and conditions it. If the former is false, the latter will logically be false too: it will be awkward."[57]

In his essay on *Party Girl*, Hoveyda appears, on the face of it, to be writing from the same perspective as that taken by the original group. For example, consider Rivette's argument that Preminger's characterisation of the Jean Simmons character via the mise en scene in *Angel Face* transformed a "banal character" as written in the screenplay into something "… fresh and surprising. How does this come about, if not by some mystery that is not contained in the script."[58] There was, however, an important difference. The original group of Chabrol, Godard, Rivette, Rohmer and Truffaut were not denying the function and importance of the script as Hoveyda appears to do. Their method for a visual retracing of cinematic creativity through analysis of the mise en scene was underpinned by significant assumptions about *auteur* directors' roles in writing the final versions of their shooting scripts, and this literary stage in the creative process is often overlooked. Truffaut in "The Rogues are Weary" had argued, "The fact that Renoir, Bresson, Cocteau and Becker are involved in the writing of a script and sign their names to it not only gives them greater

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[55] Hoveyda, "Nicholas Ray's Reply: *Party Girl*" 123.
[56] Hoveyda, "Sunspots" 139.
[57] Godard, *Godard on Godard* 146.
[58] Rivette, "The Essential" 133.

freedom on the studio floor, but more radically it means that they replace scenes and dialogue that a scriptwriter could never dream up."[59] During the 1957 round table discussion, "Six Characters in Search of *auteurs*: A Discussion about the French Cinema", Rivette made an even more absolute statement:

> ... in spite of the credits ... we now know for sure there isn't a single one of the great American directors who doesn't work on the scenario himself right from the beginning, in collaboration with a scriptwriter who writes the screenplay for him and does the purely literary work that he himself couldn't do with the same formal skill but which is nevertheless in accordance with his own directives (not simply under his supervision but following the direction he gives to it). And that's why in *Cahiers* we've chosen to defend directors like Hitchcock rather than Wyler ... because they are directors who actually work on their scenarios.[60]

Therefore, the function of the *politique's auteurs* included involvement in the script as a necessary part of the creative act of filmmaking, it might have been only a "blue print" but it was a necessary stage and preparation for thinking through scenes in terms of the mise en scene.

While the term "pretext" is sometimes used as the *auteurist* adjective for the script, "opportunity" was also a term used and it is this term that more precisely reflects the original perspective. The script became the "opportunity" which allowed the director to write certain characters, which were his film's "real subject".[61] To more accurately state the original *politique*, a distinction needs to be drawn between the originating script, and the shooting script the director took on set. Bazin, typically, offered a slightly different view that indicated his more total consideration of cinema as an art form and respect for each function of the creative process, " It's possible that the evolution of the cinema … is moving in the direction of the director-*auteur* working on the scenario with the scriptwriter or scriptwriters. But it matters very little to me whether there are scriptwriters as such – what does matter is that the scriptwriter should exist as a function."[62]

There was recognition of the differing attitudes between *auteurs* to the form the script could take as a creative stage of the process. This point was specifically noted in retrospect by

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[59] Truffaut, "The Rogues Are Weary" 28.
[60] Rivette, "Six Characters in Search of *Auteurs*" 38.
[61] Rivette, "The Essential" 133.
[62] Bazin, "Six Characters in Search of *Auteurs*" 38.

Godard in 1962, "… Eisenstein and Hitchcock, are those who prepare their films as fully as possible … The shooting is merely practical application". Godard compared this attitude to that taken by directors such as Rouch, who "… don't know exactly what they are going to do, and search for it. The film is the search." Godard described his filmmaking in terms identifiable with the latter group, "My first shots were prepared very carefully and shot very quickly ... I had written the first scene … and for the rest I had a pile of notes for each scene …[…] this isn't improvisation but last-minute focusing."[63]

The national and institutional environments

The French tradition

The arguments raised about script and subject at *Cahiers* had a particularly national focus. They were essentially a continuation of the concern about the status accorded to cinema, as opposed to that accorded to literature, in French cultural life. This concern, in turn, was bound up in the all enveloping concern that artists should be inspired by, and directly engage with, the world in which they lived, whatever the source material, rather than merely re-tell the traditional cultural and social values expressed in literary classics. The 1957 round-table discussion, held to debate "something rotten in our cinematographic kingdom", ranged around whether or not the perceived "crisis" in French filmmaking was one of subject or of people, and if one of subject, whether this was, in turn, because French literature did not provide the same source of inspiration as did the American. Roger Leenhardt believed that the "crisis is one of subject matter" and inspiration, Pierre Kast, however, thought that "the crisis facing subject matter isn't simply an *auteur* crisis, it's also the problem of having subjects accepted."[64] They considered the inability of the French filmmaking culture to be inspired by, and engaged with, the social, economic and political environment and compared this failing with the ability of Italian and American filmmakers to reflect and engage in a more dynamic dialogue with their societies.

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[63] Godard, *Godard on Godard* 172-73.
[64] Kast, Leenhardt, "Six Characters in Search of *Auteurs*" 33-34.

Generic templates

Hollywood films were judged to reflect their society's concerns primarily through the generic templates that, while originating in novels, had also become the templates for most American film. Hollywood's cinematic genres, however, were not seen as a moribund reworking of stale literary forms buried in past epochs, but as the cinematic extension of a "modern" literary patrimony provided by authors such as Hammett and Chandler that "emerged out of the very complex social, economic and political conjunctions of the 1930s". Rohmer, for instance, discussed American film as both generic and emerging from a direct engagement with the surrounding world in "Rediscovering America". He considered Hollywood's genre-based films as more than narrative formulae pandering to the masses through expression of "platitudes", and whose success only depended on "noisy publicity" and the "economic power" of the American film industry. He argued that American films were universally dominant and popular primarily because they tackled universal themes such as "…the relations between power and the law, will and destiny, individual freedom and the common good". Universal themes and style that were marked by "*efficacy* and *elegance*" and a "certain idea of man" since lost in France, where films were "Perpetual drivel about love crossed by some religious or social conformism".[65]

There were different attitudes to the American generic tradition at *Cahiers*. Jim Hillier noted that these attitudes could be "confused and contradictory" and details the different emphases between Chabrol, Rohmer, Rivette and Bazin in his introduction to the section on American cinema in *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*. Hillier also notes, however, that whatever the differences, there remained an over-riding belief in an *auteur's* ability to use generic codes as yet further resources at his or her disposal, "… despite stars, despite industrial factors, despite genre, authorship – the *politique des auteurs* – was the undisputed system on which almost all *Cahiers* writing was based; even Bazin's critique of the *politique* lent it fundamental support in essentials."[66] One instance of these different emphases, but with constant reference to the *auteur*, is to compare Chabrol's statements on genre in his essay, "Evolution of the thriller", with the statements by Rohmer in "Rediscovering America" quoted above. Chabrol describes genres

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[65] Rohmer, "Rediscovering America" 89-91.
[66] Hillier, Introduction to "Part Two American Cinema," *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 75.

as having "created the past glory of American cinema" but then diminishes them as only the "pretext or a means". He believed that generic constants should not lock inspiration into "strict rules" that could too readily lead to repetitive re-workings of their formulae that would produce mediocre, even banal, films without the "*sincere* expression of the preoccupations and ideas of their authors" to animate that formulae with new insight.[67]

The American tradition: the institutional and collaborative environment

Hollywood and the American filmmaking tradition provide a useful focus for a further exploration of the *Cahiers* group's approach to, and understanding of, the material facts of filmmaking that could contradict their concept of the director as solitary artist. Their attitude to the industrial and collaborative structures within which the *auteur* worked, and to technological innovations such as Cinemascope, was the same as that to the script and to the narrative structures imposed by generic templates They were considered to be either resources at the director's disposal, rather than hindrances to personal expression or hindrances that could be overcome by mise en scene authorship. Though it must be said that the *Cahiers* group's consideration of these material realities tended to the cursory.

Hollywood film might not have been spotlighted in "*Une certain tendance*", but Truffaut's passing comment in the first few sentences of that essay "With the advent of 'talkies', the French cinema was a frank plagiarism of the American cinema." is indicative of the significance given to Hollywood film. [68] Throughout the essays in *Cahiers*, Hollywood was a constant reference point by which the perceived failings of the French national tradition were judged. *Cahiers* neither sneered at nor patronised Hollywood cinema. Not the industrial nature of production (Truffaut and Godard), nor the thematic and stylistic patterns of the generic templates (Bazin, Rohmer, Rivette, Truffaut), nor the overtly moral simplicities of the stories (Godard, Bazin), nor the commercial intent to attract a mass paying audience (Bazin, Rohmer, Truffaut).

American film was admired not only for the works of its *auteurs* but also for the ability of that tradition and that society to have provided the conditions for their emergence in the first

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[67] Claude Chabrol, "Evolution of the Thriller", trans. Liz Heron, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 160-162.
[68] Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" 228.

place. The *Cahiers* group were by no means uncritical, sometimes confused and, as usual, not always in agreement on many of these issues, and it should be noted that attitudes changed as practical filmmaking was experienced by many of the collective. Despite this, the *Cahiers* collection of essays at the time on American film contain statements of precise creative and critical significance that have remained a critical exemplar for the studio-made films of Hollywood's "Golden Age".

Apart from a few notable exceptions, such as Lindsay Anderson and Gavin Lambert in England, prior to the radical disruption caused by Truffaut, Godard et al., Hollywood films had been regarded as entertainment for the masses and so, by definition, not a creative site of the seventh art. The reasons contributing to this general dismissive assessment of Hollywood cinema by serious critics are well known. First, because it was assumed that the director was but one creative functionary within a Hollywood machine that did not allow for personal artistic expression whatever the subject matter of a film, and so could not claim creative ownership of that film. Secondly, because Hollywood films were intended to be popular entertainment, their subject matter did not usually include overtly serious social or literary themes.

There was also the more fundamental objection that Hollywood film was not art because of the over-riding commercial intent and industrial nature of Hollywood studio production. This was the objection that Hollywood mass-market production was incompatible with individual artistic expression within that institutional environment. There was a cultural elitism at work here but also an ideological rationale. Claiming personal artistic expression in commercial film – specifically Hollywood films – was polemical because it was seen as a commodity produced for capitalist mass market consumption, dependent on the market, formed by the market and so reflecting the capitalist ideology. Traditionally, however, an artist was seen as independent of the market, one whose free will and expression was not constrained by industrial forces and so was able to challenge the ideology produced by the industrial base.

The *Cahiers* group's answer to these objections was to focus on the ability of individual directors to compose and effect works of film art with more serious intentions than were

immediately obvious through singular use of mise en scene. Their insistence on methodical *a posteriori* analysis of the whole of a director's *oeuvre* to identify consistent style and themes embedded with the mise en scene was the method by which the *Cahiers* group uncovered the deeper inner meaning in Hollywood films that had been previously dismissed as mere entertainment, with attributes supposedly only capable of offering immediate enjoyment. Their re-evaluation of the deeper meaning to be found in these films led to recognition of personal expression and individual authorship within the industrial environment of the commercial Hollywood filmmaking tradition, and this in turn led to a re-evaluation of many films and directors from that filmmaking tradition which had previously been dismissed as not worthy of critical consideration.

Chabrol's 1955 review of Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954) as a "serious" film "beyond the mere entertainment thriller" is an example of this application of their policy and method.[69] Chabrol uncovers universal themes present in the film not from an analysis of the overt subject matter, but by teasing out intended directorial meaning signified through visual narrative strategies. Similarly, there was an earlier example of the *Cahiers* approach to Hollywood, written by Rivette prior to publication of "*Une Certain tendance*", in his 1953 essay "The Genius of Howard Hawks". In this essay, Rivette analyses Hawks's use of style and technique for dramatic and narrative expression. He discusses the consistent themes and visual narrative strategies of the director's films, "But Hawksian drama is always expressed in spatial terms, and variation in setting are parallel with temporal variations: whether it is the drama of *Scarface*, whose kingdom shrinks from the city he once ruled to the room in which he is finally trapped, or of the scientists who cannot dare leave their hut for fear of *The Thing*".[70]

Hoveyda's essay on Nicholas Ray's *Party Girl* was a late, and notorious, example of the *politique* as a critical method. Hoveyda analysed Ray's use of colour, décor, framing, sets and direction of the actors for narrative expression and characterisation, and used that analysis as evidence for his belief that subject mattered little because "*mise en scène* can transfigure it." And so, Hoveyda argued, a seemingly minor Hollywood film about a

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[69] Chabrol, "Serious Things" 136.
[70] Jacques Rivette, "The Genius of Howard Hawks," trans. Russell Campbell, Marvin Pister (adapted from a translation by Adrian Brine), *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 129.

gangster's lawyer and mistress became a story about "the constant factors of this universe", and this "deep meaning" was located "purely and simply in the *mise en scène.*"[71]

Retrospective attention was given to the Hollywood studio system, with surprising results. There was the realisation expressed during the December 1963/January 1964 round table discussion, "Questions about American Cinema: A Discussion", that with the fall of the studio system in Hollywood came a noticeable decline in American film. During the discussion there is an explicit connection made between changing conditions of production and changes in the style and quality of the films. As stated by Godard during that discussion, "… of every hundred American films 80 per cent say,were good. Nowadays of every hundred American films 80 per cent are bad", and the quality and prevalence of those good films had been the "reason we used to like the American cinema."[72] Truffaut suggested that aspects of the Hollywood studio system had, in fact, nurtured artistic development as much as they might have seemingly restrained artistic freedom, "We were wrong in welcoming the emancipation of the American cinema. The moment they became free they made lousy films"; there had been a "falling off of quality". He admitted that the films *Cahiers* had admired had been those produced by "… assembly line cinema ... where the director was an operative for the four weeks of the shooting, where the film was edited by someone else...".[73]

Several explanations were proposed for why *auteurs* emerged during the studio era and for the quality of the films that were made. One suggestion was that, while dealing with a studio boss might have meant no directorial control over production, distribution and exhibition, it had also meant no responsibility for those non-creative production duties and obligations that would restrict the time, energy and thought available for the creative stage of the process. Truffaut even posited the artistic benefits to be gained from a system headed by a business minded studio boss intent only on producing good, successful money-making films. The "great modesty" from the "hard face of business" that did not privilege the

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[71] Hoveyda, "*Party Girl*" 127, 130.
[72] Godard and others, "Questions About American Cinema: A Discussion (Extract)," *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1960s* 174.
[73] Truffaut, "Questions About American Cinema" 176.

production of "quality" films designed to enhance a particular star's status or to win awards and critical admiration.[74]

The stylistic influence of each studio was also recognised during this retrospective discussion. For example, there had been more cutting in Universal films than in MGM films. The importance of scriptwriters and particular stars was also debated, and, with the power of the studios in decline, the consequences of the rising power of the stars was a particular issue. There is, therefore, some consideration given to both the conditions of production and some of the other creative participants and contributors on the set. However, these other elements are only ever considered as external forces either inhibiting or promoting the artistic intentions of the director as a unified subject. There is no consideration of material elements as formative influences in the emotional, psychological, social and political make-up of their *auteurs*.

Clearly, their consideration of the institutional conditions of production within which their *auteurs* operated was, at the time, limited to whether or not particular production environments nurtured or thwarted the creative intentions of directors.[75] There were rhetorical pronouncements rather than closely argued analyses – perhaps because they believed the evidence on screen spoke for itself. Rivette's statement that it was for, " … the directors who decide, who alone know how to distinguish between what increases their powers and what limits them – and the critics follow", gives no consideration at all to the commercial realities of filmmaking.[76] There is no consideration of the impact that box-office success or otherwise might have on the resources, both technical and human, that were to be made available to the director in the first place, or to the degree of artistic licence that he or she would then be afforded.

The auteur's collaborators

The collaborative environment and happenings on-set were considered to be yet more opportunities for *auteurial* expression; as stated by Rivette, "I do believe that for Preminger

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[74] Truffaut, "Questions About American Cinema" 176-77.
[75] For example, Truffaut lamenting what he considered as the negative effects of big budget filmmaking in, "A Full View" 274.
[76] Rivette, "The Age of *Metteurs en Scène*" 277.

a film is in the first place an opportunity ... for questioning ... The film is not so much an end as a means. Its unpredictability attracts him, the chance discoveries that mean things cannot go according to plan, on-the-spot improvisation that is born of a fortunate moment...".[77] This statement and Godard's in the previous paragraph, echo Truffaut's belief in the creative importance of what happens on-set, and of improvisation, "Not only could a scriptwriter never have written this line, but it is also the kind of line which is only improvised on the set".[78] Thus improvisation on set, whether arising from the inspiration of the moment or necessitated by last minute occurrences, became another element in a director's "fine writing" of the film's mise en scene.

Occasionally, other collaborators were awarded authorship status. During the 1957 discussion, "Six Characters in Search of *Auteurs*", Rivette advised:

> In fact, Gabin wasn't an actor ... he was someone who brought a character into French cinema, and it wasn't only scripts that he influenced but *mise en scène* as well. I think that Gabin could be regarded as almost more of a director than Duvivier or Grémillon, to the extent that the French style of *mise en scène* was constructed to a large extent on Gabin's style of acting, on his walk, his way of speaking or of looking at a girl. It's also what gives the great American actors their dynamism, actors like Cary Grant, Gary Cooper or James Stewart. For instance, Anthony Mann's *mise en scène* is definitely influenced by James Stewart's style of acting.[79]

But, however influential the actor or other collaborators were thought to have been, the director was still identified as the *auteur* – both author and artist – because only the director had the function to organise, and authorise, the creative input of all other collaborators when composing the mise en scene. The lighting-camera man, the actors, the production or set designer, the editor, and any other collaborators, might each have contributed to the creative result, and one might sometimes have been the primary contributor, but none could claim to be the *auteur* because they did not have that primary authoring function:. Their talents and contributions were viewed as resources for the director's use in his or her aesthetic, thematic and narrative design. Rohmer provided a succinct example of this attitude when he

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[77] Rivette, "The Essential" 134.
[78] Truffaut, "The Rogues Are Weary" 29.
[79] Rivette, "Six Characters in Search of *Auteurs*" 37.

described mise en scene as the director's conception then realised by the crew at his or her disposal.[80]

Fereydoun Hoveyda, in the two 1960 essays already cited, did provide a more robust, though still limited and partial, defence to critics who insisted that a film was a collective and commercial work and account had to be taken of the conditions of production and distribution. In the May essay of that year, "Nicholas Ray's Reply: *Party Girl*", he referred to the constant "harping" of the critics on the importance of the screenplay, the acting and the production system. His analysis of Ray's use of colour, decor and sets for characterisation and stylistic exposition contain no mention of the contributions of Ray's stylistic collaborators and functionaries. The August essay of the same year, entitled "Sunspots", included a more substantial argument, though with essentially the same answers: for example, his description of cameramen as putting "their talent at the service of the director. It is up to the Director to know how to use it." The title of the essay is a direct reference to the work of the economist Stanley Jevrons, "who explained the cyclical crises of the economy by the build-up of sunspots", and he likened suggestions of the impact of the screenplay and photography on the meaning of the film to that of the climate on the economy.[81]

The Romantic tradition

This idea of the artist as a solitary genius whose inspiration was the sole source of meaning in a work of art is based on the Romantic critical tradition that emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century. Within the Romantic tradition a work is only art if the artist can be recognised as the signifying presence, the sole originator and site of meaning in that text. Typically, the terms used by the *Cahiers* group to identify that presence were the artist's "personality", "world-view" or "signature". The *politique* is often criticised as conservative and reactionary because it was based on this critical "bourgeois" tradition that did not recognise that an individual's "personality" or "world-view" originates in that individual's culturally and historically specific environment. If the *auteur* was one where, "…every

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[80] Rohmer, "The Old and the New" 91.
[81] Hoveyda, "Sunspots" 140, 135-45.

statement reveals in its author a conception of the world", then that conception had first been formed by that world. [82]

While Pierre Kast doing "duty as the Marxist" is often recognised as the one member of *Cahiers* writing collective **at that time,** and apart from Bazin, who emphasised the **determining** influence on the artist of the conditions of production, his comments in "Six Characters in Search of *auteurs*: A Discussion about the French Cinema", and his earlier 1951 essay, "Flattering the Fuzz: Some Remarks on Dandyism and the Practice of Cinema", go little beyond the superficial consideration given to these sociological and technical conditions by the non-Marxist members of that collective. [83] It was Bazin, the writer of conservative Catholic sensibility, who provided the real corrective to the Romantic tendencies of the others, "... the individual transcends society, but society is also and above all *within* him. So there can be no definitive criticism of genius or talent which does not first take into consideration the social determinism, the historical combination of circumstances, and the technical background which to a large extent determine it."[84]

Mise en scene and a Realist aesthetic

The *politique* promoted a realist aesthetic that was beyond "dramatic or narrative verisimilitude", beyond a naive belief in documentary reproduction: it was an "imitation of life", as witnessed by the *auteur* and then thought through in terms of the mise en scene.[85] This idea and aesthetic was based on Bazin's theory of cinematic realism. Bazin's ideas provided the critical, moral and aesthetic foundation for the *politique des auteurs*, and for that policy's concept of film as art – despite diverging opinions within the collective during, and subsequent to, the period in question. His concept of cinematic realism was a moral, rather than ideological, perspective realised as an aesthetic style.[86] He detailed his concept in two essays, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" and "An Aesthetic of Reality:

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[82] Hoveyda, "Sunspots" 138.

[83] Kast, "Six Characters in Search of *Auteurs*" 33; and "Flattering the Fuzz: Some Remarks on Dandyism and the Practice of Cinema," trans. Diana Matias, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 227-234.

[84] Bazin, "On the *Politique des Auteurs*" 251.

[85] Rivette, "The Essential" 134; Hoveyda, "*Party Girl*" 130; Truffaut, "The Rogues are Weary" 28.

[86] Rossellini exemplified the idea of a moral perspective realised as an aesthetic style. When interviewed in 1954 by Rohmer and Truffaut he stated: "As far as I am concerned it is primarily a moral position which gives a perspective on the world. It then becomes an aesthetic position, but its basis is moral". Rohmer and Truffaut, "Interviews with Roberto Rossellini" 209.

Neo-realism (Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation)". Both essays included discussions on the Italian Neo-realist school, which he considered "… tends to give back to the cinema a sense of the ambiguity of reality".[87]

Bazin recognised that the director chose which facts to show and which not, and acknowledged that realism in art was not mere "passive recording" but was "first profoundly aesthetic". He reasoned that "authentic reality" was but one element of the artist's composition and allowed that only "the illusion of reality" was created by its "cinematographic representation". He also allowed that the director's use of setting, lighting, camera angles; the relation of "objects and characters" made it "… impossible for the spectator to miss the significance of the scene". But he argued that an aesthetic based on the "fact" as the "unit of cinematic narrative", rather than on the "shot", and on depth of field photography that included the whole setting within the frame, still allowed for an "active mental attitude" and the exercise of "at least a minimum of personal choice" by the spectator. Bazin judged that "facts" had an independent, intrinsic meaning irrespective of what else the director chose to show, and that an aesthetic style based on "facts" tended to "emphasise" rather than subvert those "facts" intrinsic meaning. Therefore, if the "fact" was the unit of cinematic composition then the creation of a sense of meaning objectively contained in the images themselves was possible.[88]

Bazin opposed this idea of cinematic realism and art with the "expressionism of montage", which used the "shot" as the unit of cinematic narrative and so created, "a sense or meaning not objectively contained in the images themselves but derived exclusively from their juxtaposition".[89] By contrast, he admired Orson Welles's use of depth of field for, "Dramatic effects for which we had formerly relied on montage were created out of the movements of the actors within a fixed framework".[90] He was stylistically prescriptive only to a certain extent: he equated Welles's use of depth of field with Rossellini's quite different Neo-realist style, and admired both for their humanist aesthetic. He suggested that while

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[87] Andre Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema," *What Is Cinema?* vol. 1, selected and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1967) 37.
[88] Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" 34-37; Andre Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism," *What Is Cinema?*, vol. 2, selected and trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1971) 25-27.
[89] Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" 25.
[90] Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" 33.

they might be stylistically and technically different, even "diametrically opposite", both had the "same dependence of the actor relative to the setting, the same realistic acting demanded of everyone in the scene whatever their dramatic importance … [the] same aesthetic concept of realism".[91]

Bazin's concept echoes throughout much of the early writing by the young filmmakers and "commandos" at *Cahiers*, such as Rohmer's assertion that, "… even the most direct, least contrived scene" is an artificial construction.[92] Similarly, Rohmer's equation of style with moral attitude and content echoes Bazin's rhetorical question, "Is not neo-realism primarily a style of humanism and only secondarily a style of filmmaking?"[93] Bazin's stricture that the artist should not "impose an interpretation on the spectator" was echoed by Truffaut in "*Une certaine tendance*" when he castigated the adherents of psychological realism for failing to be truly realistic rather than just ideologically driven of, "[locking] characters in a closed world … instead of letting us see them for ourselves, with our own eyes. The artist cannot always dominate his work."[94]

A realist aesthetic on these terms supports the *auteurist* belief in the necessary and identifiable presence of the artist in the work if it is to be considered as art, but the identifiable presence of an artist sincerely representing his or her perspective on the world in which she or he lived, and questioning that world, rather than attempting to dominate it by imposing ideologically constructed answers. It was an idea of filmmaking as a means to research, through spectacle, the world in which one lived and then present that world as authentic because " … it had first to have been witnessed in real life, [and as cinematic art because it had been] then *thought through* in terms of *mise en scène*".[95] This idea of film as "not so much an end as a means" was exemplified by Godard's 1962 explanation of his filmmaking, "Cinema, Truffaut said, is spectacle – Méliès – and research – Lumière ... I have always wanted, basically, to do research in the form of a spectacle. The documentary

[91] Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality" 38-39.
[92] Eric Rohmer, "The Land of Miracles," trans. Liz Heron, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 206.
[93] Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" 29.
[94] Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" 232.
[95] Truffaut, "The Rogues Are Weary" 28.

side: is a man in a particular situation. The spectacle comes when one makes this man a gangster or a secret agent."[96]

A eulogy to poverty: anti-academicism and technical simplicity

While Truffaut displayed a virulent anti-academic attitude because of his particular self-consciousness about a lack of academic achievement, there was a pervasive anti-academicism inherent throughout the *Cahiers* group and their *politique* directed against both critics and filmmakers who displayed an overtly sociological, psychological or otherwise academic approach to film. This attitude was based on the perception that such overtly "academic" approaches displayed a lack of regard for cinema as an art form because it seemingly first had to be validated by reference to either literature or academic theories, rather than by reference to the cinematic aesthetic itself, " … the exegetists of our art ... believe to honor the cinema by using literary jargon. (Haven't Sartre and Camus been talked about for Pagliero's work, and phenomenology for Allegret's?)".[97]

There was also the belief that a too consciously intellectual approach by filmmakers was evidence of both a lack of engagement with the contemporary world (and so with reality), and an attempt to impose an ideological or theoretical perspective on the worlds and people portrayed in a film. In contrast, the terms sincerity, simplicity and naivety are used throughout the *Cahiers* essays to describe the films of their chosen *auteurs*. For instance, Rivette discussing the work of Ray and others as "naïveté … set in opposition to the wiles and tricks of the professional scriptwriters".[98]

Technical simplicity was viewed seemingly as a visual verification of the sincerity and authenticity of an *auteur's* world-view. Therefore, technical ability for its own sake was not admired. If Truffaut dismissed scholarly framing and complicated lighting as stylistic hallmarks of the "tradition of quality", and heralded Ray as, "not of great stature as a technician…the editing is deplorable. But the interest lies elsewhere: for instance, in the very beautiful positioning of figures within the frame."; then Rohmer "… unfailingly wished

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[96] Godard, *Godard on Godard* 181.
[97] Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema" 229.
[98] Jacques Rivette, "Notes on a Revolution," trans. Liz Heron, *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s* 96.

that the brutality of technical invention might deliver us, once and for all, from the superstition of the beautiful image …"; Chabrol argued that its very clumsiness made *Build My Gallows High* more sincere than *Dark Passage* and Rivette would proclaim Preminger's *Angel Face* as a "eulogy to poverty" and that the lack of financial and other resources meant the director had "reduced his art to the essential".[99]

Conclusion

To be an *auteur* as defined by the *politique des auteurs* was not to be a film maker of exceptional technical ability, was not to insist on serious subject matter narrated from a pronounced ideological position, was not to have control over all aspects of production and distribution, or to necessarily have provided the original screenplay and idea. To be an *auteur* was to have a world-view formed and authenticated by a lived experience and then sincerely expressed through a realist aesthetic inscribed in the mise en scene. The experience of the practicalities of filmmaking, and political and cultural developments in France, meant that the *Cahiers* group's subsequent ideas on film, and the role of the artist in society, were often radically different to those expressed at the time. However, the fact that the reputations of filmmakers established by the *politique's* authors have lasted, and the fact that they were able to establish a method for distinguishing cinematic art from its traditional predecessors – the art of Jean Renoir from that of Auguste – suggests the real and lasting value of their original ideas. As stated by Godard in 1959: " … those of us who waged…the battle for the film *auteur*…[have] won the day in having it acknowledged in principle that a film by Hitchcock, for example, is as important as a book by Aragon. Film *auteurs*, thanks to us, have finally entered the history of art."[100] Therefore, while the policy might not have allowed a full view, might have denied other important aspects of the creative process, it remains a creative starting point for filmmakers wishing to express their ideas primarily in cinematic form on the screen, and a critical method for those critics wishing to express their ideas primarily in terms of the cinematic art form on the page.

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[99] Truffaut, "A Wonderful Certainty"108; Rohmer, "The Cardinal Virtues of Cinemascope" 280; Chabrol, "Evolution of the Thriller" 160; Rivette, "The Essential" 132.
[100] Godard, *Godard on Godard* 147.

Much of the literature on the *politique des auteurs* has focused on a search for, or denial of, the *auteur* figure: but that singular concept of the cinematic artist, and the equally singular concept of mise en scene, were not easily found, as the confusing nature of the original discourse initiated by the *Cahiers* group in Paris caused confusion for both the intention to find, and the intention to deny, those concepts. It allowed the policy to be open to misrepresentation and misconception – even by those purporting to support and promote it as a valid critical method for historical and aesthetic evaluation of film as an art form. That confusion was noted by Jean-Louis Comolli during the 1965 round-table discussion at *Cahiers*, "What we need is clarification of the misunderstanding or misunderstandings which for some years now have led cinephiles as a whole astray on the American cinema and the concepts of *auteur* and *mise en scène* as *Cahiers* itself presented them – in often confused and sometimes over-theoretical terms."[101] Unfortunately, that attempt at clarification was held on the cusp of the radical change brought about by the events of May 1968 and the focus at *Cahiers*, and elsewhere, turned away from the author and towards the idea of the constructed "subject". Consequently, the literature on the *politique* is, with a few notable exceptions, frustrating to read as so much of it does not provide sufficient analysis of the *politique's* idea of film and its primary concepts of *auteur* and mise en scene.

There have been four distinct periods in this critical history. First, there was the focus on the *politique* itself as a critical method for defining and evaluating film as an art form and the consequent appearance of its Anglo-American variations. Secondly, the *auteur*-structuralist development in England that heralded the arrival of the author as a critically constructed abstraction and film as a critically constructed text. Thirdly, arrived the immediate post-structuralist period when the author was declared dead and the reader was born: when the author figure became an ever more theoretical "subject" and the filmed text became an ever more theoretical "object" for, increasingly, an exclusive academic discourse that changed as fashionable academe decided one paradigm previously *a la mode* was now *passé* – often for ideological reasons. The fourth, post-modern period, is still in process: a period when the author has been re-incarnated as a respectable figure for academic concerns. But re-incarnated as a fragmented figure, respectable only as a social, gender-based, nationally

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[101] Comolli, "Twenty Years On" 197.

constructed, or otherwise institutionally determined figure that bears the accumulated baggage of its previous incarnations and suffers the consequences.

There have been, situated outside these broad chronological developments, particular continuing concerns: such as the inappropriateness of awarding ownership of the creative act of cinema to a single artist in defiance of the collaborative nature of filmmaking. There have also been two significant pieces of literature that, to some degree, read as a return to the concerns of the 1950s and early 1960s, and that reflect a particular purpose or interest of each author going against the grain of prevalent discourses. The first, written by John Hess and published in 1974, provided perhaps the only fully detailed analysis of the *politique's* primary concepts. The second, by John Caughie and published in 2007, is Caughie's own reconsideration of the *politique* and provides a rationale for returning to that policy.[102] On the whole, however, one particular influential force is apparent at all stages: the historical moment. An evident constant throughout the literature is how historical conditions can partly determine aesthetic movements and concerns, and how they partly determined the birth of the *Cahiers* group's *politique des auteurs* and the responses to it. This review of the literature by the *politique's* supporters, critics and adversaries in France, America and England, is an attempt to locate and position the *Cahiers* group's idea of film, and their *auteur,* within that literature, to provide an argument for a reconsideration of that policy, and to identify and locate this project's contribution to the discourse.

The *politique des auteurs* as an idea of film

During the early 1960s several critics in Britain and America responded to the *politique* by either adopting *auteur*-based criticism as the primary evaluative method for understanding the filmed text or by opposing it. Two of the earliest of these "Anglo-Saxon" articles were published in *Sight & Sound* in 1960. These articles were written by Penelope Houston and Richard Roud as companion pieces that presented different perspectives on the *politique* and, in Houston's case, their British admirers at the time – the *Oxford Opinion* group who were to become the editors of *Movie*. In the United States the critic and academic, Andrew Sarris, wrote two seminal pieces – the article, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962", and

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[102] John Caughie, "Authors and Auteurs: The Uses of Theory," *Sage Handbook of Film Studies*, ed. J. Donald and M. Renov (Sage 2007) <http:eprints.gla.ac.uk/3787> 1-41.

the introduction to his book, *The American Cinema: Directors and Direction 1929-1968*, that re-defined the *politique des auteurs*, re-titled it the *auteur* theory and, in so doing, effectively misappropriated that idea of film for Sarris's own purposes. These writings are often cited as the opening salvos fired either side of the *auteur* divide – in English critical history at least – and that is why their significance cannot be overlooked. They revealed not only how a new, confrontational idea of film was first read and understood, they also proposed principles and postulates often later accepted as accurate readings of the *politique*. For these reasons, those initial contributions to the discourse are considered in some detail.

Penelope Houston

The purpose of criticism was the subject of Penelope Houston's article "The Critical Question". Throughout the article Houston argues for a criticism of "commitment" – a commitment she could not discern in *Cahiers* "aesthetic approach" or that of the *Oxford Opinion* group. She believed not only that critics should have a declared ideological perspective but also that the social and political values expressed in a film were the primary subjects for consideration: "If the film makes an impact, it does so through its style, using style here to mean the full force of the artist's personality as revealed in his work: there can be no argument here. Primarily, though, I would suggest that the critical duty is to examine the cinema in terms of its ideas, to submit these to the test of comment and discussion."[103]

Houston's article makes no distinction between the French and English groups: assertions are only evidenced by selected quotes from the latter and their attempt to follow the style and theme of their French predecessors. There are no specific references to the original source material from the *Cahiers* group's 1950s articles – the only direct references from that magazine appear to be from Fereydoun Hoveyda's later articles published in the May and August 1960 editions. Perhaps that lack of focus and definition contributed to Houston's confused misrepresentation of the *politique* as she not only ignored or denied fundamental principles of the *Cahiers* group's idea of film, but also the *raison d'être* for their critical stance, and so failed to provide a significant critical response to the policy or,

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[103] Penelope Houston, "The Critical Question," *Sight and Sound* 29.4 (Autumn 1960): 164.

from the evidence on the page, a credible reading of that policy as originally conceived in the 1950s.[104]

A fundamental weakness of Houston's case was that she was arguing for evidence of a social commitment by the film maker without addressing how that commitment might be articulated cinematically within film making's creative and industrial complex. She referred to the possibility of cinematic form's expressive agency, to the "artist's personality as revealed in his work", as a self-evident truth without presenting her own conception of cinematic form. Nor did she identify the individual within the cinematic medium with both the function, and ability, to signify ideas of personal social and political commitment, and she did so while denying the *Cahiers* group's fundamental concepts of that figure and that form.

On her article's founding principle, however, the critical **primacy** of socially committed subject matter, Houston did accurately place herself in opposition to the *Cahiers* group, and her accusation that there was " … a disinterest in art which does not work on one's own terms, and an inevitable belief that those terms are the only valid ones" was justified.[105] Founding principles of the *politique*, and ones so famously avowed by Truffaut in "*Une certaine tendance du cinema francais*", were that there could be no peaceful co-existence between their idea of cinema and the "tradition of quality", and that a critic's **primary** enthusiasm should be for the cinematic audacities on screen, not for the ideological content. This did not mean, however, that subject and content were to be of no critical value. Houston's accusations did not recognise that Truffaut continued his polemic with an attack on the ideological objectification and misrepresentation of communities and citizens by the scriptwriters he despised (and that is not too strong a term for his attitude to Aurenche, Bost et al.), to suit those writers' ideological intentions. That perspective, a moral perspective on how the characters and world of a film were portrayed, was a continuing concern of the *Cahiers* group and this was effectively denied by Houston's accusations that the "aesthetic approach" only valued a film's formal strategies.

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[104] The editors of Oxford Opinion provided their own defence in a letter responding to Houston's article published in the subsequent edition of *Sight and Sound*: V.F. Perkins, Ian Cameron and Mark Shivas, "Letter in Response to Penelope Houston's Article 'The Critical Question'," *Sight and Sound*, 30.2 (Spring 1961).
[105] Houston, "The Critical Question" 164.

There was a more profound failure: Houston did not recognise that the *politique's* "aesthetic approach", in contrast to that of the *Oxford Opinion* group, was the search for a definition of the seventh art to distinguish it from the previous six, so that they could express themselves as artists of that form. Therefore, for the *Cahiers* group, defining and understanding the cinematic aesthetic was the crucial purpose. It did not then follow that subjects of social significance were unimportant or of no interest to them, only that critical analysis of their representation was dependent on the *auteur's* formal expression of those subjects through the mise en scene. Crucial to their concept of mise en scene was characterisation, for if that group insisted on anything, it was on the importance of a characterisation that allowed for society to be questioned through the character's agency and so represented its maker's dialogue with that society.[106] Houston's accusation that the "aesthetic approach" denied any critical value to human representation of the subject through the characters, " … don't even, if one takes it far enough, look for character …", ignored this critical imperative.[107]

Similarly, her claim that its proponents had no "truck with anything that smacks of literature" as the narrative source, cannot be supported by any reading of the *Cahiers* group's original articles.[108] The group recognised that literature had provided cinema's narrative patrimony and, in the case of American cinema, a defining generic patrimony as well. As discussed in the previous chapter, the group's condemnation for literary adaptations, particularly those of French directors, was aimed at films they deemed to be mere cinematic representations of the literary source, regurgitating the novelist's perception of the world at the time of writing, rather than the film maker's own perception of that world as informed by his or her contemporary world view expressed in cinematic form. This belief in the importance of the film maker's engagement with, and representation of, society is not only ignored by Houston, it is denied, "… the weakness of the *Cahiers du Cinéma* School, both in its own country and among its exponents here, seems to be that it barely admits of experience which does not take place in the cinema … a film's validity is assessed

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[106] Truffaut, "The Rogues Are Weary" 29.
[107] Houston, "The Critical Question" 163.
[108] Houston, "The Critical Question" 163.

not in relation to the society from which it draws its material but in relation to other cinematic experiences."[109]

There was some justification to this accusation. It might have been based on the *Cahiers* group's critical method of exhaustively analysing each director's films within an inter-textual context referencing other cinematic works (or *Oxford Opinion's* devotion to detailed analysis of each filmed text). But, for the *Cahiers* group at least, that cinematic analysis did not exclude consideration of how a filmmaker's engagement with the world was represented through characterisation, or the importance of that material context for inspiration and subject. Nor could Godard's statement be taken at face value for, as he also stated at the time Truffaut's film, *Les quatre cents coups/The 400 Blows* (François Truffaut, 1959), was accepted for Cannes, "We cannot forgive you for never having filmed girls as we love them, boys as we see them every day, parents as we despise or admire them, children as they astonish us or leave us indifferent; in other words, things as they are."[110]

Nor is Houston's statement that the critical approach at *Cahiers* was only concerned with evaluating the visual image to the exclusion of all the other elements within the frame justified. That was not the case: the *Cahiers* group was insisting on a more dynamic conception of all those elements composed as expressive cinematic form through the mise en scene. Significantly, Houston did not address that fundamental concept. She refused to recognise, indeed dismissed, the need to identify and analyse a cinematic aesthetic; an idea she found too elusive for analysis, "We might not be able to pull down a film aesthetic out of the clouds, but we should be able to get closer to defining the cinema's place in the world we live in".[111] On this point, she was not so much privileging subject over form as refusing to engage with the idea of a formal aesthetic in the first place, doubting that an "… 'aesthetic of cinema' is suddenly going to emerge, and I can't believe that it greatly matters". But if that was so she could not then proclaim, "That the cinema is an art is no longer in question; that battle is over and won". If the battle was over and won, then identification of a cinematic aesthetic must have been both achievable and necessary, and in suggesting that if cinema " … is an art on the same plane as literature and the theatre, then it

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[109] Houston, "The Critical Question" 164.
[110] Godard, "Debarred Last Year from the Festival" 147.
[111] Houston, "The Critical Question" 165.

is the use of its special techniques for the expression of ideas that must make it so." She needed to identify what were cinema's "special techniques". [112] Her justification for this refusal was that a film "… cannot be taken home and studied like a novel or a play [and so] invites reaction and impressions rather than sustained analysis". [113] Apart from contradicting her own earlier statements that cinema as an art was no longer in question, she is ignoring the value of the *Cahiers* group's critical method of analysing the body of a director's work for evidence of deeper social and human meaning inscribed within the mise en scene. The *Cahiers* group did grasp the aesthetic nettle and that is why Truffaut's polemic and the subsequent *politique des auteurs* could not be dismissed as merely a limited, somewhat immature and conservative approach but had to be considered as the policy that initiated a critical and creative discourse.

There was another collection of critics Houston was opposed to for quite different reasons. This group were the socialist critics contemptuous of the more ideologically liberal tradition of left-wing criticism she personified. Ironically, Houston's answer to the socialists' criticism of her more liberal social and political commitment, might well have equally applied to her own dismissive impatience with the attempt at *Cahiers* to understand and define the complexities of the cinematic artistic process and form: "There is a suspicion of the complexities of the artistic process and a preference for the subject which lays its cards on the table". [114]

Richard Roud

Richard Roud was the *Cahiers* London correspondent in the 1950s and his rhetorical article "The French Line", published in the same edition of *Sight & Sound* as Houston's article, was not prompted by ideological concerns but in the hope of understanding a national divide: an attempt to articulate a persuasive understanding of why the *Cahiers* critics, some of whom he believed had made "remarkable, even great films," admired American films and directors that Anglo-Saxon critics did not as, "by and large", both sets of critics seemed to agree on foreign language films. His examples of this divide included Chabrol's and Rohmer's

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[112] Houston, "The Critical Question" 164.
[113] Houston, "The Critical Question" 164.
[114] Houston, "The Critical Question" 165.

admiration of Alfred Hitchcock and Rivette's admiration of Howard Hawks. [115] As noted by Roud, those directors were not admired as cinematic artists by Anglo-Saxon critics of the time. From this starting point, Roud offered an historical perspective based on a reading of French cultural traditions that effectively presented an apologetic, nationally-based rationale for any undue emphasis on form that **might be apparent** as he proceeded to a rather superficial defence of an approach he admired, with qualification, without appearing to precisely understand.

Roud was clearly arguing that far from being a reformation, the *politique des auteurs* was a continuation of two French cultural traditions: a preferred emphasis on form and an admiration for the "cult of America". An admiration that was, itself, a reaction against the "weight of inherited culture" which "lies more heavily in France than in almost any other country". He proposed that the "cult of America" tradition influencing the young men at *Cahiers* was merely given added emphasis with the end of the Second World War and their discovery of Italian and American cinema denied to France during the occupation. With reference to this cult, and contrary to Penelope Houston's view that the *politique* was limited to formal analysis, Richard Roud asserted that the *Cahiers* group did take account of the content of film in that they praised cinema which promoted a quite particular American world view they admired*;* an appreciation of the brutal, the dispossessed and the irrational, "Is it not clear that they also like the American film for its subject matter, for its themes, most of all, perhaps, for its portrayal of the American "world"?" It is on these points – that content was an evaluative element within the filmic text, and that there had to be a particular moral or spiritual attitude to that content – that Roud provided important insight into the *politique des auteurs*.[116]

On the accusation of excessive formalism, he did not deny the emphasis on form as a factor determining meaning, but posited that it was merely the continuation of a tradition that preferred Racine to Shakespeare, "solely on the grounds of form" and while "… in England the supreme art has always been literature, in France it has, at least in the last century, been as much painting… [because] in painting, form is, as far as the two can be separated,

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[115] Richard Roud, "The French Line" 167.
[116] Richard Roud, "The French Line" 167.

paramount over content."[117] This suggestion that the continuation of a cultural tradition was the rationale for the *politique's* emphasis on form also provides some insight, but insight that must be qualified. Roud did not develop sufficiently his argument, or sufficiently support his cultural observations, with a more detailed historical analysis of that cultural context. He did not identify the binary divide between the formal aesthetic proposed by the French establishment and the cinematically specific aesthetic proposed by *Cahiers*. For example, Roud could have been writing about the French critical establishment so deplored by Truffaut and that establishment's admiration for studio-based films displaying beautiful elaborate images and evident technical ability – form's necessary pre-requisite – when asserting that, "In France the cinema has never needed, as it were, to work its passage towards respectability. Almost from the outset, French critics felt bound to discuss films on as serious a level as that on which the other arts are discussed; and this means, inevitably, on the formal level."[118] With this statement he has also either ignored, or is unaware of, the *politique's* authors' resentment of literature's higher artistic status to that of film in France, and of the preference by the establishment for films from a classic literary source, with serious subject matter or exhibiting "psychological realism" tendencies from a pronounced ideological perspective.

Nor did Roud sufficiently analyse the concepts initiated by the *politique*. There is too little analysis for any developed understanding of that policy's historically significant definition of cinema as an art form: for any real insight into the critical method proposed for judging when a film was cinematic art and when it **was** just literature with pictures added. He could not do so because he introduced, rather than interrogated, those concepts*:* mise en scene is merely defined as "staging, or stage-producing". Astruc is cited as the one who: "…originally defined the *Cahiers* use of the term as 'a certain way of extending the *élans* of the soul in the movements of the body: a song, a rhythm, a dance.'"[119] Rather than then continuing with a serious analysis of the original *Cahiers* concept and its significance to that group's idea of film, Roud moves quickly to the more extreme statements of Hoveyda and Mourlet, describing them as laughably "mysterious, elusive" and supporting a "purist theory" of cinema. This was despite the fact he has made a valuable point in distinguishing

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[117] Roud, "The French Line" 167.
[118] Roud, "The French Line" 167.
[119] Roud, "The French Line" 170.

"the older of the *Cahiers* critics" who went on to become the directors of the *Nouvelle Vague* from Hoveyda, Mourlet and others " … of the newer (as yet, non-filmmaking) members of the *Cahiers* team ...".[120]

It is unfortunate that Roud focuses more on those subsequent acolytes rather than on the original group. He did so, in effect, to reveal the "crypto-fascist and slightly nutty" errors of the latter while admitting that the former's "system of rationalising personal quirks and fancies" was bound to lead to that conclusion in time.[121] Roud's criticism was justified in that the critical method of analysing the mise en scene of all a director's films for evidence of stylistic and thematic consistencies could, and did, lead to such inanities; but his language diminished both the *politique* and his own argument. The original *Cahiers* group were not rationalising personal quirks and fancies – though that might have been the business of the later *Cahiers* contributors, it was not theirs – they were attempting to identify cinematic form and to distinguish the cinematic artist – the director – from the painter, the playwright, the novelist and to be able to state why.

His suggestion that the *Cahiers* group were too adoringly uncritical in their admiration of directors they nominated as their *auteurs*, such as Robert Aldrich and Alfred Hitchcock, is also not without insight. His explanation for that excess was the *Cahiers* policy of allowing their contributors and editors to write about the films they admired rather than the ones they did not, "… that system of criticism which derives, I believe, from Chateaubriand … the *critique des beautés*. That is to say, the critic concentrates entirely on the beauties of a work of art rather than attempting impartially to point out both the good and the bad elements."[122] Ultimately, however, while Roud attempted to progress understanding of the *Cahiers* group's idea of film in "Anglo-Saxon" criticism beyond that of Houston's more blinkered article by providing a more sympathetic reading of that idea, and by suggesting the significance of content and subject in chosen *auteur* films, he did little more than introduce those suggestions as grounds for further consideration.

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[120] Roud, "The French Line" 170.
[121] Roud, "The French Line" 171.
[122] Roud, "The French Line" 169.

Oxford Opinion and Movie

The *Oxford Opinion*/*Movie* development (as with Andrew Sarris's distinct American variation) allows the *politique des auteurs* to be read with the clarity provided by the contrasts to be found between those ideas of film. One example, would be Jim Hillier's succinct statement that, "*Cahier* critics very rarely tried to recreate or reconstruct the films they reviewed (a methodology more associated with Robin Wood and *Movie*) rather, they tried to construct the conceptual key that would unlock the work, and the *oeuvre*."[123]

The young editors of *Movie* – Ian Cameron, Victor Perkins, Mark Shivas and Paul Mayersberg, three of whom had also been members of the *Oxford Opinion* group – welcomed the arrival of the *politique*, but that welcome was not for the critical method introduced but for the outcome of that critical method in terms of the films to be admired. The *Cahiers* group's admiration for Hollywood films previously dismissed by established critics in both countries, gave them the confidence to assert their own *auteur*-focused critical admiration for those films in opposition to the established criticism in the United Kingdom. That was the specific reason given by Ian Cameron in his introduction to *Movie Reader* in 1972. Cameron advised that *Movie* critics were not simply adopting *Cahiers* ideas but, encouraged by *Cahier*s, were responding to the "… absence of them at home … to the situation which we found in British film criticism and the British cinema...". Cameron focused on Hollywood's specific institutionally and historically defined studio system as he claimed that with that system "now in ruins …[…] The cinema which was *Movie's* particular territory has disappeared …".[124] In an essay in the *Movie Reader* entitled "The British Cinema", Perkins identified the problem as the preference for "quality" pictures or pictures with socially significant subject matter often focused on working-class concerns shot on location with "unfamiliar" actors and a "conscientious attempt at style". He was critical of their "supposed modernity" and of a British criticism "concerned mainly with what a director ought to want to do."[125]

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[123] Hillier, Introduction, "Part Two American Cinema" 78.
[124] Ian Cameron, Introduction, *Movie Reader*, ed. Ian Cameron (London: November Books, 1972) 6.
[125] Victor F. Perkins, "The British Cinema," *Movie Reader* 7-11.

Like *Cahiers*, they not only disagreed with the established critics" cinematic tastes but also with their method of critical analysis. The *Movie* critics believed that the British critical establishment had equally little to say about a Bergman film as a Hollywood Western because their "… set of liberal and aesthetic platitudes which stood in for a deeper and more analytical response meant that the critical approach to all films was equally impoverished …". The method they proposed was a "detailed, descriptive criticism" based on a "…closeness to the films and the desire to investigate the way they *worked* … the best antidote to the prevalent wooliness."[126] One instance of this approach was a 1962 article by Cameron, "Films, directors and critics", in which he analysed how form expressed content in *Hell is for Heroes* (Don Siegel, 1961) but contradicted content in *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (David Lean, 1957), and suggested that the outcome of that comparison provided the "best argument for a detailed criticism".[127]

There was a further significant difference between the British and French groups as clarified by Cameron in that 1962 article:

> The assumption which underlies all the writing in *Movie* is that the director is the author of a film, the person who gives it any distinctive quality it may have. There are quite large exceptions … On the whole we accept this cinema of directors, although without going to the farthest-out extremes of *la politique des auteurs* which makes it difficult to think of a bad director making a good film and almost impossible to think of a good director making a bad one … […] The great weakness of *la politique des auteurs* is its rigidity: its adherents tend to be, as they say, totally committed to a cinema of directors. There are, however, quite a few films whose authors are not their directors [… though] any merit they may have still comes from the director, much more than from any other source.[128]

These criticisms may have been warranted but there was not only a critical difference between the two groups; there was also a difference in purpose, and that second difference goes some way to explaining the *Cahiers* emphasis on the director. The *Movie* editor's intentions had been to "... present our critical ideas and attitudes in analyses of specific films or the works of particular directors rather than manifestoes".[129] This statement by

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[126] Cameron, Introduction, *Movie Reader* 6. John Caughie's introduction to extracts from *Movie* in *Theories of Authorship* provides a fuller account of this method and its literary antecedents, including the comment that it was based on the Leavisite tradition of close reading of the text. Caughie, *Theories of Authorship* 48-50.
[127] Ian Cameron, "Films, Directors and Critics," *Movie Reader* 15.
[128] Cameron, "Films, Directors and Critics" 13-15.
[129] Cameron, Introduction, *Movie Reader* 6.

Cameron makes clear that the British critics may have had the same focus for their discontent as the French, the same regard for Hollywood movies, the same concern to "investigate the way (those films) worked"; but that focus was concentrated on film criticism for the purpose of criticism rather than for the purpose of writing a manifesto for film authorship. The *Movie* group was not attempting a politics of authorship, merely an alternative critical method. They wrote film criticism to write about films; the *Cahiers* group wrote film criticism to start "writing" films as directors. If one reads their articles as a working out of how to author a film through direction, then the devotion to directorial authorship at *Cahiers,* and the more circumscribed emphasis at *Movie*, can be understood as a teleological difference rather than merely a critical one.

This difference in purpose may be the reason that the *Movie auteurist* discourse has not had the same historical relevance as the *Cahiers politique*. In his introduction to the section on *Movie* in *Theories of Authorship*, John Caughie advises that *Movie's* influence "… constituted and produced a radical shift in British film criticism." but it did not constitute and produce a radical shift in film practice.[130] Their influence has been more limited because their ambitions were more limited and, perhaps, because their preferred critical method was based on an established literary critical tradition rather than on the development of a cinematically specific methodology to overthrow an *ancien regime*.

Andrew Sarris and the "Auteur Theory": misunderstanding, misrepresentation and misappropriation.

The American academic and critic, Andrew Sarris, may have been the editor of the English language version of *Cahiers du Cinéma* published in London and New York, but his writings on the *politique des auteurs* should only be read on the understanding that they offer the Sarris alternative to that policy and provide a limited definition, or clarification, of the *Cahiers* original. In "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962", published in *Film Culture*, and in the introduction to *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968*, Sarris re-defined the *politique*, called it by another name and, in so doing, effectively misappropriated that idea of film for his own purposes. Sarris wrote other pieces on the

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[130] Caughie, *Theories of Authorship* 49.

Cahiers policy for authors – including his 1977 reconsideration "The Auteur Theory Revisited", and a 1995 article "Notes of an Accidental Auteurist" in the journal *Film History*. But it was those two earlier writings that were definitive instances of his re-formulation of the *politique des auteurs*, and his subsequent writings did not sufficiently redress his original misrepresentations. Sarris's "*auteur* theory" label and re-definition of *auteurism* became accepted as a definitive Anglo-American re-articulation of the original *Cahiers* idea and initiated a misconception that continues to this day. For this reason, those original articles demand close reading.

The statement in his 1962 article that "Henceforth, I will abbreviate *la politique des auteurs* as the *auteur* theory to avoid confusion", was neither preceded nor followed by any clear explanation as to why he thought there was confusion in the first place.[131] His term "*auteur* theory" was neither an adequate translation of "*la politique des auteurs*" nor an accurate representation of it. Sarris acknowledged he might be "…accused of misappropriating a theory...", and gave, "…the *Cahiers* critics full credit for the original formulation of an idea that reshaped my thinking on the cinema."[132] He later withdrew the label of "theory" in the introduction to his 1968 book, restating his position as "not a theory but an attitude, a table of values", but the damage had been done and the *politique* is often referred to as the *auteur* theory it never was.[133]

Similar to Richard Roud, Sarris often introduces points of some insight and understanding, but without providing sufficient critical analysis and justification of those points in depth, which makes "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962" frustrating to read. There is a lack of focus on the motivating purpose behind the *politique*: an articulation of its authors' specific concept of cinematic form so that they could start writing films on screen and not merely write about them on the page. Sarris preferred to focus on his purpose, which was to assert the primacy of the American cinematic tradition above all others by writing film history as directorial autobiography organised within a hierarchical table based on his critical criteria. In his 1962 article he made clear this intention, "… to re-direct the argument … toward the

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[131] Andrew Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory in 1962," *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, ed. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen 3rd ed. (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 530.

[132] Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory" 536.

[133] Andrew Sarris, "Introduction: Towards a theory of Film History," *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1968) 30.

relative position of the American cinema as opposed to the foreign cinema", and made clear his intention to misappropriate the *Cahiers* group's vocabulary and idea to justify this idiosyncratic and nationalistic preference:

> Just a few years ago, I would have thought it unthinkable to speak in the same breath of a "commercial" director like Hitchcock and a "pure" director like Bresson. … I am now prepared to stake my critical reputation, such as it is, on the proposition that Alfred Hitchcock is artistically superior to Robert Bresson by every criterion of excellence and, further, that, film for film, director for director, the American cinema has been consistently superior to that of the rest of the world from 1915 through 1962. Consequently, I now regard the *auteur* theory primarily as a critical device for recording the history of the American cinema, the only cinema in the world worth exploring in depth beneath the frosting of a few great directors at the top.[134]

From this starting point Sarris proposed three premises as his criteria for defining the *auteurist* approach articulated by the *Cahiers* group:

> ...the first premise of the *auteur* theory is the technical competence of a director as a criterion of value [defined as the ability to put a film together with some clarity and coherence] ... The second premise of the *auteur* theory is the distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value [recognised by] …recurring characteristics of style, which serve as his signature ...The third and ultimate premise of the auteur theory is concerned with interior meaning, the ultimate glory of cinema as an art.[135]

Those three premises were depicted as outer, middle and inner circles corresponding to the roles of the director as technician, stylist and *auteur* with "... no prescribed course by which a director passes through the three circles". But they bore little resemblance to the *politique des auteurs*. The first premise, technical competence, had not been considered a crucial criterion in Paris. The second premise might have used the vocabulary of the *politique,* but there is little clarification or analysis of what Sarris meant by "style" and "signature", and so little evaluative criteria for judging if the Sarris "critical scale of values" was the same as those observed in Paris some years earlier. With his third premise Sarris was proposing that "interior meanings" were created from the tension between the director's expression of self through style and the subject in the script he was contracted to film; and he contended that

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[134] Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory" 535.
[135] Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory" 537-39.

this premise came close to Astruc's initial definition of mise en scene. Sarris provided no further definition and merely indicated what he meant by "interior meaning".[136]

One such indication is his example of "tension" in action – a moment in *La Règle du Jeu/The Rules of the Game* (Jean Renoir, 1939) when Renoir (also acting in the film) hesitated before making a particular gesture. Sarris gave only descriptive detail of that moment on screen, not an analysis of how that gesture conveyed a meaning distinct from that conveyed by the dialogue and plot event written in the script, and so there is no understanding of why he believed there to be "tension" in the moment and why there was an "interior meaning" as distinct from the obvious meaning to be discerned from the dialogue and plot. Referring to Astruc's definition of mise en scene, Sarris described the gesture as an "*élan* of the soul … let me hasten to add that all I mean by 'soul' is that intangible difference between one personality and another, all other things being equal."[137] But he did not explain how "*élan* of the soul" equated to the "intangible difference between personalities" or to the "tension" between a director's material and his personality. Nor did he define who or what those personalities were, merely continuing with, "If I could describe the musical grace note of that momentary suspension, and I can't, I might be able to provide a more precise definition of the *auteur* theory. As it is, all I can do is point at the specific beauties of interior meaning on the screen …".[138] In any case, his suggestion that it is the tension between a director's concerns and a film's subject that inspire "interior meaning" is inexplicable in the case of Renoir's film. Renoir was not contracted to make the film and handed a script at odds with his own narrative intentions but was credited with co-writing the script with Camille François and Carl Koch.

This was but one instance where Sarris effectively appropriated the *politique's* vocabulary without clarifying either that vocabulary or the methodology it denoted. Sarris excused this failure to define and engage by referring to the "nebulous" indescribability of the director's craft. While the *Cahiers* group can also stand accused of failing to clarify and define their terms, their writings were an attempt to articulate the director's "craft" and the art form in question, even if they often omitted to clarify their opaque statements.

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[136] Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory" 538.
[137] Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory" 538.
[138] Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory" 538.

The third premise was Sarris's acknowledgement of the industrial nature of commercial filmmaking – the only conditions of production to be found in Hollywood. For this reason it became the means for his misappropriation of the ideas of the *politique* to justify his own evaluation of American cinema above all others, "Because so much of American cinema is commissioned, a director is forced to express his personality through the visual treatment of material rather than though the literary content of the material. A Cukor, who works with all sorts of projects, has a more developed abstract style than a Bergman, who is free to develop his own scripts."[139]

This third criterion was a clear contradiction of the *Cahiers* group's insistence on a director's necessary involvement with the script – rather than a circumvention of it, as Sarris appears to suggest. Expression through mise en scene could be an *auteurial* strategy for overwriting scripts imposed under contract by studio heads, but that did not necessarily mean this strategy was caused by, or evidence of, a director's **opposition** to the material in the script. Astruc and the authors of the *politique* valued a director's ability to inscribe meaning through the mise en scene, rather than through the plot and dialogue, because it was evidence of a director's ability to re-write a literary work in cinematic language **irrespective** of his or her attitude to that literary source, or even of who wrote the script. Therefore, the director could have written the script, but that script had still to be thought through in terms of the mise en scene by that director.

Subsequently, Sarris disposed of all but the third premise in the introduction to his 1968 book, *The American Cinema: Directors and Directions 1929-1968*. He did not, however, acknowledge this change; nor did he acknowledge his implicit denial of his original *raison d'être* for that third premise when stating: "Of course, the best directors are usually fortunate enough to exercise control over their films so that there need be no glaring disparity between *what* and *how*. It is only on the intermediate and lower levels of filmmaking that we find talent wasted on inappropriate projects."[140] It is a shame Sarris did not reflect on the reasons behind his decision to discard two of his three defining criteria, as that reflection might have led to a more accurate representation of the Cahiers *politique des auteurs* and even, perhaps,

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[139] Sarris, "Notes on the Auteur Theory" 538.
[140] Sarris, "Towards a theory of Film History" 36.

to an essay of more lasting critical and historical value on American directors from 1929 to 1968. But he had now another purpose, one that provided an answer to those who might criticise his ranking and categorising of directors. Sarris suggested that his table established a useful "system of priorities for the film student" that was a more, " … reliable index of quality available … short of microscopic evaluation of every film ever made."[141] He was still maintaining that film history "could reasonably limit itself to a history of film directors", but his belief in the superiority of American cinema had softened to "film for film Hollywood can hold its own with the rest of the world"; and when citing Paul Valéry's "taste is made from a thousand distastes", he acknowledged there might be other ways to read a film, and that *auteur*-focused criticism was but one method, "the first step rather than the last stop."[142] He also offered a more considered and representative understanding of the original *politique* and provided a definition of the *auteur* position that the *Cahiers* critics might have recognised. He made the pertinent point that directors must be discovered through their films, and stated that, "… the auteur critic is obsessed with the wholeness of art and the artist. He looks at a film as a whole, a director as a whole. The parts, however entertaining individually, must cohere meaningfully."[143]

However, there is a continued failure to fully comprehend the *Cahiers* concept of *auteur* throughout the article, as when Sarris considers the question of whether or not the writer could claim the authorial function ahead of the director within the Hollywood production process. He raises interesting and historically useful facts, but ones of limited theoretical value, as he does not consider the distinctive creative roles of each function and the cinematically specific role of the director, and at no point does he stress the importance of characterisation within the mise en scene complex or the moral perspective required of their *auteurs*. Sarris could as easily have been describing a *metteur en scène* as a *Cahiers auteur* when stating that, "Ideally, the strongest personality should be the director, and it is when the director dominates the film that the cinema comes closest to reflecting the personality of a single artist … meaningful coherence is most likely when the director dominates the proceedings with skill and purpose."[144] Sarris never clarified – perhaps never recognised – that the *Cahiers auteur* was a duality who had to be not only a recognisable cinematic author

[141] Sarris, "Towards a theory of Film History" 27, 31.
[142] Sarris, "Towards a theory of Film History" 27, 23, 34.
[143] Sarris, "Towards a theory of Film History" 30.
[144] Sarris, "Towards a theory of Film History" 30.

of skill and purpose but also a recognisable cinematic artist: it was how cinematic language was used that distinguished the gifted *politique auteur* from the articulate *metteur en scène*. For a director to have dominated the set and mastered the language of film was not sufficient, any more than it would be sufficient for a novelist to merely have mastered grammar, vocabulary and punctuation to achieve fluent, articulate writing. These distinctions and differences are important because Sarris continued to present his idea as little more than an English translation of the *Cahiers politique*.

The fact that Sarris does not take the time to distinguish carefully between the two ideas of film is perhaps surprising given that he is now emphasising the purpose of the *auteur* approach as a critical method for historical research, rather than as a directorial method of authorship, and given that he attempts to diminish the significance of the *Cahiers* intervention and to distance himself from Truffaut, and by implication the others of the *Cahiers* group, while recognising the debt Hollywood owed to them. He proposes that the *politique's* admiration for Hollywood films was not polemical as even *Cahiers"* antagonists, such as *Positif*, had reviewed Hollywood film in, " … intellectually respectful terms … the editors of *Positif* may have preferred Huston to Hitchcock, and the McMahonists may have preferred Losey to Hawks, but no faction ever had to apologise for its serious analyses of American movies."[145]

With the publication of his 1977 essay, "The *Auteur* Theory Revisited", Sarris's purpose has again changed and is now, "To add historical perspective to auteurism, and to emerge with a usable residue of critical theory …".[146] Much of this essay reiterates the points he made in 1968, and some from 1962 – he still keeps faith with the third criterion believing it had "... since come to define what all serious film criticism seeks to discover."[147] There are, however, yet more revisions and withdrawals from previously held positions. Sarris starts by asserting that "… all sorts of scholarly books and articles continue to disseminate an astounding amount of misinformation on the origin and evolution of auteurism", without recognising his own contribution on this point.[148] He does, however, go some way to

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[145] Andrew Sarris, "The Auteur Theory Revisited," *Film and Authorship*, ed. Virginia Wright Wexman, Rutgers Depth of Field Series (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003) 29.
[146] Sarris, "The Auteur Theory Revisited" 25.
[147] Sarris, "The Auteur Theory Revisited" 28.
[148] Sarris, "The Auteur Theory Revisited" 21.

clarifying that "auteurism and Sarrisism are not identical"; and his statement that " … the French shifted the critical emphasis away from the nature of content to the director's attitude towards content." is one that accurately corrects previous critics who had asserted that the *Cahiers* group excluded content as a critical criterion.[149]

But there are still sufficient misrepresentations to ultimately leave a confused understanding of the *politique*, if not one quite as inaccurate and misleading as in the essays of the 1960s. Sarris continues to recognise that there were different critical attitudes at *Positif*, compared to those at *Cahiers*, although without fully explaining the distinguishing features, and so the significance, of that difference. He merely repeats the observation that the two camps liked different directors.[150] This characterisation of these camps as a single entity, representing admiring French critical attitude to Hollywood film, was the means by which Sarris could then distance himself from those French critics in his preferred position as an American partisan who could, more authentically, critique and evaluate American film. His assertion that *auteurists* "…thought they were writing only for other believers", dismisses in a sentence the whole purpose behind Truffaut's "*Une certain tendance*" and the intention of the *Cahiers* group to radically change the established critical idea of cinematic art.[151]

From this perspective he is able to suggest that the polemical nature of *auteurism* could be traced back to Truffaut's savage and uncompromising 1954 essay and so rested with Truffaut's attitude rather than with the idea itself. With the following statement Sarris reveals how ultimately dangerously misleading his writings often were, "Auteurism has less to do with the way movies are made than with the way they are elucidated and evaluated. It is more a critical instrument than a creative inspiration … […] more a tendency than a theory, more a mystique than a methodology, more an editorial policy than an aesthetic procedure".[152] He excused his failure really to engage with the idea of film espoused by the *politique,* on the grounds that, "Godard's translated criticism has merely mystified even his most determined American admirers. Having published twelve editions of *Cahiers du Cinéma* in English between 1965 and 1967, I can testify that many of my French-speaking acquaintances were frequently unable to decipher the cryptic pronouncements of

[149] Sarris, "The Auteur Theory Revisited" 25, 26.
[150] Sarris, "The Auteur Theory Revisited" 24.
[151] Sarris, "The Auteur Theory Revisited" 28.
[152] Sarris, "The Auteur Theory Revisited" 28, 29.

Cahiers."[153] In failing to get to grips with what on earth those often cryptic, often passionate, writings in *Cahiers* were all about Sarris failed to clearly represent that policy in America.

In 1995, he wrote an anecdotal and fragmented post-script, "Notes of an Accidental Auteurist", in which this failure to engage and clarify continues. He has travelled some distance from 1962 when he gave " … the *Cahiers* critics full credit for the original formulation of an idea that reshaped my thinking on the cinema", and is now stating that "My revisionist stance labelled 'auteurism' was always as much about genre as about directors, and as much about subtexts as about contexts".[154] It was unfortunate, in historical terms, that the man who attempted to introduce and promote to the American critical and academic world a radical, controversial, and still relatively new concept of cinematic art that had originated in France less than a decade previously, failed to attempt that clarification.

Pauline Kael "Circles and Squares": a response to the "auteur theory"

The American critic, Pauline Kael's, 1963 article "Circles and Squares" was seemingly animated by a personal vendetta against both Andrew Sarris as an *auteurist* exemplar and, to a lesser extent, the then editor of *Film Culture* Jonas Mekas, rather than by being concerned with providing a reasoned response to the emergence of a new critical method. Kael distinguished between the "French critics", Andrew Sarris, other US *auteur* critics and the English *Movie auteurists*, but it was to distinguish between their animating purposes for introducing or adopting *auteurism,* not to distinguish between those groups' essential critical and theoretical differences. For this reason, the *politique* can be an assumed target for many of her criticisms – as much as her stated target – Andrew Sarris – and his *auteur* theory.

Kael did not dispute the *auteurists*' founding belief that cinema was a means for directorial personal expression; she merely took issue with their method and tastes. Kael's purpose, similar to that of Penelope Houston, was to argue for her idea of the critic's function and correct critical methodology in opposition to that of *auteur*-focused critics; and for her idea

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[153] Sarris, "The Auteur Theory Revisited" 24.
[154] Andrew Sarris, "Notes of an Accidental Auteurist," *Auteurism Revisited*, spec. issue of *Film History* 7.4 (Winter 1995): 359.

of cinematic art. In Kael's case, the function was to perceive "what is original and important in *new* work and helping others to see".[155] Her method was that, "…there is no formula to apply, just because you must use everything you are and everything you know that is relevant".[156] Her idea of cinematic art remains unclear. There is the suggestion throughout the article that serious subject matter was a primary and essential criterion, but also that subject alone was insufficient and that "unity of form and content" were required for artistic expression.[157] What is clear is that Kael did not believe commercial Hollywood films produced for the entertainment of the masses were cinematic art.

She was dismissive of some of the *auteurists'* most admired directors, as when characterising Howard Hawks as a director who "When he has good material he's capable of better than good direction", or that, with *To Have and Have Not* (Howard Hawks, 1944) and *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946), Hawks demonstrated "…that with help from the actors, he can jazz up ridiculous scripts."[158] She condemned *auteur* critics for preferring "routine material", for praising "the shoddiest films" and for working "…embarrassingly hard trying to give some semblance of intellectual respectability to a preoccupation with mindless, repetitive commercial products".[159] Kael could excuse the "French critics" for their admiration of, "the vitality, the strength of our action pictures" – characteristics she believed they found lacking in their own cinema. She could not, however, find the same excuse for the English and New York critics who admired the same films.[160]

Kael was able to dismiss the *Cahiers* reading of "...elaborate intellectual and psychological meaning in these simple action films" by denouncing the critical method used to uncover those deeper meanings as a "theory based on mystical insight" of *auteur* critics who "…simply take the easy way out by arbitrary decisions of who's got "it" and who hasn't."[161] She did so, however, without offering a credible alternative critical method or theory, providing little more than her own arbitrary mystical method based on individual subjective

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[155] Pauline Kael, "Circles & Squares," *I lost it at the Movies,* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1965) 295.
[156] "Circles & Squares" 309.
[157] The comment referred to here is Kael's response to Sarris's "inner circle" criterion, that it is, "… the opposite of what we have always taken for granted in the arts, that the artist expresses himself in the unity of form and content," "Circles & Squares" 302.
[158] "Circles & Squares" 304-305.
[159] "Circles & Squares" 302, 307.
[160] "Circles & Squares" 311.
[161] "Circles & Squares" 301, 311.

appreciation using, and typifying criticism as "an art, not a science", a response to a director's "joy in creativity".[162] Kael's criticism of "mystical insight" might have validly applied to Andrew Sarris's habit of identifying a "grace note" on screen without then providing a reasoned analysis of why that moment was significant, and how the director had been responsible for achieving that significance. That criticism might also have applied to individual articles written by the *Cahiers* group. But that criticism does not apply if the collected works of their *politique* are read as a whole. A close reading of those works reveals an analytical method that depends on a systematic recording of evidence-based textual analysis for determining cinematic authorship and artistic achievement.

Kael's refusal to fully engage with the method promoted by the *politique* also allowed her to claim that *auteurism* was little more than a search for directorial personality as evidenced by repetitious stylistic, narrative and thematic patterns. Her dismissal of Sarris's description of a repeated scene in two Raoul Walsh films, recognised that not every directorial repetition could be claimed as a "grace note" irrespective of its individual aesthetic, or narrative, value within the specific text (as Sarris seemed to be claiming).[163] However, in dismissing the *auteur* approach as a whole on this point, Kael fell into the usual anti-*auteurist* error of not recognising that identification of stylistic and thematic constants was not the ultimate aim, it was one stage of the methodological research. The subsequent stage was to consider why and how the director used those constants for expression. She might deride Hitchcock's "distinguishable personality" as mere repetition (in her attack on Sarris's first premise), but an analysis of Hitchcock's films reveals how his perception of the world was expressed through those stylistic constants, such as his use of extended tracking shots at the start of his films. Those constants were, in turn, evidence of his ability to own the creative act irrespective of institutional constraints and the collaborative nature of filmmaking.[164]

There are further instances of Kael's failure to properly define and distinguish between the various *auteur* movements throughout the article, for instance, when asking "If *The Maltese Falcon*, perhaps the most high-style thriller ever made in America, a film Huston both wrote

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[162] "Circles & Squares" 295, 301.
[163] "Circles & Squares" 293-294.
[164] An extended analysis of Hitchcock's use of the tracking shot to open his films is provided in the first filmed chapter of this thesis.

and directed, is not a director's film, what is?"[165] If Kael had read the *Cahiers* group's collected articles, she would have discovered her answer in the *politique's* authors' denunciation of the mere stylistic flourishes of the *confectionneurs* and *metteur en scènes*. What is so surprising is that, despite her vituperative condemnation of the *auteurist* idea, she often uses the same terminology and essential assumptions when describing the work of directors she believed were cinematic artists, such as her identification of "personal expression and style" as important measures, and her condemnation of Sarris's first premise of technical competence as an essential criterion, is in accord with Truffaut's admiration for Nicholas Ray despite the fact he was " … not of great stature as a technician".[166]

Kael identified the *auteurist* focus on only the one "theory", as "… like a gardener who uses a lawn mower on everything that grows", and criticised the "theory" for becoming a rigid formula among *auteur* critics.[167] Those criticisms; her dismissal of Sarris's admiration for mere stylistic or thematic repetition as evidence of an *auteur*; her condemnation of his three defining premises; and her abhorrence of his more glib phrasing and often careless argument; were accurate and justified. But her scornful and vicious expression was not necessary and merely denied her the critical high ground she wished to claim. Ultimately, Kael's article reads as another example of a critic who condemned without understanding. It is an example of how the distinction between the "*auteur* theory" and the *politique* became even more confused as the failure properly to identify and analyse the French policy continued.

The case for "authors" within the collaborative institutional setting

Richard Corliss: the case for the Hollywood screenwriter

Richard Corliss was a courteous and reasoned adversary of the *auteur* approach who commended the *auteurist* purpose of examining " … films as the creation of artists rather than of social forces …"; and, in particular, Andrew Sarris's "… thoughtful and well-timed challenge to the near monopoly of social-realist criticism …".[168] His point of departure

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[165] "Circles & Squares" 299.
[166] Truffaut, "A Wonderful Certainty" 108.
[167] Kael, "Circles & Squares" 309, 295.
[168] Richard Corliss, "The Hollywood Screenwriter", *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings,* 3rd ed. ed. Gerald Mast and Marshall Cohen (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) 594.

from Sarris was the *auteurist* focus on the directorial function to the exclusion of all the other functions within the collaborative context. He did not deny the central organising function the director played on set, or that many films were "dominated by the personality of the director". To Corliss, a dominant directorial personality was necessary because of the director's function as unifying organiser. He also allowed that such a dominant "personality" could determine a film's visual style, but only as an interpretative, rather than as an original artist, and he decried, "… the assumption that he creates a style out of thin air (with his collaborating craftsmen acting merely as paint, canvas, bowl of fruit, and patron), instead of adapting it to the equally important styles of the story and performers."[169] His specific concern was for the scriptwriter, the one most displaced by the *politique* as presumed author, and in *The Hollywood Screenwriter*, published in 1970, Corliss presented the case for that figure.

Corliss suggested that the fact "… Hollywood film is a corporate art, not an individual one.", did not diminish its artistic validity.[170] He did not believe that identification of a solitary cinematic author was a necessary artistic criterion and suggested instead the, "… real joy…. from seeing the fortuitous communion of forces (story, script, direction, acting, lighting, editing, design, scoring) that results in a great Hollywood film.", and that this communion, "… not scholastic disputes over the validity of individual signatures, should be our first critical concern."[171] He then, however, directly contradicts his own argument by effectively adopting the *auteurist* methodology to claim the *auteur* position for the scriptwriter,

> … a screenwriter's work should, and can, be judged by considering his entire career, as is done with a director. If a writer has been associated with a number of favorite films, if we can distinguish a common style in films with different director and actors, and if he has received sole writing credit on several films an authorial personality begins to appear.[172]

This contradiction continued as he seemingly also suggested *auteurial* status for the actor and other individual functions on set without confronting the issue that neither the actor nor the scriptwriter had the function or authority to organise and compose the cinematic text as a

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169 Corliss, "The Hollywood Screenwriter" 595.
170 Corliss, "The Hollywood Screenwriter" 594.
171 Corliss, "The Hollywood Screenwriter" 596.
172 Corliss, "The Hollywood Screenwriter" 599.

unified whole. He was borrowing *politique* terminology and method without applying the rationale behind it. Similarly to Sarris, Corliss did not define his terminology, did not define cinematic form, nor did it define what he meant by style. He also did not explain how the writer could determine the inclusion and composition of the elements contributed by the director of photography, the set designer, the editor and other contributors to the eventual cinematic text.

Victor Perkins: the case for the director as unifying organiser

Victor Perkins, in the chapter "Direction and Authorship" from his book *Film as Film*, first published in 1972, provides an answer to Richard Corliss and others who claim the scriptwriter as possible cinematic artist: the screenwriter could not be the "major source of meaning and quality", because that figure doesn't create, "a finished work, he offers an outline open to an infinite variety of treatments."[173] Perkins directly addresses how authorship can be awarded to the director despite the collaborative nature of filmmaking. For a practice-based student, it is one of the most useful and incisive essays on the subject as it offers a practice-based assessment of the director's function. The essay does not directly address the *politique des auteurs*, and so is free of the terms *auteur* and mise en scene, which in turn frees it from the accumulated baggage represented by those terms, but it directly addresses several continuing objections to the *politique's* presumption that a director of commercial films could be a cinematic artist, and suggests that the institutional setting is neither an artistic determinant nor an artistic constraint. Perkins judges that the institutional environment is not a determining factor on the grounds that all cinema, whether commercial Hollywood or experimental art-house, is the product of an industrial complex, and that the director of any film – even a director-producer – must always be an employee unless he or she had personally financed the production because the director must always "submit his projects to outside judgement", and each, " … work must be approved for its ideological or artistic qualities."[174]

He also raises the question of "intentional fallacy" as one that needs to be answered, whatever the production environment, and refutes Ernest Lindgren's statement that the critic

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[173] Victor F. Perkins, "Direction and Authorship," *Film as Film* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972) 185.
[174] Perkins, "Direction and Authorship" 165.

can "'Look to the operations of the mind which precede conscious creation'".[175] His answer is to focus on the practice of filmmaking for understanding the outcome of that practice and for determining whether or not the director is integral to that outcome. Perkins's scrutiny extends beyond a simple recognition of the collaborative and industrial nature of filmmaking, to an in-depth analysis and elaboration of its details. With this careful, detailed scrutiny, Perkins posits filmmaking as not merely a collaborative process, but one of multiple and overlapping negotiated relationships, creating multiple and overlapping stages of material formation and transfer. His first set of relationships is the one formed between the individual contributors at all stages of the process – pre-production, on-set and post-production. The second set of relationships is that formed through the first set's composition of all the elements – human and plastic – within the material that ultimately becomes the filmed text. For Perkins, that text does not exist throughout this sequence of processes: there is only evolving textual material. He argues that those sets of relationships – material, plastic and human – and the meaning that can be realised through them, can be manipulated and controlled – as the evolving textual material can be manipulated and controlled – by an organising figure: the director.

Perkins described the director's function as evolving through that complexity of processing treatments from organiser to organising interpretative craftsman and ultimately, if there is the ability, to that of organising, authoring creator. From that basis he posits that, whatever the actual or theoretical limits on the director's authority, it is the director who determines what is to be seen on screen. The final creative state is realised when "The director begins to be the author of the film from the moment he finds *his* way to make the details significant as well as credible":[176]

> The director takes charge at the point where the components of the film have been assembled and they await their organization into synthesis … […]Being in charge of relationships, of synthesis, he is in charge of what makes a film a *film* … […]Style and meaning are twin products of synthesis; they do not result from a simple accumulation of independent statements by actors and technicians. A film may resemble a number of such 'statements' … But if the film's form embodies a viewpoint, explored in depth and with complexity, it is almost certain to be the director's. He is in control throughout the period in which virtually all the significant relationships are defined.

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[175] Perkins, "Direction and Authorship" 172. Perkins was quoting Lindgren from *The Art of the Film* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1963) 202.

[176] Perkins, "Direction and Authorship" 181.

He has possession of the means through which all other contributions acquire meaning *within* the film.[177]

Therefore, while Perkins judged that "A movie cannot be fully and uniquely one man's creation" this did not mean one figure – the organising figure – could not own the creative act.[178]

Thomas Schatz: the case for the genius of the system

Thomas Schatz believed in what Bazin called "the genius of the system". In his 1988 article, "The Whole Equation of Pictures", Schatz presented an empirical case for recognition of the executives and producers behind the studio system as the primary authoring presence in Hollywood. It was these executives and producers, not the director, who he believed were "… the most misunderstood and undervalued figures in American film history".[179] The *politique* is not directly referred to in the article and the *Cahiers* group is only mentioned as "… the early auteurists, who were transforming film history into a cult of personality.", as Schatz presented his case in opposition to American *auteur*-based criticism, and Andrew Sarris in particular, who he characterised as "a cadre of critics and historians in the 1960s and 1970s (who) cultivated a 'theory of film history' based on the notion of directorial authorship."[180]

Schatz believed that Hollywood film of the studio era could not be understood and analysed in terms of individuals alone, because "The quality and artistry of all these films were the product not simply of individual human expression, but of a melding of institutional forces."[181] He maintained, however, that if individual figures could be singled out then the "chief architects of a studio's style were its executives".[182] He was not proposing them as visionary artists but as the ones who were responsible for "… style and authority – creative expression and creative control…", as he accounted for meaning within films as mostly based on, "… distinctive styles and signature moments, involving different stars and story types and a different 'way of seeing' in both a technical and an ideological sense.", within

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[177] Perkins, "Direction and Authorship"183-84.
[178] Perkins, "Direction and Authorship" 158.
[179] Thomas Schatz, "The Whole Equation of Pictures," *Film and Authorship*, ed. Virginia Wright Wexman, Rutgers Depth of Field Series (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003) 94.
[180] Schatz, "The Whole Equation of Pictures" 91, 94.
[181] Schatz, "The Whole Equation of Pictures" 92.
[182] Schatz, "The Whole Equation of Pictures" 93.

generic templates and prevalent studio styles.[183] Schatz argued that each studio provided,

"…a consistent system of production and consumption, a set of formalised creative practices

and constraints, and thus a body of works with a uniform style – a standard way of telling

stories, from camera work and cutting to plot structure and thematics … […] each one a

distinct variation on Hollywood's classical style."[184]

Schatz did concede that some directors had "an unusual degree of authority and a certain

style" – his necessary criteria for Hollywood authorship – and gave John Ford, Howard

Hawks, Frank Capra and Alfred Hitchcock as his examples, but he claimed that their

authority "was more a function of their roles as producers than as directors." From this

position Schatz could dismiss noted films by those directors, including Ford's *The Grapes of*

Wrath (John Ford, 1940) and *Young Mr Lincoln* (John Ford, 1939), Hawks's *To Have and*

Have Not and Hitchcock's *Notorious* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1946) as, "first-rate Hollywood

films … no more distinctive than other star-genre formulations turned out by routine

contract directors".[185]

This case, however, for the production system of the studios, and the historically specific

moment when that system controlled Hollywood and the material result of that moment,

does not account for thematic and stylistic constants apparent within those directors' films

made at different studios. For example, Ford's *They Were Expendable* (John Ford, 1945) a

war film produced by MGM with a screenplay by Frank Wead, while the director's western

Fort Apache (John Ford, 1948) was produced by RKO and Argosy Pictures, with a

screenplay by Frank S. Nugent. Nor does Schatz explain the stylistic and thematic

differences between films made at the same studio, within the same generic template, but by

different *auteur*-directors. Bazin's full statement had been, "… but why not then admire in

it what is most admirable, i.e. not only the talent of this or that filmmaker, but the genius of

the system".[186] Schatz focuses on the latter influence and ignores the former.

One methodological problem his article brings to the fore is that of attributing creative

ownership based on partial historical and anecdotal information. This was a problem also

[183] Schatz, "The Whole Equation of Pictures" 91, 93.
[184] Schatz, "The Whole Equation of Pictures" 95.
[185] Schatz, "The Whole Equation of Pictures" 92.
[186] Bazin, "On the *Politique des Auteurs*" 258.

addressed by Bordwell, Thompson and Staiger, who recognised the "... problems of attribution, authentication, the relevance of biographical data and statements of intention".[187] Robert Spadoni – who was more inclined to acknowledge the roles of individuals within the industrial environment – reconsidered the detailed typed notes of production meetings kept during the making of *Grand Hotel* (Edmund Goulding, 1932) that Schatz had analysed to provide evidence for his argument. This reconsideration is detailed in Spadoni's 1995 article, "Geniuses of the systems: Authorship and evidence in classical Hollywood cinema", as he questioned the claim that historical research provided objective and conclusive evidence.[188] For, even with detailed historical information, the critic or scholar cannot know the respective creative contributions to a film unless he or she has observed the planning and making of that film (as noted by Victor Perkins in the preceding section).

Within that context, the value of the *Cahiers* group's *politique* as a critical method for *a posteriori* identification of the *auteur's* possible single ownership of the creative act, despite material and critical realities, is reinforced. Schatz might have criticised the insistence on recognising consistent textual marks of authorship as nothing more than an "aesthetic personality cult", but it is the means to rise above the impossible task of knowing who was responsible for every creative decision at every stage of the process.

Robin Wood: the auteur as self-evident author

Robin Wood believed in *auteurial* textual expression, in the director as an expressive unifying and organising presence and as the "… decisive determinant of the quality of the vast majority of films".[189] But he did not believe that the *auteur* was the sole artistic determinant and he called for criticism to turn from the author to the text from "auteurs to films" and, " … to a position that regards the director's identifiable presence as one influence – probably the most, but certainly not the only, important one – among the

[187] David Bordwell, Janet Staiger and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) 77.
[188] Robert Spadoni, "Geniuses of the Systems: Authorship and Evidence in Classical Hollywood Cinema," *Auteurism Revisited*, spec. issue of *Film History* 7.4 (Winter 1995): 362-385.
[189] Robin Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory," *Personal Views: Explorations in Film* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1976), 174.

complex of influences that combine to determine the character and quality of a particular film."[190]

Wood's *auteur*-focused criticism was based on a continuation of the Leavisite tradition of close reading of the text to uncover meaning within it, rather than through application of theoretical or methodological paradigms. He took a rather Olympian view, accepting the notion of the cinematic artist as a "self-evident" fact rather than as an elusive concept to be searched for within the text, and deemed the value of *auteurism* to have been " …largely historical: what is valid in it is also obvious, and simply needed to be pointed out. Even Truffaut's original principle is scarcely beyond question...".[191] He effectively, however, declined to state his definition of that approach, preferring not to draw "conclusions" but to leave his "… examples to suggest the complexities of authorship in the American cinema and the need for the greatest flexibility on the part of the critic."[192] From this position Wood was able to distance himself from both the *politique* and Andrew Sarris's "*auteur* theory" without first having to consider their essential differences. He implicitly regarded both as little more than the same concept of film.

This refusal of definition and distinction between the various *auteurist* approaches allowed for a limited reading and denial of the critical method introduced by the *politique* and its *raison d'être*. There is the suggestion that he recognised the *politique* was intended to be a policy, not a theory, but he continued to use "*auteur* theory" as his identifying label, even if within quotation marks.[193] Therefore, his 1976 essay "Reflections on the auteur theory" in his book, *Personal Views Explorations in Film*; and his 1971 article in *Film Comment*, "Shall we gather at the river? The late films of John Ford", work more as examples of Wood's version of *auteur*-based criticism in action rather than as a critical analysis or application of the *auteur* approach in general, or of the *politique des auteurs* in particular.

Wood's understanding, however, of the *politique* and his affinity with the ideas of that policy, are evident in those writings: evident in his analysis of Max Ophuls' presence within the text of *The Reckless Moment* (Max Ophuls, 1949)*,* evident in his description of that

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[190] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 187-88.
[191] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 174.
[192] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 187.
[193] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 174.

director's use of the camera to signify meaning, and evident in his focus on the director's characterisation of Ted Darby and Lucia as composed elements within the mise en scene dynamic. He describes how this composition reveals those characters' reactions to the plot events and to each other, and locates their position within the familial and social structures of the community portrayed in the film, "There is the sense of Lucia's aloneness … conveyed by such unobtrusively presented details as her filling a hot-water-bottle from the tap of her washbasin." Wood's description of "the treatment throughout the film of Sybil, the coloured maid …" reveal his affinity with the *politique's* required moral perspective of an equality of treatment for the supporting characters within the formal composition – the requirement that no character should be reduced to a stereotype for ideological purposes.[194] This affinity is also evident from his description of the generic template, in this case Hollywood melodrama, not as a defining constraint but as another resource at the director's disposal that "... pushes Ophuls towards the exploration of areas not alien to his fully characteristic films but usually subordinate to his dominant preoccupations, he on the other inflects the genre in a very personal way…".[195]

Wood dismissed the *auteur* approach as one that saw the identification of "authorial fingerprints as an ultimate aim", without recognising its value for determining how a director could over-write a script and author a film – a determination he attempted, but was unable to make convincingly, in this essay. This is apparent when he states his,

> … conviction that *North by Northwest* is ultimately a Hitchcock movie remains unshaken; it would remain unshaken if Lehmann could prove that every camera set-up and every cut were indicated by him in the script … If Hitchcock merely executed a meticulously detailed script, then it is evident that every detail in that script was conceived for *him* to execute.[196]

This statement begs the question: then on what basis would he identify Hitchcock as the author of the film and owner of the creative artistic act? The "identification of authorial fingerprints" might have provided an answer.[197]

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[194] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 182.
[195] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 184.
[196] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 178-179.
[197] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 187.

Wood's reasoning why Alfred Hitchcock, not the scriptwriter Ernest Lehmann, was the author of *North by Northwest* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1959), also reveals his failure to fully consider directorial authorship in cinematic terms, "Hitchcock has said elsewhere … that he writes 'quite a bit' of his scripts himself, and specifically lays claim to the line in *North by Northwest*, 'That plane's dusting crops where there ain't no crops.'"[198] With this statement Wood is seemingly equating authoring a film with writing dialogue. Hitchcock, however, never considered the script to be just dialogue, nor did the *Cahiers* group.[199] The scenario's crucial purpose was as a stage in the creative process. Ideally, the director could alter the script but, if that degree of literary control could not be achieved, then the script, in whatever form, was still only the opportunity for the film. Whatever the limitations on directorial influence over the final screenplay, the director still had the function to think through each scene – including the dialogue – in terms of the mise en scene. Composition and direction of the scene was the *politique auteur's* primary narrative strategy and Hitchcock's ability to author a film in cinematic language was one of the reasons they admired him. Wood failed to recognise this principle, and that it was one of the crucial distinctions between Sarris's *auteur* theory and the original *Cahiers* policy.

His failure to fully consider the *politique* as a manifesto for film authorship is also apparent when he seemingly distinguishes between scenic construction and the mise en scene as different things. Wood describes the first as "the shot-by-shot build-up of each sequence, the placing and movement of the camera, the editing – the areas in which the authorship of a film (as opposed to a scenario) is largely determined", and then distinguishes between that process and the mise en scene, "One needs to account, then, not only for the film's superiority of *mise en scène* but for its superiority of construction".[200] The *politique's* more dynamic conception of mise en scene may not have included editing, but it did include the placement and movement of the camera as specifically cinematic narrative techniques and codes for articulating meaning visually, rather than only the plastic and human elements within its composition.

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[198] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 177.
[199] François Truffaut, with the collaboration of Helen G. Scott, *Hitchcock*, revised ed., (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1984). See Hitchcock's comments at 61 and 139.
[200] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 178.

By failing to fully conceive this idea, and so its heuristic value, Wood was able to propose that, "The auteur 'theory' is of value only where its validity is highly arguable." He confined " ... its usefulness and interest exist within clearly defined limits, namely, the studio-dominated 'commercial' cinema where the director is an employee."[201] With this statement, Wood denied the *politique's* distinguishable importance as a method for defining the cinematic art form, and for identifying the cinematic artist, in specifically cinematic terms irrespective of the institutional context. He might assert that "Questions of authorship become interesting only where work of some quality is under consideration …", but he begs the question: what then are the criteria for quality in the first place?[202]

John Hess: the Artist and Art in Society

John Hess was not an *auteurist* and he was opposed to the *politique des auteurs*, even while seemingly accepting, without question, the *Cahiers* group's idea of commercial cinema as a means of personal directorial expression. Hess was not concerned with the *Cahiers* group's purpose to distinguish between cinema and other art forms to raise the status of cinematic art to that of those other forms; his purpose was to position film criticism and academic writing within a left-wing ideological perspective. From this perspective he objected to the *Cahiers* group's political and social leanings, as evidenced by their writings, and the influence of those leanings on their evaluation of directors as *auteurs*.

Given this ideological purpose it is surprising that the two articles Hess wrote on the *politique* published in *Jump Cut* in 1974 – particularly the first, "*La politique des auteurs* (part one) World View as Aesthetics*" – read as a return to more traditional concerns that echo points made by critics in the early 1960s, such as Penelope Houston and Richard Roud. He does not conceive the author figure as the theoretical or institutional construct it increasingly became after the *auteur*-structuralist development of the mid 1960s, and the events of May 1968, but as the more traditional expressive human agent. Echoing Penelope Houston, he disapproves of the *Cahiers* group and their *politique* because he believes it to be, "… a justification, couched in aesthetic terms, of a culturally conservative, politically reactionary attempt to remove film from the realm of social and political concern, in which

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[201] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 174.
[202] Wood, "Reflections on the Auteur Theory" 178.

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the progressive forces of the Resistance had placed all the arts in the years immediately after the war."[203]

Echoing Richard Roud, he proposes that the *Cahiers* group did not value their chosen *auteurs* because of those *auteurs*' ability to express their personality through their films – irrespective of production conditions – but because of their ability to express a particular world view; a world view of characters in physical, psychological and spiritual isolation:

> *Auteur* criticism was, in fact, a very complicated way of saying something very simple. These critics wanted to see their own perception of the world on the screen: the individual is trapped in *solitude morale* and can escape from it – transcend it – if he or she come to see their condition and then extend themselves to others and to God. Whenever the *auteur* critics saw this tale on the screen, they called its creator an *auteur*.[204]

Like those previous critics, Hess examines the *politique's* authors' "social, cultural, and aesthetic antecedents" to explain their *politique* and their preferred world-view. Unlike those previous critics, he more accurately paces out his area of enquiry – identifying the period in question as between 1951 and 1958. He clearly distinguishes between those he considers to be the originating authors of the *politique*, and their articles in the pages of *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Arts*, from subsequent *Cahiers* contributors naming the former as Eric Rohmer, Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette, and François Truffaut (it is unclear why he declined to include Claude Chabrol).[205] He excludes Andrew Sarris and other American critics from his discourse, criticising their almost exclusive focus on the director as cinematic artist as far too narrow and leading "... to incredible distortions and abject silliness …".[206]

Also unlike those previous critics, Hess offers a far more closely argued critique of the *politique* and its major aesthetic principles that directly engages with the defining concepts of *auteur* and mise en scene. He identifies those principles as a specific concept of mise en scene; a realist aesthetic; a focus on characterisation – a particular style of characterisation –

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[203] Hess, "La Politique Des Auteurs, Part 1" 19.

[204] Hess, "La Politique Des Auteurs, Part 1" 21.

[205] Hess, "La Politique Des Auteurs, Part 1" 19. It could be argued that the authors' initial return to their policy in the late 1950s - such as Jean-Luc Godard's 1959 essay - might also have been included.

[206] Hess, "La Politique Des Auteurs, Part 1" 19.

to reveal the spiritual dimension of the world and the spiritual world of the characters. Echoing Sarris, Hess describes mise en scene as "… the most used and the least explained term to appear in their writings"; unlike Sarris, he does not then merely refer to Astruc's original description as sufficient insight but offers his own reading of mise en scene as the, "…arrangement of all the physical objects the choreography of all movement, and the manipulation of all the technical apparatus (sets, lighting, camera) … in short, the composition of the visual images."[207] This statement, in its simplicity, bears a close resemblance to Rivette's "network of relationships, an architecture of connections". [208]

Importantly, Hess identified Bazin's cinematic realism as the aesthetic and moral foundation for the *politique*, while distinguishing between Bazin's initial discourse and its modifications by the authors of that policy, "As a general statement, it can be said that their view was a qualified acceptance of Bazin's concept of realism, the emphasis of which they subtly changed."[209] This more accurate definition of time, place, people, concepts and aesthetic antecedents, sustains a more profound and relevant discourse on the *politique* than those offered by many of his critical predecessors. But whatever the merits of this discourse, Hess's ideological imperatives provoke a far too reductive reading of the *politique*, and of Andre Bazin's writings on aesthetic realism; one that ties them too tightly to the theory of personalism. This is apparent in the suggestion that Bazin's original realist aesthetic was an argument for passive recording (in opposition to manipulation of the image through montage), which is a clear misrepresentation of Bazin's aesthetic formulation. Bazin did not promote cinema as mere passive recording and he was explicit on this point: "One must beware of contrasting aesthetic refinement and a certain crudeness, a certain insistent effectiveness of a realism which is satisfied just to present reality … one merit of the Italian film will be that it has demonstrated that every realism in art was first profoundly aesthetic."[210]

What cannot be denied, however, is that Hess clearly, and convincingly, shows how the formal specifications of the *Cahiers* group's *politique* mandated their chosen world-view. He may have disagreed with the *Cahiers* group's perception of the world, but his discourse

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[207] Hess, "La Politique Des Auteurs, Part 1" 20.
[208] Rivette, "The Essential" 134.
[209] Hess, "La Politique des Auteurs, Part 1" 20.
[210] Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality: Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of Liberation" 25.

supports their conception of personal artistic expression through cinematic form and, in particular, of their belief in characterisation as a primary *auteurial* strategy. This is of particular relevance to the contention that, however over-stated the *politique's* emphasis on form may have been, it could not be dismissed merely as an instance of undue formalism, but had to be considered as conceiving how a specific cinematic aesthetic could become a way of seeing the world, and then of expressing that perception on screen.

The Auteur-structuralists

Structuralism, the theoretical concept introduced by Ferdinand de Saussure in the study of linguistics, then taken up by Christian Metz and Roland Barthes in semiotics, and Claude Lévi-Strauss in anthropological linguistics, was a theoretical paradigm that could be applied to other narrative forms, such as cinematic narrative; and the English *cine* or *auteur*-structuralists made the attempt to do so in the period immediately prior to May 1968. Historically, the events of May 1968 and its repercussions, particularly as experienced in France, became a crucible for radical cultural and political disruption that reverberated in academe and beyond. The events of 1968 did not introduce that radical change but they provided the abrupt historical moment that forced it centre stage. The increasing academic focus on structuralism was one consequence: post-1968 they, and other, discourses increasingly focused on theoretical and ideological models as paradigms for understanding reality and how the world was to be perceived and understood.

Consequently, cinematic art – films – were positioned as social constructs – texts – rather than as creative works of personal expression. Discourses on authorship changed from questions about whether or not the author, as an identified and named individual creating a work of art, could do so irrespective of the material context, to consideration of the author as an ideological or theoretical constructed "subject" position within the text, to be found and read out of that text. The *auteur*-structuralist development was at the forefront of that shift and emerged in the period immediately preceding 1968. That development marked the beginning of the end for the *politique des auteurs* as a subject for critical and academic analysis.

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Peter Wollen, Jim Kitses and Ben Brewster were identified as the most notable *auteur*-structuralists (though, as noted by Caughie, they did not knowingly combine as a recognised movement under that label at the time).[211] Each had his own particular focus on authorship of the filmic text – Kitses, for instance, tied the *auteur* more tightly to generic conventions, but they all had a common critical purpose: to maintain the possibility of the *auteur* director as primary signifier and site of meaning under the banner of a method perceived as a more scientifically-based empiricism, and so more theoretically respectable, than the *politique's* more traditional Romantic concept of the artist.

The *auteur*-structuralist attempt to continue recognition of the authorial figure as site of meaning in the text did not depend on identification of an *auteur's* conscious world view existing prior to, and outside, the text and consciously embedded within it as *auteurial* stylistic signature. It depended on identification of structured thematic opposites – or antimonies – present as hidden textual constructs representing *auteurial* concerns irrespective of conscious *auteurial* intention. The role of the knowledgeable critic then became crucial, as those hidden constructs had to be uncovered from behind a film's formal and thematic facade representing the consciously intentional subject.

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith's 1967 book *Luchino Visconti* was credited as the first example in English film criticism of *auteur*-structuralism in practice:

> … one essential corollary of the theory as it has been developed is the discovery that the defining characteristics of an author's work are not always those that are most readily apparent. The purpose of criticism becomes therefore to uncover behind the superficial contrasts of subject and treatment a structural hard core of basic and often recondite motifs. The patterns formed by these motifs, which may be stylistic or thematic, is what gives an author's work its particular structure, both defining it internally and distinguishing one body of work from another.[212]

He then provided a partial definition of *auteurism* that effectively dismissed it as a critical method and limited its value to that of an artistic principle:

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[211] John Caughie, Introduction, "Auteur-Structuralism", *Theories of Authorship* 124.
[212] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, "Visconti (Extract)," *Theories of Authorship* 137.

The so-called *auteur* theory can be understood in three ways: as a set of empirical assertions to the effect that every details of a film is the direct and sole responsibility of its author, who is the director; as a standard of value, according to which every film that is a *film d'auteur* is good, and every film that is not is bad; and as a principle of method, which provides a basis for a more scientific form of criticism than has existed hitherto.[213]

This partial definition allowed Nowell-Smith to justify his conception of *auteur*-structuralism as an alternative method for identifying the *auteur*-director as site of textual meaning. Whatever the value of Nowell-Smith's intervention, his analysis depended on neither an accurate reading of *auteurism* nor a proper application of structural methodology; and his definition of *auteurism* as a critical approach was too absolutist. He was not a committed structuralist and he found significant consistencies in Visconti's films independent of the structural hard core of basic motifs he had identified. He also recognised that rigid adherence to the structural approach could not account for an author's work changing over time and that, ultimately, "It narrows down the field of enquiry almost too radically, making the internal (formal and thematic) analysis of the body of works as a whole the only valid object of criticism."[214]

In 2003, Nowell-Smith produced a third edition of *Luchino Visconti*. In the preface, dated a year earlier, he advises that he has left the text mostly unchanged and presents it as an "historical document". Nowell-Smith has, however, included a retrospective at the end, which includes a " … brief statement of where I think authorship theory stands today." This retrospective is not, in fact, so much a statement on authorship theory today as Nowell-Smith's statement of his attitude to the idea of the director, and Visconti in particular, as the author of his films. That attitude is not so very far from the position of the late 1950s and early 1960s, though he now believes less in the idea of "unconscious" intention – at least in the case of a Visconti. In both the preface and the retrospective he presents the director as the author in terms similar to that of Truffaut and the others at *Cahiers* in 1954, "… it was not hard to see how a man like that could make the films he did", and *Ludwig* is, " … not only one of his best but also one of his most personal films …".[215] There is a further correspondence with the *Cahiers* group's perspective in Nowell-Smith's evaluation that an *auteur* director's films, good or bad, are worthy of detailed analysis while other directors'

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[213] Nowell-Smith, "Visconti (Extract)" 136.
[214] Nowell-Smith, "Visconti (Extract)" 137.
[215] Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Luchino Visconti*, 3rd ed. (London: British Film Institute, 2003) 1-6.

films, "… good and bad alike … are not illuminated at all by knowing who directed them ...".[216] Wollen's idea that the weaker films of a director's *oeuvre*, the "eccentricities", have something to offer, in that they are part of the whole and inform that whole, is also echoed. For example, when Nowell-Smith suggests that consideration of that whole, "… illuminates the single films that form its parts"; even a "risible" film like *The Savage Innocents* (Nicholas Ray, 1960).[217]

But this return to the author and earlier concerns is not a return to the *politique des auteurs*. Nowell-Smith denies the idea of the *auteur* as necessary for a concept of the film artist as embodied by Visconti. This is clear when he states, that "There is no way his status as author of his films can be denied", for Visconti was "… if you like, an author who had no need of auteurism in order to explain himself … [because] he was the director at the centre".[218] By "director at the centre" he means a director with almost total control of the production. This statement echoes another writer who believed in the director as author, while holding himself distant from the *politique des auteurs* – Robin Wood – and raises the same question raised by Wood's attitude. How, then, does Nowell-Smith find Visconti – the **cinematic** artist and author – in his films if not through applying a specifically cinematic analysis utilising specifically cinematic concepts – such as those introduced by the *politique?* The director's role as controlling organiser does not, by itself, identify that director's personal cinematic expression through his films. If this thesis has one contribution to make, it is through insisting on the necessity for the *politique* to be considered as a method for determining whether or not a director was both the **cinematic** author and artist, not merely the authorising figure in control of the apparatus of film–making.

Peter Wollen: Signs and Meaning in the Cinema

Peter Wollen was a more committed *auteur*-structuralist than Nowell-Smith but one equally guilty of misusing that method. Like Nowell-Smith he incorrectly labelled his **method** as structuralist when it was simply a reading of thematic patterns within a generic template. Wollen conceived of cinema as composition and performance: composition being the

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[216] Nowell-Smith, *Luchino Visconti*, 3rd ed. 220.
[217] Nowell-Smith, *Luchino Visconti*, 3rd ed. 220.
[218] Nowell-Smith, *Luchino Visconti*, 3rd ed. 221.

screenplay and story; performance being the acting, photography, editing (presumably the mise en scene), with the director able to move between either position to command or participate in both. His intention is to analyse **what** was on the screen, not only **how** that **what** had been achieved in practice, and to reduce the meaning of that "what" to those thematic structures that could be identified as signifying consistent directorial concerns.

Wollen borrowed Lévi-Strauss's positioning of narrative meaning within sets of structured antinomies. He argued that the greater the underlying variations in those structured antinomies, beneath the surface of general thematic repetition universal to them all, then the greater the *auteur*; with "… lesser *auteurs* … defined … by a core of basic motifs which remained constant, without variation."[219] He was searching for the singularity – the "eccentricities" – and not just universality in an *auteur's* works, "…as Lévi-Strauss has pointed out, that by simply noting and mapping resemblances, all the texts which are studied … will be reduced to one, abstract and impoverished. There must be moment of synthesis as well as analysis …".[220] On those grounds Wollen claimed regard for films often considered to be minor or failed works of their *auteurs*, such as the later films of John Ford, because "…the test of a structural analysis lies not in the orthodox canon of a director's work, where resemblances are clustered, but in films which at first sight may seem eccentricities."[221]

In a 1965 essay on John Ford in *New Left Review* (under the pseudonym of Lee Russell), and again in *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* – his seminal work of *auteur*-structuralism in practice – Wollen found the director's work richer than that of Howard Hawks because his structural analysis revealed "… the richness of shifting relationships between antinomies in Ford's work that makes him a great artist beyond being simply an undoubted *auteur*."[222] In these essays Wollen's argument remains true to the animating purpose of the *politique*; the idea of *auteurism* as a method for expressive cinematic practice as much as a method for

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[219] Peter Wollen, "The Auteur Theory," *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972) 102-104.
[220] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 93.
[221] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 93. Wollen recognised perhaps that the *Cahiers auteur* was both author and artist with *auteur* being used here as simply author.
[222] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 102; see also Wollen, "John Ford", *New Left Review* 29 (January/February 1965): 69-73.

critical analysis. This is evident in his statement, "The director does not subordinate himself to another author; his source is only a pretext, which provides catalysts …".[223]

There were two versions of *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema*: the first published in 1969 and a second in 1972, which included an additional conclusion to the chapter on the "*auteur* theory". This conclusion introduced a significant difference in perspective to the 1969 original that was not acknowledged by Wollen. In 1969 he had still identified John Ford as author and site of meaning in the text, but by 1972 Wollen no longer believed in the idea of the *auteur* as site of even unconscious expression but as an "unconscious catalyst" of meaning, and he was writing not of John Ford the expressive artist but of "John Ford" the critical construct:

> The structure is associated with a single director, an individual, not because he has played the role of artist, expressing himself or his own vision in the film, but because it is through the force of his preoccupations that an unconscious, unintended meaning can be decoded in the film … *Auteur* analysis does not consist of retracing a film to its origins, to its creative source. It consists of tracing a structure (not a message) within the work, which can the *post factum* be assigned to an individual, the director, on empirical grounds. It is wrong, in the name of a denial of the traditional idea of creative subjectivity, to deny any status to individuals at all. But Fuller or Hawks or Hitchcock, the directors, are quite separate from "Fuller" or "Hawks" or "Hitchcock", the structures named after them and should not be methodologically confused.[224]

This radical, unacknowledged, shift in Wollen's concept of the *auteur* became the subject of much consequent criticism. Also criticised was his failure to make clear that what he termed "*auteur*" analysis and the "theory" was little more than his own *auteur*-structuralist variation, which was neither an accurate application of structural nor *politique* methodology.

> To my mind, the *auteur* theory actually represents a radical break with the idea of an "art" cinema, not the transplant of traditional ideas about "art" into Hollywood. The "art" cinema is rooted in the idea of creativity and the film as the expression of an individual vision. What the auteur theory argues is that any film, certainly a Hollywood film, is a network of different statements, crossing and contradicting each other, elaborated into a final "coherent" version.[225]

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[223] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 113.
[224] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 168.
[225] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 167.

This statement bears no resemblance to the *politique des auteurs* – the origin of the *auteur* approach Wollen was referring to – as previously discussed in Chapter One. Wollen – like Sarris, Nowell-Smith and Robin Wood – had come to praise *auteurism* but ended by burying it beneath the weight of his own re-focused discourse. Like those others, he discarded elements inconveniently at odds with his own particular concerns and critical constructions. In Wollen's case, the other meaningful elements within the text were recognised but then discarded as irrelevant "noise":

> Of course, the director does not have full control over his work; this explains why the *auteur* theory involves a kind of decipherment, decryptment. A great many features of films analysed have to be dismissed as indecipherable because of "noise" from the producer, the cameraman or even the actors. … […] What the *auteur* theory does is to take a group of films – the work of one director – and analyse their structure. Everything irrelevant to this, everything non-pertinent, is considered logically secondary, contingent, to be discarded.[226]

But everything else, consideration of those other factors and their contribution to the meaning to be found in the film, could not be discarded; for the significance of those other contributions to the whole and how they were organised and incorporated to become a part of that whole, helped determine whether or not the film was the work of an *auteur*. In any case, with his distinction between great artist and "mere *auteur*" Wollen seemingly limits his reading of that concept to only an author figure rather than the author and artist as conceived by the *politique*. By 1972 he had become as circumspect as Nowell-Smith and was allowing that an *auteur* analysis could not, "… exhaust what can be said about any single film. It does no more than provide one way of decoding a film, by specifying what its mechanics are at one level. There are other kinds of code which could be proposed, and whether they are of any value or not will have to be settled by reference to the text, to the films in question."[227]

However, whatever the errors of methodology and however narrow the focus, Wollen's pseudo-*auteur*-structural analysis of Ford's and Hawks's works offered profound insights. Wollen characterised both directors' films as thematically focused on stories of heroism and masculinity, but from different perspectives. John Ford's heroes were placed within society and the historical frame of the subjugation of native-Americans by European settlement of

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[226] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 104.
[227] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 168.

the American west; community ritual had a significant function; women are either domesticated and dutiful or defined as an "other" – outside respectable European-based society – such as a saloon girl, a native American or Polynesian princess. The Hawksian heroes, however, were positioned within all-male, elite groups; history and society were conceived as illustrative rather than defining frames. It is the routine of the group, punctuated by dangerous adventure typified as "fun", that provides the unifying and healing functions – not the community ritual of Ford's films. Hawksian women are characterised as either threatening the idealised male group or as pseudo-male honorary members admitted to it.

Wollen's consideration of Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (John Ford, 1946), *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956) and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (John Ford, 1962), and of their respective heroes – Wyatt Earp, Ethan Edwards and Tom Doniphon is particularly insightful. All three films were founded on a thematic Fordian constant; narratives about the settlement and domestication of the West. All three characterisations exhibited Fordian constants of honour, duty and sacrifice in service to country and community, but Wollen's analysis draws out the profound differences that were also present in Ford's portrayal of those heroes and the outcomes of the historical moment. He analysed the roles of those protagonists, not only the overall texts, as "…bundles of differential elements, pairs of opposites".[228] This analysis revealed not only the shifting variations in the repeated core antinomies of Ford's work, particularly his master antimony between the wilderness and the garden (taken from Henry Nash Smith's book *Virgin Land*), but also how those antinomic variations are represented by the heroes themselves "not just the worlds in which they operate." Wollen's finding of constant themes, but shifting variations of oppositions in those films, informs any reading of them or any consideration of Ford as a *politique auteur*. The analysis revealed how an *auteur's* concerns about the world could stay constant while his or her attitude to that world could change over time, and be accounted for in his or her films.[229]

In 2003 Wollen, like Nowell-Smith, also returned to the *auteur* approach with his essay "The auteur theory: Michael Curtiz, and *Casablanca*", and he also denies the *politique*. He

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[228] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 94.
[229] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 94-102.

summarises his former ideas as "… the critic delineated a coherent textual structure and simply assigns it to the concrete individual who, on empirical grounds, could be identified as the best available source of that coherence."[230] Now, however, he also provides a succinct rebuttal of the arguments denying the director – or any individual – as authoring source, "Yet although no such thing as a unique singularity of authorship exists, this doesn't imply that the very concept of authorship is consequently dubious or uncertain. It is simply much more complicated than we tend to assume."[231] If his gaze returns to any of the *auteur* champions it is, not to Truffaut and the others at *Cahiers* – though they are mentioned, but to Andrew Sarris, "…Sarris coined the phrase 'the doctrine of directorial continuity' to describe the essence of auteurism." With this idea, Wollen makes the case for Michael Curtiz as an *auteur*. "The case for Curtiz as an auteur rests on his incredible ability to find the right style for the right picture. ... [his] thematic consistency across several genres."[232]

Wollen, like Nowell-Smith, also returns to the idea of control and authority as defining *auteurial* criteria. "It is simply mistaken to believe that Curtiz was no more than a studio hack without authority and control over the films he made."[233] But, as argued throughout this thesis, a director could have the considerable control allowed a commercially successful director and still be only a *metteur en scène.* Whether Curtiz can be identified as an *auteur*, or might be better typified as a *metteur en scène*, is open to question, but that identification perhaps needs to be based on more than thematic and stylistic constants (as pointed out by Pauline Kael, repetition alone does not equal artistry), and the exercise of considerable control over the production of his films. Those elements may ensure his authoring status but they do not ensure his *auteur* status.

The auteur-structuralist heresy

There is a more detailed analysis of Robin Wood's *auteur*-based approach earlier in this chapter, but it is useful at this point to consider his criticism of *auteur*-structuralism. Wood was highly critical of what he termed the "structuralist heresy" and criticised the use of structuralism as an evaluative tool for rating directors on the clarity and variation of their

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[230] Peter Wollen, "The Auteur Theory: Michael Curtiz and *Casablanca*," *Authorship and Film*, ed. David A. Gerstner and Janet Staiger (New York, London: Routledge, 2003) 68.
[231] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory: Michael Curtiz and *Casablanca*" 69.
[232] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory: Michael Curtiz and *Casablanca*" 76, 74.
[233] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory: Michael Curtiz and *Casablanca*" 64.

found structured antinomies rather than as an analytical tool. Wood's concerns were more akin to those of the 1950s and early 1960s: the aesthetic of cinema and the roles and functions of the human agents creating that aesthetic. It was from this starting point that he was particularly critical of Wollen's structuralist readings of Ford and Hawks: a reading he found too reductive and one that privileged themes without considering the mise en scene. That position was illustrated by his criticism of Wollen's analysis of Ford's *Donovan's Reef*, as a method that "… concentrates on its abstractable motifs … [and] precludes any close reading of what is actually on the screen."[234] But this, in turn, was too narrow a reading of Wollen; and Wood's own essays on Hawks and Ford, while also offering insightful analysis, often also steer dangerously close to the purely thematic that could equally be accused of ignoring what else might actually be there.

In 1973 Charles Eckert and Brian Henderson provided critiques of the *auteur*-structuralist development that were more focused on the emerging concern to move away from conception of the author as the human individual. Each, however, wrote from quite different perspectives.

Charles Eckert

Eckert clarified the intentions and limitations of *auteur*-structuralism criticism and its different currents in his essay "The English Cine-Structuralists" in *Film Comment*.[235] As a committed structuralist, he identified the *auteur*-structuralist failure to properly apply structural methodology; and the inconsistencies and incompatibilities between the two quite different codes of signification. Eckert identified the plastic and material elements of the filmic text that were not found in, or formed by, mythic texts and their material processes, and gave the example of Ford's portrayal of Jane Darwell's character in *Grapes of Wrath* (John Ford) to illustrate the irreconcilable difference between the production and narration of myths (as defined by Lévi-Strauss) and cinema's own production processes, narrative codes and strategies. He argued that Darwell's character was an archetype and archetypes, though primary cinematic signifiers of universal meaning, were not present in mythic

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[234] Robin Wood, "Shall we gather at the River? The late films of John Ford," *Theories of Authorship*, ed. John Caughie 99. Wood, however, does not deny the historical and theoretical value of *Signs and Meanings in the Cinema*.

[235] Charles Eckert, "The English Cine-Structuralists," *Theories of Authorship*, ed. John Caughie 152-165.

narratives as signifying codes. In myth, he argued, "… (figures) have meanings only in relation to other figures. They cannot be assigned set meanings … […]. The search is not for what she resembles or what she symbolizes, but rather for the meaning of the myth in which she is one figure entering into many relations."[236]

Eckert noted that the *auteur*-structuralists' failings to properly apply structural methodology meant that they did not uncover the inherent contradictions of their discourse. He could not, however, bring himself to admit that the two approaches as a whole were irreconcilable. He was unwilling to accept that, if properly applied, the structural method could not be relevant to the new art form of the twentieth century. On this ground, he maintained that while Nowell-Smith had allowed for other significant and signifying non-structural aspects of Visconti's work, structural themes remained at the heart of his analysis; and he asserted that Wollen's faults were "… seminal faults, spawning as many ideas and thoughtful reactions as the Bazin-Einstein controversies."[237] His article, however, developed into a rather haphazard exposition of Lévi-Strauss structuralism, and a rather haphazard critique of the *auteur*-structuralist mis-appropriation of the structuralist label and ideas. He did not offer either a fully sustained analysis of the first principles of Levi-Strauss's anthropological structuralism or of the *auteur* approach.

Brian Henderson

Brian Henderson was far more trenchant in his criticism of the *auteur*-structuralists in a *Film Quarterly* article, "Critique of Cine-Structuralism".[238] He took Eckert to task for his refusal to address the irreconcilability of the inherent contradictions and failings he had uncovered; though he allowed that Eckert had "activated the scandal" of the *auteur*-structuralists' lack of proper foundation in structural theory and application of structural methodology. Henderson did address the *auteur*-structuralists' failure to confront the limitations implicit in their own writings, "We have let the auteur-structuralist texts speak for themselves and in speaking through their gaps, omissions, rhetorical strategies, and contradictions, destroy themselves."[239] He judged, correctly, that the Wollen and Nowell-Smith definitions of

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[236] Eckert, "The English Cine-Structuralists" 161-62.
[237] Eckert, "The English Cine-Structuralists" 154.
[238] Brian Henderson, "Critique of Cine-Structuralism (Part 1)," *Theories of Authorship,* ed. Caughie 166-82.
[239] Henderson, "Critique of Cine-Structuralism (Part 1)" 175.

either method were neither *auteurist* nor structuralist, as when noting Wollen's confusion of *auteurist* variations and unacknowledged re-definition of the *auteur* method:

> …at least four different senses of 'the auteur theory' may be distinguished … French original, Nowell-Smith's transformation, Wollen's transformation (1969), Wollen's transformation (1972). Yet Wollen refuses to differentiate these senses, speaking at all times of the 'auteur theory', as though it were one thing now and had always been one thing ... Wollen himself redefines the auteur theory, even as he affirms its singularity of meaning.[240]

Henderson's criticism went beyond objecting to *auteur*-structuralism as a limited and restrictive method without proper theoretical foundation: he denounced both *auteurism* and structuralism as empiricist epistemologies that "denied" their own signifying practices:

> The contention that (some) individual directors can and do stamp their films with a distinctive or unique meaning (structure) cannot be grounded in Lévi-Strauss. Nor is the problem overcome if it is stipulated that the auteur-structure is only one meaning among many, for the problem of accounting for the production of this meaning remains.[241]

Henderson was arguing against empirical methods of research on the grounds that meaning could not be read out of a text – whatever the critical or theoretical method employed – as though that text existed in isolation and was responsible for its own discourse because, "Every text is a combination of other texts and discourses which it 'knots' in a certain way and from a certain ideological position.", and the material conditions within which the text was produced had also to be analysed. The role of the critic was now not only to question what was there, but what was not:

> … inquiry is no longer limited to the object itself, the given, but addresses what is there in light of what is not there. This includes questioning the problematic of the text: not just the answers the text gives, but the questions it asks, and not just the questions it asks, but the questions which it does not ask. Why are certain discourses included in the text and others left out?[242]

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[240] Henderson, "Critique of Cine-Structuralism (Part 1)" 172.
[241] Henderson, "Critique of Cine-Structuralism (Part 1)" 177.
[242] Henderson, "Critique of Cine-Structuralism (Part 1)" 180.

Edward Buscombe

Edward Buscombe's article "Ideas of Authorship" in *Screen* was also published in 1973 and encompassed the *Cahiers* group's *politique*, Andrew Sarris's *auteur* theory and Peter Wollen's *auteur*-structuralist development. It provided a valuable over-view of the *auteurist* debate to that point, offered important clarifications of the various developments, and so can be read as an initial analysis of the *politique* and of post-*politique auteurism* in general.[243] Buscombe's primary purpose was not to enter into the structuralist debate but to reveal what he perceived as *auteurism's* undue emphasis on the individual, and on individuality and originality as evaluative artistic criteria, as he presented the case for a more expansive gaze leading away from that figure. Andrew Sarris is identified as the prime peddler of the resulting "cult of personality": "This notion of the unity produced by the personality of the *auteur* is central to the *Cahiers'* position; but it is made even more explicit by their American apologist, Andrew Sarris … […] who pushes to extreme arguments which in *Cahiers* were often only implicit".[244]

Buscombe is particularly critical of Sarris's second premise "… of the distinguishable personality of the director as a criterion of value", criticising his use of "… individuality as a test of cultural value" rather than just as a method of historical classification.[245] Sarris may have identified personality as "a criterion of value" but Buscombe typifies it as "**the** criterion of value" to support his argument and, by association, suggests that this was also the criterion of value for *Cahiers*.[246] The *Cahiers* group are accused of making "… a totem of the personality of the *auteur*…", and Bazin's well-known reproof to his "young fire-brands" on this point is cited. He acknowledges that *Cahiers* "… never entirely forgot [Bazin's] commonplaces …"; even pointing out that some members of the *Cahiers* group – in particular Rohmer – might not have been so in thrall to the idea of personal expression. But all at *Cahiers*, including Bazin, are deemed – correctly – to have believed:

> … in the absolute distinction between *auteur* and *metteur en scène*, between *cinéaste* and "*confectionneur*", and characterise it in terms of the difference between the

[243] Edward Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship," *Theories of Authorship*, ed. Caughie 22-34.
[244] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 25-26.
[245] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 27.
[246] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 28.

> *auteur's* ability to make a film truly his own, i.e. a kind of original, and the *metteur en scène's* inability to disguise the fact that the origin of his film lies somewhere else.[247]

Buscombe identifies the Romantic critical tradition that emerged during the first half of the nineteenth century as the theoretical antecedent for this fatal insistence on art as personal expression, and also notes that the *Cahiers* commitment to "… the line that the cinema was an art of personal expression" was for the purpose of raising cinema's cultural status to that of an art form.[248] He is, however, not pursuing the debate about cinema as an art form but proposing an idea of cinema as a cultural effect. He is arguing for a turning away from consideration of authorship as the result of individual decisions and perceptions to focus on a cinema of materialist influences and relationships: "… a theory of the cinema that locates directors in a total situation, rather than one which assumes that their development has only an internal dynamic."[249]

Buscombe is not denying any status at all to the *auteur*: implicit throughout is his acceptance of the director as the author figure, as the cinematic artist. In his critique on Peter Wollen's attempted *auteur*-structural re-incarnation there is explicit recognition of that figure's contribution. But he is proposing that cinema should not be viewed as the creative outcome of a conscious artist's "internal dynamic" but "those forces that act upon the artist". Therefore, he applauds Wollen's resistance to earlier *auteurist* belief that **all** meaning in a work must have been the result of conscious intention; while taking him to task for not explaining how the presence of thematic structures identifying unintentional directorial presence often corresponded with the presence of narrative strategies and themes that were clearly instances of intentional directorial decision, "The conscious will and talent of the artist … may still be allowed some part … [but, that] conscious will and talent are also in turn the product of those forces that act upon the artist, and it is here that traditional *auteur* theory most seriously breaks down."[250]

Few would deny the value of his proposal that further study of the cinema could focus on the effects of cinema on society, effect of society on cinema, effects of films on other films. That re-focusing, however, did not require such a complete refusal of originality and

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[247] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 24-26.
[248] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 22.
[249] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 32.
[250] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 32.

individuality as evaluative criteria. Those elements do have an aesthetic and evaluative purpose that is not necessarily inappropriate and inconceivable. Similarly, the idea of a work's "organic unity" formed by the influence of the *auteur's* "internal dynamic" is not such a nonsense as he suggests. Buscombe might argue that "… a film is not a living creature, but a product brought into existence by the operation of a complex of forces upon a body of matter". [251]   That complex of forces, however, is – as described by Perkins and discussed previously – an ever changing dynamic of relationships and textual material organised into an articulate and aesthetic whole by the director. (This point is addressed in greater detail in Chapter 6).

Buscombe's turning away from analysis of the cinematic artist, and of cinema as an art form, to cinema as a cultural effect means that he can evade the question of formal definition of that art form and therefore the consequent question of formal artistic evaluation. He makes evident this evasion and then justifies it: "… the avoidance of the problem of evaluation is surely justified until we have an adequate description of what we should evaluate." [252]   The *politique des auteurs*, however, was an attempt to define and describe "what" should be evaluated and also "who", and their focus on the "who" – the cinematic artist – was a necessary part of their formulation of the "what" – cinematic form. From this standpoint the belief that "… the failures of the *auteurs* will be more interesting than the successes of the rest", cannot be read simply as undue emphasis on the individual: the emphasis is on the works of those individuals for insight into "what we should evaluate". [253]

It is difficult to understand why Buscombe should claim that *auteurism* "... identified the code of the *auteur*; but was silent on those codes intrinsic to the cinema, as well as to those originating outside it." [254]   The *Cahiers* group's "code of the *auteur*" was based on their conception of "those codes intrinsic to the cinema" that helped form the mise en scene. One of the great contributions to film criticism and theory is the *Cahiers* group's concept of mise en scene as a composition of specifically cinematic sub-codes, techniques and strategies, combining with the more traditional dramatic and narrative codes, to become cinematic form.

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[251] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 32.
[252] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 31.
[253] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 25.
[254] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 33.

Post-structuralist theories of authorship

The theoretical development marked by Buscombe, and even more emphatically by Henderson, represented the absolute break with the 1950s: meaning and knowledge could no longer be based on experience and observation, but on the application of theory and ideology by the "God-critic" and "God-academic" who could bypass what actually was there, to introduce a discourse based, not on examination of the work, but on the social forces influencing the production of a "text". Structuralism may have been more a flag of convenience for Nowell-Smith, Wollen and their fellow *auteur*-structuralists, and that development might also have proved to be more a transitory consequence of a particular radical historical moment, rather than a continuing academic concern, but with that development, they became agents for the change in film studies and criticism accelerated by the events of May 1968.

None reflected the consequences of 1968 more than the editors of the time at *Cahiers*. In 1970 they produced, as had their predecessors, a seminal piece of work: the "John Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*" text. Their animating purpose was now, not to make a film, but to produce an "active reading" of it. The search was no longer to find what was there, but what was not, the "structuring absences, always displaced … the unsaid included in the said and necessary to its constitution."[255] Their predecessor's explicit pervasive anti-academicism was replaced by explicit reference to academic theorists: to Althusser and "… the two discourses of over-determination, the Marxist and the Freudian."

Though, *Cahiers* still being *Cahiers*, a familiar attitude remained. Truffaut had advised those who would "reject" Hawks and Ray to (his emphasis) "*Stop going to the cinema, don't watch any more films, for you will never know the meaning of inspiration, of a view finder, of poetic intuition, a frame, a shot, an idea, a good film, the cinema.* An insufferable pretension? No: a wonderful certainty."[256] In that same spirit, Oudart advised those who were inclined to view the "*Young Mr Lincoln*" text as "Hollywood revisited" to "give up the

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[255] The editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, "John Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*," *Movies and Methods* vol. 1, ed. Bill Nichols 497.
[256] Truffaut, "A Wonderful Certainty" 108.

reading with the very next paragraph".[257] There also remained a focus on the director as textual source. Henderson may have maintained that this was not a "return to the author", but there is repeated reference throughout to the director as the inscribing presence and the identifiable owner of the text being actively read: "Ford's film", "Ford's world", "Ford's fiction", "Ford's universe", "Ford emphasizes". If Ford is not the author – unconscious transmitter or whatever – then why constantly refer to him?

What cannot be denied is that the impetus for subsequent post-structuralist writing on film **was** a denial of the authorial figure, the human creative agent, as source of unity and meaning existing prior to the text and the reading of that text. There were now alternative ways to read film that did not depend on identification of time-based decisions – intentional or otherwise – by a named director, but that allowed for alternative signifying codes to be analysed and uncovered; that allowed for the idea of the readers of a text determining the meaning they were reading out of that text. As proposed by Wollen, the critic's reading was not "…the single reading, the one which gives us the true meaning of the film; it is simply a reading which produces more meaning." This, in turn, accommodated the idea of the film's meaning as a continuous process of textual analysis dependant on the material circumstances of the audience at any particular point in time.[258] The author figure increasingly became a theoretical construct: an ideological, semiotic or divided psychoanalytic effect of the text, or a subject position within the textual process, or a spectating subject authoring the text through the reflective process of reading and reception of that text. This denial of the *"bourgeois"* concern with identifying named individuals as authors also denied the specificity of film as a creative practice distinct from other visual, literary and dramatic creative practices. Bill Nichols, in Volume II of *Movie and Methods* (1985), viewed this loss as a price worth paying if the development allowed film studies greater acceptance within main-stream academe. Nichols speculated that while use of the term *text* denied specificity to film, "*Text* conveys a greater sense of methodological exactitude than the terms *movie* or *film*, partly because it implies that films are manifestations of certain

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[257] The editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, "John Ford's *Young Mr Lincoln*" 497.
[258] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 148.

characteristics found across a range of works that many non-film specific methods are adept at analysing."[259]

Those discourses, however, did not recognise that whatever the theoretical construct, and whatever meaning the spectating subject might read into a text, that meaning and those subjects did not make the "aesthetic choices … in particular circumstances" that create it, as stated by James Naremore in his essay on authorship printed in *A Companion to Film Theory* published in 1999.[260] Interrogation of the text will only reveal what is already there, not how that what was formed: the "how" in this respect being the formal textual construction of the object not the theoretical or ideological construction of the subject. That is one reason author-focused discourse has returned – a return that might not have seemed likely in the late 1970s and 1980s. The former refrain calling for the author's burial has now been replaced with calls for that figure's accommodation, as an individual, within today's debates. Virginia Wright Wexman, in her introduction to *Film and Authorship* published in 2003, provides another reason often given for this return: that the author "… had dissolved into a vast sea of textuality just at the moment when the previously marginalized voices of women and people of color were beginning to be heard."[261]

There is also the acknowledgment that, whatever academe – or certain currents within academe at least – might have urged, the idea of the *auteur* as a cinematic artist has never died, but has become an almost ubiquitous idea in popular culture, with the director the usual suspect around which critical debates are constructed. In his essay "The Author" in *Film and Theory An Anthology* published in 2000, Robert Stam's comment is representative of this acknowledgment, "Whatever the objections to auteur theory, museums still offer retrospectives in the work of specific directors, film courses revolve around directors, and film publishing tends to privilege auteur studies."[262]

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[259] Bill Nichols, Introduction, *Movies and Methods: an Anthology*, vol. 2 ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley, Calif., London: University of California Press, 1985) 6.
[260] Naremore, "Authorship" 22.
[261] Virginia Wright Wexman, Introduction, *Film and Authorship* 2.
[262] Robert Stam, Introduction, "Part 1: the Author," *Film and Theory: an Anthology*, ed. Toby Miller and Robert Stam 6.

Dudley Andrew in "The Unauthorized Auteur Today", also printed in *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, suggests why this return might be the case despite theoretical and ideological concerns. Citing Deleuze's discussion on Kurosawa and Hitchcock, he posits that a focus on cinema as an art of personal expression and the *auteur* as the self-expressive artist, does not mandate reading meaning in the text as only that authorised by the auteur, "An auteur may be surrounded by the images for which it is claimed he is responsible, while not directing their reading …[…] The auteur marks the presence of temporality and creativity in the text, including the creativity of emergent thought contributed by the spectator."[263] But who is this *auteur* so confidently referred to? There has been a fragmentation of that figure into a multitude of identities as a "total theory" of film is no longer deemed possible or desirable, and a plurality of *auteurs* are now conceived and analysed.

Timothy Corrigan: the auteur of commerce

In an essay, published in 1991, and entitled "The Multiple Children of Truffaut: from Author to Agent", Timothy Corrigan suggests one of those multiple children is the *auteur* as a commercially defined social agent. He believes that, "One of the chief mystifications or omissions within early theories and practices of auteurism …" was not the confusion caused by lack of conceptual definition but the "omission" of valorising "an idea of expression" without accounting for "its marketing and commercial implications".[264] Corrigan seeks to fill that space:

> … the auteur had been absorbed as a phantom presence within a text, he or she has rematerialized in the eighties and nineties as a commercial performance of *the business of being an auteur*. To follow this move in contemporary culture, the practices of auteurism now must be re-theorized in terms of the wider material strategies of social agency. Here the auteur can be described according to the conditions of a cultural and commercial *intersubjectivity*, a social interaction distinct from an intentional causality or textual transcendence.[265]

This re-theorising will, Corrigan believes, address another perceived problem encountered by traditional *auteurist* readings of films: how to account for historically and institutionally

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[263] Andrew, "The Unauthorized Auteur Today" 25.

[264] Timothy Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism," *Film and Authorship*, ed. Wright Wexman 97.

[265] Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism" 98. Corrigan does not explain why this absence was not merely a future discourse made possible by the preceding discourse rather than a "mystification" or "omission"; and in the hard-nosed world of the business, directors - as much as the stars – were long viewed as potential marketable identities assuring commercial success within the industry, and promoted as such, by the studios.

influenced personal subjectivism. He believes that constructing the *auteur* as commercial strategy provides one answer as he argues that, "… a revaluation of auteurism as more than enunciatory expression or a heuristic category could and should take place across any of its historical variations and to a certain extent has already been implicit in the social and historical emphasis of a 'politique des auteurs'."[266]

Corrigan, however, does not succeed in taking the *auteur* – all variations of that figure – out of time and place to such an extent. On this point, he engages in a brief inter-textual discourse with Dudley Andrew's comments in "The Unauthorized Auteur Today", quoting Andrew's contention that, "…my primarily spatial relation of the commerce of auteurism, as it plays across public and private space, underestimates the temporal dimension of the auteur."[267] Corrigan's answer does not sufficiently address this criticism of how to account for the presence of *auteurial* "temporality and creativity in the text, including the creativity of emergent thought contributed by the spectator". That is not to deny the value of his discourse in opening new lines of enquiry for academe. The essay is valuable as an example of how interrogation of a specific force that acts upon the artist (to paraphrase Buscombe) employs the *auteurist* paradigm in its widest sense to explain "the effect of society on cinema".[268] But Corrigan over-states his case in attempting to show how a commercially promoted reading of the text, in which the "*auteur* of commerce" actively colludes, can displace any previously intended meaning inscribed during the making of that text or, presumably, the meaning read by any particular audience at any particular time.

The "*auteur* of commerce" is one of Corrigan's commercially constructed *auteurs*; a figure – such as Francis Ford Coppola – who "… attempts to monitor or rework the institutional manipulations of the auteurist position within the commerce of the contemporary movie industry."[269] He proposes that identification of a film with such a director can be used for marketing purposes "to guarantee a relationship between audience and movie"; and suggests that the "… auteur-star can potentially carry and redeem any sort of textual material, often to the extent of making us forget that material through the marvel of its agency".[270] Here,

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[266] Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism" 98.
[267] Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism" 109.
[268] Buscombe, "Ideas of Authorship" 32.
[269] Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism" 101.
[270] Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism" 97, 100.

Corrigan is overstating the influence of the *auteur*-star's commercial agency on audience reception. In both instances he is denying the actual commercial realities on which he is attempting to re-locate the *auteurial* discourse. He does not explain how films, such as *Heaven's Gate* (Michael Cimino, 1980) and *Tucker: the Man and his Dream* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1988) (films cited in his essay), were commercial failures and how their relationship with the audience was not guaranteed **despite** the commercial agency of the director-*auteur*-star: in Cimino's case, to such an extent that the studio was commercially ruined and the director professionally.

Corrigan is also forced to contradict his own discourse in his attempt to show how those *auteurs* of commerce relinquish their authority as authors to communicate as commercial representations of that figure. For example, when Corrigan writes about Coppola in terms suggesting the director was an agent for "intentional causality or textual transcendence", when his commercially constructed *auteur* was meant to be "… a social interaction distinct" from those formations. Corrigan attempts to reconcile this contradiction by typifying Coppola and other filmmakers within "contemporary auteurism" as figures who, " … willingly or not have had to give up their authority as authors and begin to communicate as simply figures within the commerce of that image."[271] But he is effectively attempting to deny the *auteur* as expressive artist while basing much of his argument on that figure's own knowing relinquishing of this expressive power under the weight of institutional concerns. Indeed, in his disquisition on Coppola, Corrigan's argument becomes almost a traditional *auteur*-based reading of Coppola's films as he writes about the director as site of meaning and site of identification with his protagonists, "From the two *Godfathers* through *Apocalypse Now* and *Tucker*, his visionary characters invariably pursue grandiose spectacles which reflect their desires but which either literally or metaphorically then serve to destroy them."[272]

Corrigan's enlisting of the *politique's auteur* as the hereditary source can be inferred as he not only expressly draws a direct line from Truffaut's *auteur* to his commercially constructed *auteur* by his essay's title; he implicitly enlists the *Cahiers' auteur* as the figure in question throughout the essay. For example, when referring to "international art cinema"

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[271] Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism" 109.
[272] Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism" 105.

auteurs like Bergman and Godard and "American auteurs like Arthur Penn and Robert Altman", Corrigan refers to both these art-house and Hollywood directors as though they embodied the one and the same concept of *auteur* – as was first argued by Truffaut and the others in the *Cahiers* group. Despite these inferences, however, and the title of his article, Truffaut's *auteur* cannot be perceived in this construct.[273]

Corrigan's *auteur* reads as any commercially successful director who can be identified as the primary organiser and signifier of the filmed text by several means and from several perspectives. These means include "promotional technology and production feats"; or the now prevalent director's interview, which, to Corrigan, is "… a specific example of the contemporary auteur's construction and promotion of a self …".[274] There is no apparent necessity for a specific aesthetic, for a world-view, and for expression primarily through the mise en scene. On this basis, those directors deemed mere *metteur en scènes* at *Cahiers* – or that were the target of Truffaut's attack in "*Une certaine tendance du cinema francais*" – could still be Corrigan *auteurs*, even though unlikely to be recognised by Truffaut as such. Truffaut, however, would almost certainly have recognised the following statement by Godard during an interview, printed in the June 2005 edition of *Sight & Sound*, as echoing the ideals of "*Une certaine tendance*":

> What's bad is that students think that because they've got a little camera, they can film something. The manufacturers, even the critics, say: 'It's great! Everyone can make cinema!' No, not everyone can make cinema. Everyone can *think* they're making cinema, or *say*, 'I make cinema'. But if you give someone a pencil it doesn't mean they're going to draw like Raphael or Rembrandt.[275]

Godard is still insisting on specificity of artistic definition and accountability. Compare that statement with the following by Corrigan:

> For [Coppola], the destruction of the authority of the auteur can mean the resurrection of a world of private auteurs, an intimate yet goliathan network of electronic communication …. he proclaims a home video exchange which somehow retains the aura of auteurist agency, the expressive 'I' becoming a third person plural: 'Everybody will use it, everybody will make films, everybody will make dreams …'[276]

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[273] Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism" 96.
[274] Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism" 102.
[275] Jean-Luc Godard, "Interview with Godard," *Sight and Sound*, June (2005): 30.
[276] Corrigan, "The Commerce of Auteurism" 108.

Auteurs have indeed become multiple and this lack of clarification and definition matters. The *auteur* figure is not "owned" by the *Cahiers* group: it was conceived quite differently prior to the *politique* and can be conceived differently subsequent to it. The term "author" or "artist" is open to interpretation and historical refiguring and so is the *auteur*. There is an issue, however, when, either by explicit reference or by apparent implication, critics and academics refer to the *politique's auteur* as something it was not in order to validate propositions that serve only to blur even further the specific concepts of cinematic form and cinematic artist that Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rohmer and Rivette believed in: and Corrigan is guilty of this.

Anthologies and Readers

This review began with a stated aim to locate and position the *Cahiers* group's idea of film, and their *auteur,* within the literature. There have been numerous anthologies of film studies and authorship theories over the years since 1954 that have made the same attempt. These have included John Caughie's *Theories of Authorship: A Reader*, first published in 1981 and still in print; Pam Cook's *The Cinema Book* first published in 1985, the third edition published in 2007; *Film and Theory: An Anthology*, and *Film Theory*, both edited by Robert Stam and Toby Miller, and both first published in 1999; and Virginia Wright Wexman's *Film and Authorship* published in 2003. These anthologies present the competing theoretical and critical voices that propose how principles of authorship can apply to film – usually cinematic film. As stated by Stam in his introduction to *Film and Theory: an Anthology*, "… there is something to be learned from virtually every critical school".[277]

Caughie's *Theories of Authorship: a Reader* provides a real sense of those competing voices and of ideas being worked out through debate and reflection. He led the way in tracing, "… the most significant stages in the development of theories of film authorship over the past thirty or so years; and … put into play certain formulations and problems which have to be confronted in the continuing theorization of the author's place and function."[278] The book was published when the idea of a unified idealised author had been attacked as an outdated

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[277] Stam, Introduction, *Film and Theory* xviii.
[278] Caughie, Introduction, *Theories of Authorship* 1.

bourgeois concept. Caughie believed that there was still a place for the author as a concept, if not for the *politique's auteur* as an idealised subject, because of the author's continued presence as a process in the spectator's reading of the film or the critic's reading of a text. His "strategy" was "the charting of a dissolution" as he followed the shift from the idea of the artist as a "self-expressive individual" to that individual's "traces in the text's discourse".[279]

Stam and Miller provide succinct summative histories of the historical and theoretical context for both the authorship discourse in general and, in *Film and Theory: an Anthology*, of *auteurism* in particular. In the *Cinema Book*, Pam Cook dives deep into perhaps the most detailed and analytical history of the *politique*, providing dense historical and theoretical details for closer analysis and more specific research on each and every stage in the development of cinematic authorship theory; using extensive cinematic case studies for illustration.[280] Wexman's anthology offers a welcome subsequent text to Caughie's, as she also focuses specifically on theories of authorship as they now apply to film studies. Her stated purpose is to bring the various approaches "… together in order to suggest the rich veins of inquiry that can be tapped when the issue of authorship is openly addressed".[281] There is not, however, quite the same sense of active debate and disagreements that mattered, as engendered by Caughie's *Reader*.

There can, however, be no understanding of the *politique des auteurs* without a reading of the original source material – rather than others' analysis and interpretation of it. Some anthologies provide excerpts from the period of *Cahiers* in question; and there are collections of writings by individual members of the *Cahiers* group, such as the collection of Godard's essays and interviews in *Godard on Godard*. But, for any study of the *politique* in English, the starting point must be the translated collection of essays edited by Jim Hillier in *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, and *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1960s New Wave, New Cinema, Re-evaluation of Hollywood*. Hillier, in his introduction to the first volume, and his introductions to each section of that volume, identifies and details the aesthetic, political and critical differences between the members of the *Cahiers*

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[279] Caughie, Preface, *Theories of Authorship* 2.
[280] Pam Cook, "Authorship & Cinema," *The Cinema Book*, 3rd ed. Pam Cook ed. (London: British Film Institute, 2007) 387-483.
[281] Wright Wexman, Introduction, *Film and Authorship* 2.

group, as well as the singular idea of cinematic form and the *auteur* that defined them. There might never have been settled and agreed definitions at *Cahiers*, but there was an understanding of the idea of film represented by their *politique des auteurs*, and of its constituent concepts, and this understanding can be read out of their essays in Hillier's anthology.[282]

Elsewhere I have attempted to show how distinctions between the *politique* and other *auteurist* approaches have often been blurred and the original policy consistently misrepresented; though I have also noted how the *Cahiers* group's failure to properly define their idea bears much responsibility for this. The editors of the anthologies mentioned sometimes often fall into the same traps. They provide valuable historical overviews and summaries of the various critical voices, each with a different emphasis, that locate *auteurism* in general, and the *politique des auteurs* in particular, within the history of film criticism and theory. Those overviews are particularly important for a student of film trying to grasp not only the detail but also the "sensibility" of each period, and the theoretical chronological structure of an emerging academic subject. But the distinctive contribution of the *politique* is often not defined in sufficient specific detail and the *Cahiers* group's specific idea of film as art is in danger of being lost. Caughie notes auteurism's "distinguishable currents" but then blurs distinguishing features of that policy along the way. Wexman's claim that "The purpose of the *Cahiers* critics was to elevate the films of a few directors to the status of high art." is misleading.[283] The purpose of *Cahiers* was greater than that: it was to elevate cinema to the status of high art and to elevate those directors they identified as *auteurs* to the status of high cinematic artists.

There is often too much reference to the *Cahiers* emphasis on style – or "stylistic signatures" – alone as a defining criterion, without the necessary codicil that those stylistic signatures had to represent their *auteurs*' perception of the world as expressed through the mise en scène. Purely stylistic flourishes were the mark of a *metteur en scène*, not an *auteur*, and while this distinction is often noted initially, subsequent statements tend to gloss over that specific *auteurial* identifier. One such instance is when Naremore advises "And yet, as

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[282] *Cahiers du Cinéma the 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave*, vol. 1, ed. Jim Hillier; and *Cahiers du Cinéma: The 1960s: New Wave, New Cinema, Re-evaluating Hollywood,* vol. 2, ed. Jim Hillier.
[283] Wright Wexman, Introduction, *Film and Authorship* 3.

anyone can see from the latest movies, individual style has not gone away, and the star director is more visible than ever";[284] or when Wexman typifies the *Cahiers* group as having "… called for a cinema marked by visual artistry … […] they championed moviemakers who managed to produce visually distinctive films under the constraints of the Hollywood studio system."[285] Star directors were not necessarily *auteurs* – as Truffaut was at such pains to establish in "*Une certain tendance*", if visual artistry was the only criterion then the filmmaker would not have been deemed an *auteur*; and there was not an exclusive focus on Hollywood and Hollywood directors.

Andrew Sarris is noted as a distinctive voice but his misappropriation of the *politique*, and his failure to properly define its principles, or even to adequately define his own conception of mise en scene as cinematic form, is often neglected. This is apparent in Wexman's statement that Sarris's "Auteur Theory revisited": "… re-capitulates the guiding principles of the politique des auteurs, which he had adapted from *Cahiers de Cinéma*".[286] As noted earlier, this was not correct. Caughie alludes to mise en scene as a "*Cahiers*' development" but then provides a more summative generalising of it as "… probably the most important positive contribution of *auteurism* to the development of a precise and detailed film criticism…".[287] But he does not clearly identify the specific contribution of the *politique's* concept or sufficiently note Sarris's refusal to fully understand and analyse either that specific idea or his own of cinematic form. Cook provides a succinct description of Sarris's intervention as, " … responsible for introducing the *politique des auteurs*, translated as the auteur theory and transformed into a system of evaluating and classifying Hollywood cinema." This statement seems to identify the Sarris intervention for what it was – a transformation – rather than only the translation often claimed. However, Cook then reduces that transformation back to a mere translation when she advises that in "Notes on the auteur theory in 1962" Sarris "… had clarified **his version** of the *auteur* **theory**" (my emphasis).[288] Atypically, the section in Cook, entitled "Andrew Sarris and American film criticism", is not a detailed analysis but rather a descriptive history.

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[284] Naremore, "Authorship" 21.
[285] Wright Wexman, Introduction, *Film and Authorship* 2-3.
[286] Wright Wexman, Introduction, *Film and Authorship* 13.
[287] Caughie, Introduction, *Theories of Authorship* 13.
[288] Cook, "Authorship and Cinema" 410.

There are those who, at one and the same time, refuse the *politique* while writing as though one of its practitioners. Corrigan has already been cited on this point. Similarly, Naremore contends that "French auteurism as a historical movement may be dead", while writing of Godard in terms suspiciously close to those original French paradigms when discussing the director's *À bout de souffle/Breathless* (Jean-Luc Godard, 1960):

> A highly personal movie (at least in the intellectual sense), *Breathless* gives its auteur an opportunity to identify with both Michel (Jean-Paul Belmondo), a French wise guy who is infatuated with everything American, and Patricia (Jean Seberg), a sensitive, rather intellectual young woman from America … The two facets of the director's imaginary identity are represented in the form of a perversely romantic and failed relationship, much like the one in Hollywood film noir ….[289]

As also noted previously, the author may have returned to film studies but few want to return to the paradigms of the past and consider the questions raised above within current debates.[290] For Stam, "Most contemporary auteur studies have jettisoned the romantic individualist baggage of auteurism to emphasize the ways a director's work can be both personal *and* mediated by extrapersonal elements such as genre, technology, studios, and the linguistic procedures of the medium."[291] Naremore allows that, "… we have reached a point where an author criticism could join with cultural studies and contemporary theory in productive ways, contributing a good deal to our understanding of media history and sociology."[292] Cook echoes Caughie from 1981, and Buscombe from 1973, finding that a return to *auteurism* is a:

> … qualified return as an approach that can be used to pose methodological questions for film studies …[…] Individual agency and control thus become less important than the social, industrial and personal factors that govern the collaborative business of film production at specific historical moments. Indeed, the motivating fantasy of auteurism, the attribution of agency and control to a single creative source, is revealed as myth – albeit a very powerful one that refuses to go away.[293]

However fruitful these perspectives might have been, within this literature review I have attempted to show that those initial paradigms submerged in the *politique* were too easily dismissed as read and understood. Consideration of the *politique's* primary purpose as a

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[289] Naremore, "Authorship" 14.
[290] Andrew, "The Unauthorized Auteur Today" 27.
[291] Stam, "Part 1: The Author" 6.
[292] Naremore, "Authorship" 21.
[293] Cook, "Authorship and Cinema" 479.

politics of authorship has not only often been missing from the discourse in academe, in critical reviews and within the filmmaking community; it has also often been denied. In *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* Peter Wollen suggested that, "… the situation of the cinema, where the director's primary task is often one of coordination and rationalisation, is very different from that in the other arts, where there is a much more direct relationship between artist and work. It is in this sense that it is possible to speak of a film auteur as an unconscious catalyst."[294]

Wollen changed his ideas, as did many of the *Cahiers* group, but the suggestion that there is not a direct relationship between the artist and the work, and that the director's primary task is often only one of coordination and rationalisation, is still current and still proposed as a reason for denying individual authorship in film. In the section, "Auteurism in the 1990s" in *The Cinema Book*, Nöel Smith and Toby Miller returned to this old argument and advised "… that speaking in terms of individual authorship becomes increasingly problematic the more film scholarship uncovers the details of these other contributions."[295]

Then, in a 2007 article, "Authors and auteurs: the uses of theory", Caughie returned to *auteurism* and performed something of a *volte-face* from his 1981 position. In that article, he notes that while the *auteur's* seeming disappearance "from the centre of theoretical debate in Film Studies" might have been illusory, a "more scholarly and empirical understanding of the actual conditions of production" also might have made the concept of *auteur* redundant and easily replaced with the less specific "director-centred criticism".[296] Caughie then, having set up a proposition, "turns" and confronts it, and provides grounds for the *politique des auteur's* continued significance:

> The displacement of the auteur onto the system and the systematization of motivation within the rules of the game, however appealingly common sense they may be, leave some nagging questions about creativity, imagination and the artist which apply even within – or particularly within – a classical art. What is it that makes the difference, and what difference does difference make? … […] Within the genius of the system, is there still room for the genius of the artist?[297]

In the *Reader* Caughie had warned against a total rejection of the author as a decisive

[294] Wollen, "The Auteur Theory" 115.
[295] Toby Miller and Nöel Smith, "Auteurism in the 1990s," *The Cinema Book*, ed. Pam Cook 478.
[296] Caughie, "Authors and Auteurs" 1-2.
[297] Caughie, "Authors and Auteurs" 27, 32.

transformative influence on filmed texts, "… the tendency to reject *auteurism* because it is 'hopelessly romantic' lends itself to an over-reaction in which the author appears as 'nothing but' an effect of the text, failing to elaborate what the effect does."[298] At that time he was arguing for an understanding of *auteurism* as "other than a dead language", but was still attempting to move the debate beyond *auteurism* once its "place" and "influence" within the theoretical and critical history had been identified and acknowledged.[299] He had been hoping to, "… free *auteurism* from the historical confinement which the association of the term with a particular period of *Cahiers* implies. *Auteurism* is a critical approach which existed before Truffaut announced '*la politique des auteurs*' in 1954, and persists after the *Young Mr Lincoln* text of 1970."[300] By 2007, however, Caughie's views have significantly changed and he is no longer attempting to free *auteurism* from the *Cahiers* period but to return to that period and to draw the *Cahiers* group's *politique* in greater relief on the auteurist tableaux.

In 1981, he recognised that auteurism in general had not just been a conservative reactionary development but one that produced "…a radical dislocation in the development of film theory, which has exposed it progressively to the pressures of alternative aesthetics and 'new criticisms'".[301] By 2007, he is maintaining that the *Cahiers* "effrontery" **in particular** had:

> … effected a paradigm shift in thinking and writing about cinema … [and] created a field of debate within a community of interest, the kind of field out of which theory develops. Their writing was the first step towards the institutionalization of a knowledge, the formation of a critical community which really cared whether Minnelli was an auteur or a metteur en scène.[302]

In 1981, he had, " … a dissatisfaction with most of what has been written, which has tended to remain within the romantic concept of the artist, with its concentration on questions of artistic freedom and industrial interference, and with its continual desire to identify the true author out of the complex of creative personnel."[303] By 2007 he judged that:

> There still remain fields, however, which require a more sophisticated theoretical, as well as historical, understanding. One of these is the constantly shifting field of

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[298] Caughie, Introduction, *Theories of Authorship* 15.
[299] Caughie, *Theories of Authorship*: Preface 5; Introduction 15
[300] Caughie, Introduction, *Theories of Authorship* 15.
[301] Caughie, Introduction, *Theories of Authorship* 11.
[302] Caughie, "Authors and Auteurs" 13-14.
[303] Caughie, Preface, *Theories of Authorship* 2.

imagination and creativity, raising issues of art and authorship which the anti-humanism of earlier film theory has constantly avoided and for which Bordwell's systematic rationality has not delivered satisfactory answers.[304]

By 2007, the *politique's* distinguishable contributions are fore-grounded and the contribution of their specific idea of mise en scene is noted:

> Two pathways opened up from the *politique d'auteurs* which determine the direction of authorship theory and mark out routes for film theory more generally: first, and most indelibly, there was an attention to mise en scène, not simply as a set of techniques for the representation of reality but as a language of creativity with which an auteur transformed material … […] the second pathway led towards narrative and the themes which structured narrative.[305]

There are significant points on which Caughie has not moved: he is still arguing for a plurality of critical and theoretical voices and against a return to the traditional "extremes" of the "authorizing voice … closing … down" proper textual analysis.[306] But he is now finding a contemporary place for the *politique des auteurs* within that plurality of voices and positions:

> Finally, then, the continuing work of theory is to keep alive debate and engagement, not simply applying institutionalized theories and knowledges, but rediscovering fields in which contesting theories of authorship and their conflicting desires and demands have historically played a key role. It is for this reason that I believe the writing in *Cahiers du cinéma* in the 1950s and 1960s still resonates, if not as a model of scholarship, at least as a confirmation that critical excitement and a love of films and cinema still has a role to play. … […] The questions of art and authorship, creativity and imagination, may still prove an irritant in our attempts to come to terms with our complex engagements with cinema.[307]

Conclusion

Throughout this literature review I have attempted a close and detailed analysis of the writings of both supporters and adversaries of the *politique des auteurs*. This analysis considered previous interpretations of the *politique* to assess how it has been understood and portrayed at particular historical moments. During that analysis misunderstandings and misconceptions about the *politique* became apparent in many of those writings. These

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[304] Caughie, "Authors and Auteurs" 32.
[305] Caughie, "Authors and Auteurs" 15-16.
[306] Caughie, "Authors and Auteurs" 22.
[307] Caughie, "Authors and Auteurs" 33-35.

misconceptions built upon themselves to the extent that the *politique*, and the *politique's auteur,* were increasingly casually referred to as something they were not. The intervention of Andrew Sarris was crucial. In historical terms, his re-naming of a policy as a theory helped deliver the *politique* to academic scrutiny as a flawed theoretical concept based on a confused and undeveloped discourse.

The *politique*, however, was initiated not for the purposes of academe, but as a polemic for intending directors opposing a rigid and complacent critical and filmmaking establishment; and can be read as such. Providing an evidence-based rationale for a reconsideration of the *politique* to promote this reading is the first intended contribution to the literature. The consequent intention is to clarify specific misconceptions, in particular: the attitude of the *Cahiers* group to the literary patrimony; the function of the script as a stage in the creative process; and the primacy of characterisation within the mise en scene dynamic. The final intended contribution to the literature – and to cinematic practice – is to emphasise the heuristic value of the policy's **specificity** as a creative paradigm for **cinematic** authors. The primary method chosen for interrogating that creative paradigm was an "enquiry from the inside": a filmed experiment was conducted to test the *politique* as a manifesto for cinematic authorship; and a cinematic definition constructed to analyse that idea of film as a critical method for identifying the *auteur*.

Introduction

For this project an ethnographic and qualitative research method was chosen: a practice-based, participant observation "inquiry from the inside". The primary research tool was to be a cinematic essay constructed around a filmed experiment. The filmed experiment was an attempt to "re-write" cinematically the first scene from John Huston's 1941 adaptation of Dashiell Hammett's novel *The Maltese Falcon* (John Huston, 1941). My intention was to retrace the *Cahiers* group's pathway from the empirical position of critic to that of emerging filmmaker with limited means, little filmmaking experience and a "naive" eye on set. The creative challenge was to transfer their idea of cinema from the page to the screen by seeking what Alexandre Astruc and the authors of the *politique* had sought: "to retrace the origins of cinematic creativity" and "express thought" on screen. This creative challenge, in turn, provided the theoretical rationale for the methodological choice. It was the opportunity to directly address whether or not the *politique des auteurs* provided a heuristic method for reflective practice through an understanding, and application, of their concepts of *auteur* and mise en scene.

There was an initial stage of research preceding the practice-based elements that provided the context, and a further rationale, for the chosen method as alternative methods to a practice-based approach were presented. Ultimately, however, consideration of these alternative methods merely clarified the rationale for choosing a practice-based method, (which is discussed in the body of this chapter). This initial stage involved historical research; the critical deconstruction of three films; theoretical analysis of the *politique*; and research into other theories of authorship and narrative. Throughout, there was still some emphasis on knowledge through practice to determine if findings and ideas noted during the initial research stage were applicable to the reality of filmmaking. The practice of writing for the screen was considered during attendance at: a day of lectures on scriptwriting organised for the Brighton Festival, a three day seminar presented by Robert McKee and an undergraduate unit on script-writing that required several draft scripts to be written and

analysed. Interviews were conducted with a director (Mike Figgis) and an editor (Mike Ellis). Finally, a day was spent as a participant-observer on a small independent film set.[308]

Initial research providing the context and rationale for the practice-based method

Three films were deconstructed with the question in mind of who might be deemed the author(s) of each. The films came from differing historical and social environments and were representative of two major institutional settings for filmmaking – Hollywood and European art house. The first film was an archetypal Hollywood movie, *The Godfather* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1972); the other two were archetypal European art house films, the first from Sweden, *Det sjunde inseglet/The Seventh Seal* (Ingmar Bergman, 1957), and the second from England, *Silent Scream* (David Hayman, 1989). Each film also presented a different organisation of creative personnel and, specifically, of the writer/director dichotomy at the core of Truffaut's *"Une certaine tendance du cinema francais"*. *The Godfather* was based on the novel by Mario Puzo and was directed by Francis Ford Coppola from a screenplay by Puzo and Coppola, financed by Paramount Pictures. The *Det sjunde inseglet/Seventh Seal* was written and directed by Ingmar Bergman from a stage play by Bergman, and financed by Bergman's regular backers Svensk Filmindustri. *Silent Scream* was an independent art house film financed by Film 4 International, the BFI and the Scottish Film Production Fund. David Hayman directed the film from a script Bill Beech adapted from his stage play of the same name.

There were two instances of particular importance for the overall project during these critical deconstructions: a recognition of the need first to identify the formal methodologies to be used when analysing films and considering who might be the creative agent(s) responsible for them, and, the realisation that any consideration of authorship of narrative film, the focus of the *politique*, must begin with an analysis of film as a narrative form. The subsequent research into narrative theory provided a pathway to follow when considering the possibilities presented by the transfer of narrative function from the writer to the director and the implications of those possibilities. For instance, the possibility that the transfer of

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[308] The university script-writing course was in the 1999/2000 academic year. The Brighton Festival script-writing event was on the 25th May 2000. Robert McKee's seminar was held on the 24th-26th Nov. 2000. I interviewed Mike Ellis on the 27th July 2001; and Mike Figgis on the 2nd December 2003. The small independent film was *The Great Ecstasy of Robert Carmichael* (Thomas Clay, 2005); I spent a day as a participant-observer on that film's set on the 18th March 2004.

narrative function also entailed transfer of authorship if the signifying narrative voice became that of the director – was it the conception of that distinct narrative voice, and how it was signified, that marked the *auteur* from the rest? I had, however, to eventually draw a line under further investigation into narrative theory. The focus had to return to consideration of elements – such as plot, story, characters and the narrative arc – in terms of cinematic narrative strategies **in practice**.

The value of an historical approach and analysing the production history of films as a method for determining authorship was also considered. It soon became apparent, however, that an historical approach could not easily overcome the material reality that cinema is both an institutional and collaborative creative act dependent on a succession of stages of production involving differing personnel and practices at each stage. The numerous and shifting stages of textual formation and transfer identified by Perkins, the variety of elements in the dynamic at any one time, made difficult *a posterior* recognition of singular ownership of the creative work based on historical research alone. An historian might be able to presume *a priori* the initial source of each contribution based on identification of creative functions but could not, even with considerable historical documentation, identify with any real authority individual, creative ownership *a posteriori* once those contributions had been synthesised within the final text. Even recognition of each individual contribution according to identified functions within the collective whole is problematic unless – as Perkins advised – the planning and making of every stage of that text had been observed.[309]

The value of reconsidering the *politique* through a practice-based project was further emphasised during research of the literature into the theoretical and critical discourses prompted by the *politique des auteurs*. Conception of the authorial figure as an ideological or theoretical construct, and a film as a textual site rather than a "work", provided the theoretical context, but I was not researching the author as a theoretical or ideological textual site, I was researching Truffaut's assertion, "… the qualities of this film ... cannot possibly be seen by anyone who has never ventured a look through a camera eye-piece. We

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[309] Perkins, "Direction and Authorship", 172

flatter ourselves – and it is in this that we are opposed to another form of criticism – that we are able to retrace the origins of cinematic creativity".[310]

The first implication of that statement is that an empirical **understanding** of the creative act is necessary for a critical conception of the creative outcome, and that the knowledgeable critic has to "look through the camera eye-piece" with sufficient understanding of cinematic language to be able to evaluate a director's use of that language when "writing" in cinematic form. This presents the *politique* as a possible method for identifying the cinematic art form and then evaluating the artistic standard of the works in that form. The second implication is that a critical conception of the creative outcome requires empirical **involvement** with the creative act and actual experience of the practice of filmmaking. This suggests the *politique's* potential as a manifesto for cinematic authorship and as a tool for reflective practice. I determined to test the first possibility through a cinematic definition, and exploration, of the *politique*. The second possibility could only be tested by experiencing the practice of filmmaking and I judged that a filmed experiment would be the most suitable tool.

The Cinematic definition

Films directed by *Cahiers auteurs* were to be used as case studies for a visual analysis of the *politique* throughout the cinematic definition. The essential points to be introduced and analysed on screen would be:

- how Astruc and Bazin provided the founding ideas for the *politique*;
- the significance of Andre Bazin's concept of cinematic realism as the theoretical and aesthetic foundation;
- how the screenplay was only the opportunity for an *auteur's* film;
- how mise en scene was conceived as specifically cinematic form composed by the director with the resources at his or her disposal;
- that characterisation was the director's primary narrative strategy within the mise en scene dynamic;
- how technical excellence was not necessary for a director to be an *auteur*;

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[310] Truffaut, "A Wonderful Certainty" 107.

- how the *politique's* concept of visual style was a way of seeing the world on screen and, as expressed by their *auteurs*, was, in effect, a moral position realised as an aesthetic style.

The definition was not to be the first piece of practice under taken as the experiment was to provide the core around which that overall text would then be constructed. Prior to the start of the experiment, however, I had written a draft script for the definition, and pencilled in several films as case studies for the visual analysis of each point. But there was no complete draft finished at that time, or when filming the experiment was completed and I first sat down in an edit suite and began to construct the definition as a cinematic essay. Most of my time and attention had been spent on designing, producing and directing the filmed experiment and I had made no decision about background music, the voice-over narrator or whether I would edit the piece or ask the Senior Production Engineer to do so working to my script. I had assumed that the definition would only be a transfer of, essentially, my literary chapter defining the *politique des auteurs*, and which merely had then to be written in script form. This was not to be the case and there were multiple re-writes of the script, and re-edits of the eventual essay; and scenes chosen for the case studies were replaced with others. In practice, this cinematic definition and its edited construction proved to be crucial research through practice, as crucial for the overall project as the experimental scene.

Designing the filmed experiment

As a "stranger" on set, a non-practitioner, I intended to use my analysis of the *politique's* concept of mise en scene to direct a small film and test if personal expression in cinematic form was possible irrespective of collaborators, the material conditions of production, and of the apparatus of cinema. I would interrogate the directorial function, and that of the other collaborators – particularly the scriptwriter – not to achieve an historical understanding of the work of named individuals who had inhabited the roles of director and scriptwriter from time to time, but to gain an understanding of these creative functions in practice and of their contributions on and off-set; and to gain practical experience of the relationships formed, changed and re-formed, during the stages of textual transfer and processing as described by Perkins.

I had a limited budget and relatively little experience but I was, as the *Cahiers* group had been, venturing to look through the camera eye-piece – not to assume the role of an experienced commercial filmmaker – which was not possible in any case. Therefore, those seeming limitations were to be crucial aspects of the experiment's design and would inform the hypothesis, which was:

"That the *politique* introduced a heuristic method for directorial personal expression."

Within the frame of this hypothesis I determined an initial set of questions to focus on during each stage of the experiment – script development, pre-production, production, post-production; and to provide an *aide mémoire* and a framework for mental discipline during what I believed would be, and indeed subsequently found to be, a distracting and turbulent process. The general questions were:

- what was I achieving creatively and intellectually?
- how were my ideas and understanding of the *politique* changing?
- how and what would I do differently?

The more specific questions I set myself to answer when analysing the results of the experiment were:

- is the screenplay the primary narrative strategy or the literary "opportunity" for directorial authorship?
- if, so, then how can literary authorship be "over-written" by directorial mise en scene authorship?
- is characterisation the crucial aspect of the *politique's* concept of mise en scene and **the** primary vehicle for directorial authorship?
- how significant is the generic template for the creation of meaning?
- what is the role of the other creative collaborators on-set and post-production?
- is there a creative importance to what happens on set, either because of the inspiration of the moment or last minute problems?

These questions, in turn, helped to determine initial parameters for choosing the scene to be used for the experiment:

- the scene would be based on an adapted screenplay that had already been filmed;
- that filmed scene would have been directed by either one of the *politique's* noted *auteurs* or by one of their better known, and disputed, *metteur en scènes*; and,
- the scene should be an accepted and strong example of a classic generic template.

The chosen scene

The chosen scene was the opening scene from John Huston's adaptation of Dashiell Hammett's novel *The Maltese Falcon*. This was not a scene that provided an easily realised dramatic moment but I chose this film because it was a literary adaptation by a *metteur en scène*. Literary adaptations by *metteur en scène* directors were the focus of Truffaut's essay "*Une certaine tendance du cinema francais*" and were a continuing issue at *Cahiers*: the concern with whether or not the director had assumed authorship of the cinematic version rather than just transferred a novelist's, or scriptwriter's adapted, story to the screen. Huston, even though widely admired today, was considered by the original *Cahiers* group to be only a *metteur en scène* who merely transferred the script or novelist's story and world-view to the screen rather than being a true *auteur* (though there were subsequent dissenters from that view at *Cahiers*, such as Pierre Kast). In addition, *The Maltese Falcon* is acknowledged as a founding example of American cinema's adoption of the noir genre, and Humphrey Bogart – in one of his defining and iconic roles – is the leading man. These factors provided the opportunity to examine the *politique's* attitude to the meaning contributed by received audience expectations based on formal generic conventions and the presence of a significant – and signifying – major Hollywood star.

While I intended to shoot the scene in the noir style of Huston's film, to explore the influence of the conventions and stylistic marks of a generic template on the mise en scene, there was an additional purpose. The noir marks of generic style – high contrast lighting, oblique angles, deep shadows and half-lit bodies and faces – represented a world of pessimism, suspicion and gloom, of blurred moral and intellectual values, and of power

relations played out between male and female characters. [311] These characteristics were also representative of the world and inhabitants of Hammett's novel, and of my own reading of that novel's world and characters.

The experiment could not replicate the magnitude of a commercial, or even art-house, film set, but I judged that the production would still be sufficient to represent some of the complexities and problems encountered during any film production and also the numerous practical decisions to be made that can influence creative intentions. The following sections have been included to show just some of the production matters that had to be dealt with and to provide evidence that the experiment did, indeed, replicate sufficiently the practice of filmmaking.

Time and place

One of the first considerations after the scene had been chosen, was the physical and temporal setting: what would the scene look like and why and what was to be signified by time and place? I had to consider whether or not to retain the novel's historical point in time – the 1920s – or use that of Huston's film – the late 1930s/early 1940s – or even a more modern time frame. The question was whether or not the historical moment represented by the characters and plot had sufficient contemporary resonance. But changing the temporal setting could change the meaning signified by the different social, economic, political and moral dynamics observed, and this might also work against my narrative intentions. Changes to be considered would include those to the status and role of women in society and consequently to gender-based behaviour, or to communication patterns since the introduction of the mobile phone and the Internet. I considered these options only briefly as I judged that subsequent decades did not have the mood of mystery and unknown menace I felt was recognised in the years between the wars. The question of whether to set the scene on the cusp between the 1930s and 1940s, or in the 1920s, was answered for reasons of simple practicality: 1940s' costume and furniture were more readily available than those of the 1920s and with a small budget I had to choose the era most easily replicated. I also

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[311] Susan Hayward outlines these distinctive features of the genre in the section headed, "Film Noir," *Cinema Studies* 128-33.

considered setting the scene outside America but I judged that the story was too American in sensibility, style and location for it to be sited elsewhere.

Development and Construction of the Screenplay

I read Hammett's novel in full and then re-read the first scene several times, analysing each line of dialogue and description for authorial intention and meaning. I made initial decisions on what I would retain and what I would leave out as superfluous to the story I was to tell. I read Huston's script, which was a truncated version of the first scene as written in the novel. There was no alteration of the main narrative elements of plot event, structure and characters in that script, though the dialogue had been reduced and minimal changes made to that remaining. I then viewed, shot by shot, Huston's filmed scene. During this viewing I kept in mind the *politique's* distinction between an original script given to a director and the eventual screenplay used on set; and the requirement for the director to think through each scene in terms of the mise en scene and directorial intention. I broke down the scene, as written in the novel, into shots and sketched out a rough story-board of these shots, considering what was physically and technically achievable, and then wrote the first draft of my script based on that story-board. I reviewed and changed this script numerous times, returning repeatedly to the novel with the *politique's* requirement of a moral perspective informing the aesthetic style in mind; and so considered the moral perspective conveyed in the novel and then what was to be my moral perspective and point of view.

My eventual screenplay (Appendix 5) was little different to Huston's script in that I was, like Huston, not choosing to change the plot and re-assemble the events. Also, like Huston, I reduced the dialogue but made minimal changes to that which remained.[312] The fact that my script was little different to the scene in Hammett's novel (Appendix 3), in terms of the plot event and its chronology, the dialogue that remained, setting and characters, was important for my experimental purpose because it meant that any authorship I might achieve would result from authorship through the mise en scene and the resources available on-set and post production, rather than from the literary narrative elements authored by Hammett. That my script proved to be little different from Huston's was also important for my

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[312] I reasoned that Hammett's own experience as an operative for Pinkerton's detective agency in San Francisco before and after the First World War suggested the authenticity of the dialogue.

experimental purpose, as it meant that a comparison of how the scenes might have been "authored" by their directors could focus on authorship achieved through cinematic language.

This final pre-shoot script did not include camera directions and set-ups, as is typical, only the dialogue and a description of all that can be seen and heard on screen as part of the fictional world being portrayed – the diegesis. This script was only decided after I had discussed a draft, shot by shot, with the director of photography and we had considered each camera set-up. The director of photography gave advice on the shots he judged to be achievable with the resources at our disposal and suggested alternatives for those he considered were not achievable. Several changes were made to the script based on this advice. He then provided a shot-list based on our discussions – which I used to determine the final script prior to shooting the scene – and prepared what I believed would be the final screenplay. The director of photography then provided the shooting script (Appendix 6). Immediately prior to filming I provided the cast and crew with the full pre-shoot script introduced by a prologue outlining my creative intentions and my analysis of the characters and their motivation (Appendix 4).

Establishing the set: experience of material realities influencing creative intentions

Establishing the set – the search for a location, cast, crew, props, costumes, equipment and catering – provided immediate practical experience of the material reality of filmmaking, and of how, with this particular art form, practical necessities are also creative pre-requisites on which the creative act and its outcome depend. The goodwill and focused commitment of collaborators who were being asked to accept minimal payment was required, and it was clear that such matters as catering, and reasonable expenses for cast and crew, were necessary conditions for participation, whatever the budget.

Finding a location was a major difficulty that took many weeks to solve. I had too glibly assumed that the office setting would present no location difficulties despite the fact that the time frame was set in the early 1940s. This was not the case and there were numerous problems and considerations: the cost of hiring rooms; the fact that rooms in public

buildings have standard fire and safety features that cannot easily be disguised – such as signage around doors and windows; the presence of other modern features that would need to be removed and replaced – such as door handles, double glazing and lighting. Apart from the expense that these necessary changes would entail there was also the questions of whether or not permission would be granted by the buildings" owners to re-paint and change the rooms; the issue of a building's opening hours and of whether or not the location would be sufficiently secure to leave the set, including expensive equipment, in place ready for filming each day. There was the question of background noise: one or two rooms above pubs suitable for the scene looked out onto busy roads, and the constant traffic noise would have intruded on each and every scene and so would have made filming virtually impossible, day or night. In the end these issues were too problematic, and the potential cost too great for my budget, so a room in my house, located in a quiet street, was used for the scene and another room was used for make-up, hair and wardrobe.

Creative collaborators

I had determined that I would, replicate as far as possible, a working film set and this meant employing professional or semi-professional cast and crew for the shoot, not friends or volunteers, working to me as the director/producer, and an experienced editor working to my direction to edit the first cut. Four cast members were needed to play Sam Spade, Brigid O'Shaughnessy (also known as Miss Wonderly), Miles Archer and Effie Perine. The choice of cast and crew was limited as only minimal wages were on offer. I hoped, however, to still be able to employ a cast with not only acting ability but also the particular look and presence necessary to capture the sensibility of the characters as I envisioned them. Hiring crew with the necessary knowledge and training was particularly significant given the fact I had chosen to shoot in monochrome and set the scene in the 1940s. There was also the need to employ people with whom I could establish a working relationship conducive to creative collaboration.[313] The final crew employed on-set were: a director of photography, an art director, stills photographer/assistant to the art director, a sound recordist, two make-up and

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[313] For a cast, I sent out audition notices to the Nightingale Theatre Company, the Brighton Film School, and the Academy of Creative Training in Brighton, and posted notices in the Faculty of Arts and Architecture. An initial script, including a brief statement of my reading of the scene and the characters, was provided to all auditioning actors. For equipment and crew I contacted the Brighton Film School, Lighthouse at the Brighton Media Centre and staff in the Faculty of Arts and Architecture at the University of Brighton. This communication also included a summary of the scene and my intentions. Full details of the audition notices, and all cast and crew, are in Appendices 1 and 4.

hair crew, a gaffer, a stand-in gaffer for one day and, for part of the shoot, a production manager. All cast and on-set crew were chosen and employed by me and were paid either from the university grant or from my own funds. Post-production, the University of Brighton's senior production engineer and production engineer provided assistance with editing and post-production sound.

How the set was dressed, lit and filmed was crucial if it was to become a "character" within the mise en scene. The director of photography had been eager to shoot the scene, as I wished, in classic noir monochrome, but I was unsure if the high definition video camera he was using would adequately re-create that look; I was also unsure if he had sufficient experience to light the scene. He convinced me that he could achieve the style I wished and so the decision was made to shoot in the monochrome, noir aesthetic style. I provided a budget, props and costume lists to the art director, who was responsible for choosing the props and dressing the set and the actors, and advised her of the aesthetic look and ambience that I was hoping to achieve. Properly trained and equipped hair and make-up crew were also necessary to recreate an authentic visual representation of time, place and generic conventions. The two make-up and hair crew eventually hired were from the Brighton Film School.

Conclusion

With a grant jointly funded by the School of Arts and Communication and the Research Student Division of the Faculty of Arts and Architecture, supplemented with additional funds of my own, I was able to realise my intentions. The first piece of practice attempted was the experimental scene and the "shoot" took place over five days – from the 28th of January to the 3rd of February 2006. I filmed two versions of that first scene: the first with an untrained actor as Sam Spade, the second with a trained actor in the Spade role. The first version became a valuable "dress rehearsal" for the second. An initial edit of the scene was completed by May 2006. The final edit and surrounding cinematic essay was constructed from August 2007 to August 2008. The form and structure of the two pieces of practical work had evolved over the course of initial critical and theoretical research. This evolution continued as each piece of practice proved to be critical instances of research influencing my

ideas at the time and my subsequent conclusions. Eventually two cinematic essays, and not just the one, were produced: the first was "A cinematic definition of the *politique des auteurs*"; the second was "The *politique des auteurs* in practice" constructed around the experiment. Those two cinematic essays are the next chapters of this thesis and should be viewed before continuing with the written text.

Chapter 6: Presentation and discussion of results

Introduction

The intended outcome of the practice-based research was to be a cinematic essay in three parts: the first section would be a cinematic definition; the filmed experiment would provide the central section, and the third and final section would be a comparative analysis of the experimental scene against Huston's scene. By the end of the practical research, however, and its "write-up" in the editing suite there were two cinematic essays – not just the one – and the definition section became a separate introductory essay and companion piece to the text constructed around the filmed experiment. The intention changed as the definition proved to be so distinctively different from the other two sections. The experiment provided a means for interrogating specific "authoring" principles of the *politique*. The cinematic definition provided a means for interrogating the *politique* as a critical method for evaluating film as art. Consideration of this aspect of the *politique* had been a secondary consideration at the start of the project but came equally to the fore as a result of the wider focus of the definition, which included a visual analysis of films by *politique auteurs*. Those filmed essays were constructed as chapters of the overall thesis and the points made effectively in those texts are not repeated here. For instance, a comparative analysis of the two scenes – Huston's opening scene of *The Maltese Falcon* and my experimental version of that scene – has already been effectively articulated in the second cinematic essay, entitled "The *politique des auteurs* in practice" and is not repeated in this chapter.

The methodological strategy also changed. The intention had been to conduct a pre-determined participant-observation study structured around formal interviews with collaborators at specified points during the production. The results of those interviews were to act as an audit trail. But the nature of filmmaking does not easily allow for a clear linear structure and, consequently, this chapter is mostly a descriptive account of the many issues that arose during the experiment and how decisions on those issues affected the creative result. Included in some detail are the happenings on-set, prior to production and post-production. This detail, as that included in Chapter Three, provides evidence of how the experiment replicated filmmaking in practice, and included most elements of a typical

production. It is intended to show how a greater understanding of the possibilities for personal expression in cinematic form through application of the *politique des auteurs* was realised, even though creative decisions often depended on practical material considerations and collaborators' contributions.

The filmed experiment: the directorial challenge

The Director's task as I found it to be, and as proposed by the *politique*, is far more than deciding where to place the camera. This question is but one of many to be asked for each and every shot recorded on film, starting with the basic, most practical question: there must be a set and that set must include both the physical world to be captured on film and also the surrounding production environment, personnel and technical equipment necessary for capturing that world. There is then the question of how, within the camera frame, to represent that world – the diegesis: there is the challenge of how to narrate the story of that world in cinematic language – what cinematic codes and techniques to use and when; how to realise the aesthetic and moral universe – the mise en scene – of that story and that world with the resources – human, financial and plastic – that are available. My specific creative challenge was to take both Hammett's story and my adapted script as the blueprints for cinematically "re-writing" that story using the principles of the *politique des auteurs*.

There were also post-production creative decisions to make, the most significant of these in the edit suite, and this element of the process alone imposed much greater creative responsibility on me as a director than merely deciding where to place a camera. Some challenges were caused by the fact that I had to assume both production and directorial functions. By assuming both responsibilities I had direct experience of how the production environment, quite apart from the collaborative nature of film making, can also affect ownership of the creative act. This complicated the experiment but it also meant that I was treading the path of post-studio Hollywood and experiencing realities commonly faced by many directors today. I realised in practice some of the difficulties presented by that particular filmmaking environment – and that were considered during the round table discussion, "Questions about American Cinema: A Discussion", published in the December 1963/January 1964 edition of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, in which Chabrol, Godard, Rivette and

Truffaut took part.[314]   During this discussion they raised concerns about production responsibilities reducing a director's creative time and disturbing his or her focus – and I found this to be the case. The impact on creative time and intentions – and therefore the creative outcome – of the numerous practical considerations cannot be minimised, but they were not insurmountable.

Is the screenplay the primary narrative strategy or the literary "opportunity" for directorial authorship?

Little attention has been given to the *Cahiers* group's requirement for a director's profound and intense involvement with the script even if that involvement could assume a variety of forms – whether prior to shooting or as improvisation on the set itself – if that director was to be considered one of **their** *auteurs*. That involvement was necessary to think through scenes in terms of how they were to be portrayed through the mise en scene – and so how they were to be portrayed as perceived by the director – as previously discussed. The *Cahiers* group, however, spent little time elaborating this point and their statements about the script as the "opportunity" or the "pretext" for the film have often been misunderstood as dismissals of the script's importance to the creative process.

It soon became apparent that while the script provided the starting point for the creative process of cinematic narration, it was only a blueprint of written narrative intentions that provided material reassurance for those intentions, and further unwritten intentions, that developed during the filming. "Involvement with the script" proved to be far more than acquiring perception of the story and of the characters through its reading. That story and those characters had to be realised on screen and the visual representation of the script in the story-board, then the performance of the script on-set, were vital research stages for thinking through scenes in terms of the mise en scene and the outcome of that process. Consequently the "final" pre-shoot script was not the final version as changes were made on set, then re-considered in the edit suite, when the final text was constructed. While some changes were caused by practical difficulties, other changes occurred because the script became, in practice, a pathway for reflective interrogation of the narrative, of the characters, of the

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[314] Chabrol and others, "Questions About American Cinema" 172-80.

purpose of each line of dialogue, movement and action so that these elements could be understood sufficiently for signification on screen.[315] Each day, through reference to the generic template, and to creative collaborators, a more complete picture of the scene and the characters was formed than was anticipated at the beginning. This meant that narrative intentions, written or unwritten, changed, and as intentions changed so did the working out of the script and, ultimately, the final text recorded and then edited for the screen. During that process, the significance of the question about authorship through the mise en scene and the importance of characterisation as a narrative strategy became apparent and both offered reflective pathways throughout the filming.

Is literary authorship of the script "over-written" by directorial mise en scene authorship?

The validity of Truffaut's emphasis on the importance to think through scripted scenes in terms of the mise en scene became apparent from when I drew a rough story-board of the script. The story-board is a sketch of major or complicated shots – not necessarily all shots from each scene – that typically includes camera set ups, point of view and composition of the elements within the frame including notes about those elements.[316] I hoped that this visual representation was the better option for putting into practice my understanding of the *politique's* concept of mise en scene and its signifying codes based on form, rather than on subject or dialogue, and this proved to be the case. I discovered that, to create this visual outline of the script as my initial attempt to start visually "writing" the mise en scene on a blank screen, required an even greater depth of understanding of the story as a whole and of the characters, and of each of their stories within that whole. This information was required for me to decide what I wished to signify, and how, through cinematic codes and techniques. For without specifically cinematic articulation to form an expressive dynamic there remained, on paper, only words forming a series of static images interspersed with pieces of dialogue. Those words had to be translated, shot by shot, as textual layers of sounds and moving images composed of the human and plastic elements within the frame, perceived

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[315] One example of changes required for practical reasons was when there was a particular problem with the door into Spade's office: it looked far too much like a domestic door and not that for a private detective's office in early 1940s San Francisco, and so was inadequate for Brigid O'Shaughnessy's entrance. As a consequence, the scripted arrangement of shots for Brigid's entrance (illustrated in my storyboard) had to be re-thought and her opening shot became the moment she sat down at Spade's desk.

[316] For a more detailed description see David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 7th ed. (Boston, London: McGraw Hill, 2004) 26.

and positioned within that frame by the camera: had to become the mise en scene. Each layer of each shot was changeable until finally recorded.

I realised, however, at the end of the experiment that despite my intentions, I had not fully applied the *politique's* concept of mise en scene. I had not composed the constituent elements in each shot to form an expressive dynamic that directly represented my intentions and moral perspective. I did not pay enough attention to the environment created for the camera frame – despite the fact that this had been my intention. Consequently, I did not realise, sufficiently, the potential of the resources at my disposal for relating characters and objects to each other, and to their environment, to "tell" the narrative point and to reveal the interior world of the characters. The set became only a stylistic flourish, a use so deplored by the *auteurists*, and the plastic elements within the frame did not become narrative opportunities for conveying meaning.

One instance of this was my failure to convey the narrative point that "Corinne" was Brigid's metaphor for either the Maltese falcon artefact, or for herself and her predicament.[317]   I was unable to portray this point despite the fact I had the perfect prop to do so provided by the Art Director. That prop was a ring binder with the words "black bird" and the illustration of a black bird, stamped in the maker's logo on the spine of the binder. There were so many decisions to be made on-set, so many elements to consider when thinking through the cinematic techniques available, that this quite obvious detail was not used. I only realised the prop's narrative possibilities for conveying, cinematically, Brigid's state of mind and intentions to the audience after filming had finished and when reflecting on the experiment and its outcomes.

However, the **possibilities** of expression through the mise en scene were realised. The realisation that each shot as written in the script might contain the visual elements of time and place, of the participating characters and props, and in the shooting script, might suggest camera directions and movement. But how those elements are then staged within the frame as signifiers of narrative intention is open to the director to determine with the cooperation and contributions of the art director, director of photography, actors and editor. That staging

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[317] Ostensibly, the plot event is that Brigid wants to find and rescue her sister "Corinne" from the influence of a petty criminal and fraudster. Subsequently it is revealed that there is no Corinne.

provides the initial material context for what then becomes a continuing interrogation of the resulting synthesis of that plastic and human dynamic. This is when and how the mise en scene becomes an expressive form rather than just a recorded composition.

Is characterisation the crucial aspect of the mise en scene dynamic and the director's primary narrative strategy?

While I considered that I had not successfully used the resources at my disposal to compose a unified mise en scene expressing narrative intentions, I also considered that there had been a transfer of authorial voice – not merely an interpretation of the literary source. In addition, I considered that a comparison between Huston's scene and my experimental scene revealed two distinctly different stories on screen. I attributed that transfer and that difference to my characterisation of the protagonists. Prior to filming I had judged that characterisation was the director's primary narrative strategy within the *politique's* conception of mise en scene. It was the way the director could "talk" directly to the audience through the characters and their portrayal on screen. I considered this prior judgement to have been supported by the outcomes of the experiment.

My characterisations – in particular my portrayal of Brigid O'Shaughnessy and Sam Spade – had been the means for me to most directly signify my reading of those characters and so of their story. A crucial point was when I followed the *politique* principle of considering not what was happening to the characters but how they were responding to the event and to each other. I stopped reading the script and assumed the characters of Spade and Archer, while a collaborator assumed the characters of Brigid and Effie, and actually vocalised each line of the dialogue, actively searching for the motivation behind each statement. It was at this point I realised that Brigid's references to her "sister" Corinne" were, in fact, references to one of two things at different points in the script. I realised that at one point "Corinne" was Brigid's euphemism for the Maltese falcon, at another "Corinne" was Brigid's euphemism for herself and she was talking about her predicament at that moment.

Applying the *politique's* moral perspective I "researched" the characters equally and paid close attention to each one during the entire process of bringing the scene to the screen,

starting with the storyboard. I decided what to reveal of the characters' interior beings as I understood them, and then to tell those characters' stories cinematically. One consequence was that, when viewing the completed film, I realised that the narrative focus had shifted. My original intention had been to tell the story of Sam Spade – a critique of him as a human being – and to privilege his point of view; but the focus in the final version included Spade and Brigid O'Shaughnessy equally – not my conscious intention during the shoot. This outcome indicated that I had "researched through spectacle" and achieved a "finding" rather than presented a pre-determined judgement.

The creative process provided its own increasing momentum as the layers of the characters and plot were peeled back to their essentials. And it was during this process I encountered a paradox: in reducing the characters and the elements of their stories to what I believed were their essential properties I also uncovered their complexity as human beings and the complexity of their stories. The options for what I chose to introduce, emphasise, ignore of those characters and the convergence of their stories into this particular drama leading to death and betrayal were numerous, and the decisions on which of those options to choose were mine to make as the director.

How significant is the generic template for the creation of meaning?

There was a further realisation consequent on applying the *politique's* moral perspective. The generic code became a starting point for research of the characters rather than being a limitation. The generic characteristics of psychologically flawed, emotionally crippled and isolated individuals are standard narrative marks of the noir genre. My intention was not only to fully understand and narrate these generic narrative conventions anthropomorphised as the characters authored by Hammett, but also to present fully realised human beings from my perspective of them informed by those conventions. In practice, they provided reference points for me when I was researching the characters through writing and re-writing the script and, ultimately, through the act of cinematic enunciation when directing the actors.

During this stage, however, the question of the generic template's authoring significance was not adequately addressed. This was partly a consequence of my failure to form a

unified mise en scene, I did not employ the generic elements effectively within that composition for narrative expression. Therefore, my authorial intention to convey meaning by the visual effects specific to the genre was not realised. This was despite the fact I had paid great attention to the noir systems when setting up the experiment and requesting the visual codes and conventions of that genre from the director of photography. This failure was the result of my directorial naiveté and relative lack of experience and technique. But it was also the result of the experiment's brevity: one scene by itself is not sufficient to convey with any depth the inter-related network of narrative prompts and devices provided by a generic code. As a result, those generic conventions were present as mere stylistic flourishes of the type, once again, so deplored by the *politique* rather than being present as integral signifiers of meaning.

For example, one mark of film noir is high contrast lighting and deep shadows. I noticed that Brigid O'Shaughnessy's shadow on the wall gave the impression of a large bird of prey because of the shape of her hat, which in shadow resembled a bird's head and beak. I then wanted to maximise that effect and also match it with one provided by Spade's shadow, hopefully as the larger, more threatening, though currently dormant, bird of prey. I was, however, unable to do this because of the limitations of the set: Spade was sitting in front of a window and so could not cast a large shadow if the rules of cinematography were to be observed. I decided to dispense with those rules for my narrative purpose, even though the director of photography advised me against this decision on the grounds of realism. The resulting effect was still insufficient because a shadow deep enough to rival Brigid's could not be cast adequately against the window. In refusing to follow the rules of cinematography I was not refusing the rules of the *politique*, Truffaut had been but one of its authors who did not require technical excellence, but I did not also observe the corresponding requirement: authorship through the mise en scene and the "beautiful positioning of the figures within the frame." Aesthetically worse, while a visual mark of noir is fractured and unbalanced composition, that was not the effect achieved but more one of a set divided in two, so Brigid's shadow became little more than an interesting but insignificant lighting effect.

Is there a creative importance to what happens on set either because of the inspiration of the moment or last minute problems?

The idea of the realities of film making providing improvised creative opportunities, rather than literary and institutional restrictions to personal expression, was viewed by the *Cahiers* group as another element in a director's "fine writing" of the film's mise en scene. This proposition may well depend on the degree of experience a director has, but it was still a principle to be explored as it emphasised that group's insistence that the film, as scripted, is not the result but an opportunity, and the filming on set is the search for that opportunity and its outcomes. Last minute problems, such as those already mentioned, appear to be typical events on film sets – irrespective of budget, personnel, institutional setting or location – and they were very real practical issues with creative consequences during the experiment. These last minute problems did not all become creative opportunities and often it was merely a case of making do rather than being inspired by the moment. One example of when a last minute problem did not become a creative opportunity was when the second desk – Archer's desk – was too big to get through the door. Alternative shots to those decided in the original shot list had to then be thought through, not just in terms of Archer's movement and shots but also in terms of his relation to the other characters in the scene, and the meaning I was trying to convey through their relation to each other.

There were instances, however, when problems did become opportunities and provided inspiration. The most notable instance was when Spade's first shot, the opening image for the scene, had to be re-thought. I had envisaged this shot as a slow tracking movement approaching Spade at ground-level from a distance to mid-close-up; he was to be positioned in profile and in shadow. This composition was intended to present my reading of his character and motivation: the over-riding power he was capable of and would attain over the other protagonists despite his isolation, his moral malaise and troubled conscience. That shot could not be filmed as the room's dimensions were too small for laying camera tracks and the budget could not stretch, in any case, to hiring the necessary equipment. To overcome this difficulty I decided on an angled mid-close-up shot of Spade at his desk, fixed within the frame, in even deeper shadow. Once this shot had been framed and lit, I realised that it did, indeed, emphasise the characteristics I intended and I made the on-set decision to

use it not only as the opening shot but also for the opening credit sequence. This decision then led directly to the subsequent decision to re-arrange the whole scene as a credit sequence with Spade's image as the overlay for the other shots interspersed within it.

The role of the other collaborators on-set and post-production

In an essay entitled, "Revenge of the Author", Colin McCabe noted that, "…when, in the mid-eighties, I became actively involved in the making of films. The most general concern of the cast and crew of a film, not to mention the producer, is that the director know what film he is making, that there be an author on the set."[318] That statement not only reflects my experience during the experiment it also suggests that it is necessary to accord the director that status precisely because filmmaking is such a collaborative venture. The director provides a coherent starting point – and the continuing reference point – as there is no other figure with the function and authority to set the process in motion and then to make the decisions that will combine all the other contributed elements together in each shot to form the mise en scene. There is, however, a corresponding responsibility to that presumption of authorship. If the director is not able to carry the responsibility of that presumed role then, whatever his or her creative vision, control of the act of filmmaking has been relinquished.

Each and every collaborator on set, without exception, asked me the same questions "what do you want?" and "what are you trying to achieve?". This was so from the first person I hired, the director of photography, to the last – the hair and make-up crew; from when the actors first auditioned for their parts and requested an initial idea, to when they were given their scripts prior to the shoot and required more detail. I had the authority to decide what appeared in the frame and how; and the other collaborators worked to this direction. If I appeared unsure how to use the human and material resources at my disposal – and this was evident – then some offered advice based on their experience and expertise or on their aesthetic and narrative preferences. However, if a point of difference arose, a conflict about what shot was to be staged or how that shot was to be staged, then my decision was accepted as final – I found this to be the case with both cast and crew. While this might not always occur if powerful stars or producers are involved, it indicated that the professional norm is

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[318] Colin MacCabe, "The Revenge of the Author," *Film and Authorship*, ed. Virginia Wright Wexman 30.

for the director to be recognised as the authoring voice on set and is accorded the authority needed to exercise that function. Given this creative structure and practice, whatever cast and crew brought to the set – their talent, knowledge, experience, enthusiasm, professionalism – those contributions could be realised and enhanced, or negated and minimised, by my direction.

This does not mean that the "questioning mind" belongs solely to the director. I soon realised that a genuinely collaborative effort was required. Delineation of functions was important for this to occur so that each collaborator had the creative space they needed and "owned" by virtue of the particular expertise for which they had been employed. Once I had established the style and the substance of the scene to be filmed, the main collaborators then brought to that scene their specific knowledge, experience and taste, and contributed their ideas on how to achieve the film I wished to make. One instance of this was when the art director invited me to review a selection of costumes together with the actors. After one such collective gathering I decided to remove myself from the initial discussions while retaining final approval. I came to this decision because I felt my presence was not allowing the actors the room to start developing their own sense of the characters – starting with costume – in collaboration with the art director. It was also apparent to me that the art director had a more developed eye for how the costumes would appear on screen. After this decision, the art director discussed selected costumes with each actor in turn. I was consulted on each element, all available options and the others' decided preferences. I then made the final decision.

The actors had to have their own view and understanding of the roles they were to inhabit on screen. Their first question was "what was to be achieved?" They then started to develop their understanding of the characters to be played and how they wished those characters to be represented with the costumes. Most offered ideas on how best to portray narrative points concerning their characters, and I took a number of these individual ideas on board. One instance was when the actor portraying Miles Archer suggested that, after seeing Miss Wonderly out, he would turn and take the money off the desk and hand Spade his share, as this action would indicate both his dislike for Spade and his attempt to assume control.

Filming the replacement opening shot of Spade illustrated how the director can have the authorising voice, even when dependent on more experienced collaborators with the particular expertise only they can bring to the table. The director of photography had just set up the lighting and camera for a shot in the scene and was ready to film when I changed my mind. This change was not based on any carefully thought through idea – only intuition, disgruntlement that something wasn't right, and that the shot agreed to start the day's filming "said" nothing and could be filmed later. I felt strongly that I had to do something to find my "voice" at that moment and decided to go with the replacement opening shot I had drafted. Despite his obvious annoyance at the sudden change to the agreed day's shooting, the director of photography re-lit and re-framed the shot as I wished, changing his carefully arranged set-up. Needless to say, I gained not only an appreciation of my collaborators' functions on set but a respect for their professionalism and the degree to which they had placed their talents and time at my disposal with no real knowledge or guarantee that repayment would come in the form of a finished film, and one which fully realised each of their contributions as a coherent and aesthetically successful narrative whole.

Editing the scene

Editing as a factor in cinematic authorship was not addressed in the experiment's stated research questions. It soon became apparent, however, that the function editing can play does raise questions for the *politique des auteurs* as a method for authorship through the mise en scene, and how editing can improve on the narration already attempted through the mise en scene. It is at this stage the take to be edited is chosen, and the final layers are composed and added: the final edited visual layer of the film, and the final layer of sound – both diegetic and non-diegetic. The director is customarily allowed to decide the "first cut" and for the purpose of my experiment I needed to replicate as much as possible the usual industry process.[319] Therefore, the University of Brighton's Senior Production Engineer adopted the editor's function and assembled the first cut working to my requirements.

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[319] "The editor also works with the director to make creative decisions about how the footage can best be cut together", Bordwell and Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 30. The interviews with Mike Ellis and Mike Figgis confirmed that, typically, the director is allowed to compose the first cut.

I put together an edit script choosing, on the editor's advice, three takes of each shot I wished to include. After I had presented the editor with my edit script she attempted an initial rough edit from which we would work. I asked if her choices had been for technical and narrative consistency and logic, or for reason of her subjective taste and preference. In all cases except one the reason was based on technical and narrative consistency and logic. In any event, she then re-edited the piece to my instructions, working side-by-side with me. I took account of her advice but, as with all other collaborators, there was an acceptance that the scene was my piece of work for which she was providing the technical expertise. The final edit script (Appendix 7) included more than three choices of each shot as I was unsure which I would prefer when the whole scene had been assembled and I could see shots in chronological and narrative sequence. I considered that, until I had seen shots in narrative sequence, and in relation to each other, I could not visualise how they would work as a sequential whole rather than as individual moments in isolation. I needed to view that developing performance to know if the narration, as opposed to the story, had been dramatically effective and authorial intentions realised, or not. In this respect, editing corresponds more to its literary namesake and is not so much where the creative act is authored but where the narrative is coherently assembled. It corresponds more to how the language is made more grammatically coherent, how chapters are arranged in a book and then how the pages are turned.

The importance of technique and experience became particularly apparent during the editing because at that stage I realised what had or hadn't been achieved on film. The first complete edit of the full scene (Appendix 10) revealed the consequence of not achieving a unified expression through the mise en scene. There is no dramatic urgency to this first edit and little sense of my directorial narrative intentions. Following what proved to be a preview audience, composed of fellow students and faculty staff, some noted that they found the characterisation confusing and were not clear whether Miles Archer was the predator and Miss Wonderly the prey or the reverse. Simply following the novel's – and adapted script's – temporal frame, narrative structure and language-based narrative strategies of dialogue and description did not guarantee a successful cinematic narration. Similarly, editing as simply coherent articulation was not sufficient for a successful dramatic performance given the poor mise en scene. The only solution was further editing – as re-shooting the scene was not

possible – this time using editing techniques for signification, not only coherent articulation. Such techniques included putting extra-diegetic features into the scene for dramatic and narrative effect.

But, even though non-diegetic music was added as a soundtrack for both dramatic emphasis in general, and to signify specific narrative points in particular, and even though the timing of shots were slowed down for narrative effect; those effects, and the other techniques used in the edit suite, could only be applied to the pieces of film available, that was the source material; and that source material was the result of a composed mise en scene. This would suggest that how well the director has expressed his or her ideas through that composition will determine whether or not editing can enhance, subvert or merely articulate coherently those intentions. But whether or not editing is only an interpretative and emphasising stage – similar to the literary editor – and not a stage at which something entirely new can be created needs further investigation.

The cinematic definition

The cinematic definition provided several findings that informed the research outcomes of the experiment. The analysis of *They Live by Night* (Nicholas Ray, 1948) in the definition illustrated how poor editing need not diminish the director's expression through the mise en scene. The validity of the *Cahiers* group's principle that the screenplay is the opportunity for directorial authorship was illustrated during the analysis of Robert Bresson's *Les dames du Bois de Boulogne/Ladies of the Bois de Boulogne* (Robert Bresson, 1945). That scene revealed how two simple lines of dialogue uttered by two characters during an early plot event could be transformed into a cinematic moment of great dramatic power and beauty.

Further evidence was also provided for suggesting the primacy of characterisation within the mise en scene dynamic for directorial authorship and expression of a world-view. Most of the filmed excerpts shown and analysed included characterisation as a primary element; but the comparative analysis of the differences between the characterisations of Marion Crane in Hitchcock's *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960), and in Gus Van Sant's later version – *Psycho* (Gus Van Sant, 1988), provided particular insight. The analysis of those scenes uncovered the narrative intelligence of Hitchcock's direction as he unified characterisation with the

other elements of the mise en scene – such as camera movement and set decoration – to express directorial intentions. Gus Van Sant, however, did not unify all the elements of the mise en scene as a coherent whole so there was not the same sense of a moral – or other – perspective on the scene. The set appeared merely as the backdrop and the camera movement merely showed, it did not "tell". This supported the finding that characterisation could be the primary element for directorial authorship through the character's agency, but also clarified my prior judgement that the *auteur* is a duality – both author of the work and a cinematic artist expressing ideas and perception through unified cinematic form. (I had failed to fully express narrative intentions through a composed and unified mise en scene and so did not achieve the second part of that duality).

There were two other significant outcomes. Coherent cinematic interrogation of the *politique's* concepts and critical methodology was required for a successful cinematic definition, and a coherent cinematic articulation of the findings of that interrogation. But, something else was also required. I realised during the process that to hold the audience's attention and "stitch" the viewer into the narrative, the definition I had to present the essence of the *politique des auteurs*; it could not be only a summary of the main principles. Such a cinematic discourse would not allow for semantic obfuscation or for any confusion of ideas or expression hidden behind complex academic language. The *politique*, and my analysis of it, would either prove valid on screen or weaknesses and failings would be exposed. The definition took many months to conceive and produce, many transformations through re-editing the chosen material and that process became a form of reflective practice. During this process Bergman's "third dimension" was revealed, "The primary factor in film is the image, the secondary factor is the sound, the dialogue and the tension between these two creates the third dimension."[320] The symbiosis implied by that statement was exposed: the narration could do no more than introduce an image – or remind the audience of a point – as complex verbosity soon became tedious, but the image was then required to do more than just illustrate; it had to be able to offer the further, more detailed, explanation of that narrated introduction. Editing became an important part of this process. Numerous edits had to be discarded because they had, in effect, only listed principles without sufficiently building images, words and sounds in layers upon each to achieve that third dimension.

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[320] Ingmar Bergman's quote cited in *Image, Sound and Story: The Art of Telling in Film*, by Cherry Potter (London: Secker and Warburg, 1990) 6.

There was also a "rhythm" required: show an image too soon or too long after its introduction and the mind of the audience is either still on the previous image or has lost focus while waiting for the visual explanation to appear on screen. If these mis-timings continued then coherence and unity, were lost, as images and words no longer combined to signify and detail, but to confuse.

The second significant outcome was provided by the comparative analysis of films by Howard Hawks and Alfred Hitchcock, and of Hitchcock's *Psycho* against Gus Van Sant's version. Those comparisons showed that, when the director is an *auteur*, stylistic and thematic consistencies composed within the mise en scene, and expressed through it, are not mere repetition, but reveal the author embedded within the text, not only the narrator of that text. The analysis of the scenes directed by Howard Hawks showed how thematic consistencies realised through the characters, and other elements of the mise en scene, were Hawks's "signature on screen" identifying his world-view. That identification could be made, despite the fact that the two scenes analysed – *Red River* (Howard Hawks, 1948) and *The Big Sleep* (Howard Hawks, 1946) – were produced at different studios, with different "star" actors, within different generic templates and with scripts from different literary sources and adapted by different writers. The analysis of Hitchcock's films – *Rebecca* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1940) and *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) – included a greater emphasis on how visual stylistic consistencies – such as camera movement – expressed thematic constants and a perception of the world on screen. This supported the *politique's* emphasis on the primacy of form for expressing content: how visual style could be conceived as a way of seeing the world on screen; or, in the words of Rossellini – could be a moral position realised as an aesthetic style. The analysis of the final scene from Rossellini's *Roma, città aperta/Rome, Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945), also revealed the director embedded within the text and also provided evidence, as did the other *auteur* texts included in the definition, that the *politique des auteurs* did not remove an evaluation of cinema from "the realm of social and political concern". This is because, in providing a method for personal expression through cinematic form, the *politique* provided the means for the director to present his or her view on social and political issues of significance to them: to "speak in the first person".

The presentation of Rossellini's scene of a priest's execution by a firing squad composed of soldiers in Mussolini's army during the Second World War is based on an analysis of Bazin's concept of cinematic realism. Before starting the practice-based research I had not fully grasped that concept and the significance of Bazin's stress on the "fact" as the "unit of cinematic narrative", rather than the "shot". It was only after I had completed the visual analysis of that scene that I more fully comprehended his belief that "facts" promoted the "creation of a sense of meaning objectively contained in the images themselves" and what they revealed of reality. Rossellini framed the scene to include the characters in full, their relation to each other and to the setting, and support Bazin's thesis that the ambiguity of reality can be shown by directors who rely on "facts" composed within the mise en scene as the unit of cinematic narrative rather than "shots" composed of everything that "plastics and montage can add to a given reality" and that impose an "interpretation of an event on the spectator".[321]

Conclusion

The filmed experiment was the opportunity to directly address whether or not the *politique des auteurs* provided a heuristic method for reflective practice through an understanding, and application, of their concepts of *auteur* and mise en scene. The conclusion is that the *politique* is of particular significance for the practitioner because it does provide such a method. The cinematic definition provided the opportunity to reconsider whether or not the *politique* was a critical method for uncovering the genius of the artist within the genius of the system. The evidence would support the conclusion that it did. Both cinematic essays also provided the opportunity to consider practice-based investigation as a method for academic research. For me, that method posed a contradiction that then formed a dialectic. The academic aim required quite distinctive and different paradigms and articulation to the creative practice. Creativity required an intuitive emotional, and not always rational, evaluation of the material; the academic required a clear critical understanding; and, always, a rational analysis and evaluation of the material. This contradiction provided a constant challenge but also provided evidence for considering the resulting text as an organic unity. With the cinematic definition in particular, both sets of paradigms had to synthesise and become integrated into a coherent and articulate whole.

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[321] Bazin, "The Evolution of the Language of Cinema" 26.

The filmed experiment also suggested that to talk of, and evaluate, a cinematic work as an organic unity may not be only a Romantic fiction as suggested by Colin McCabe in "The Revenge of the Author", "The experience of production relations within a film makes clear how one can award an authorial primacy to the director without adopting any of the idealist pre-suppositions about origin or homogeneity which seem to arise unbidden in one's path."[322] In such a collaborative and multi-layered enterprise as filmmaking, the numerous elements and layers of textual transfer do have to be brought together as a coherent and dramatically effective unity. The director's role is to achieve, originate, that unity. But whatever answers were found, one particular question for intending cinematic artists remains: is it only an *auteur* defined by the *politique* who can be labelled the **specifically cinematic** artist, and is the mise en scene the only definition of **specifically cinematic** form?

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[322] MacCabe, "The Revenge of the Author" 36.

Conclusion: Author, artist, *auteur*

Throughout this PhD I have often felt like Theseus in the Minotaur's labyrinth, progressing with the most uncertain of steps in the dark. I headed down theoretical tunnels that, while providing a little more knowledge and understanding to guide my steps, often led to overwhelming caverns filled with echoing arguments of "dead" authors but live "subjects", and of cinema as no more than an anonymous textual product of a theoretical construct or a signifying practice. These were caverns leading away from my intended path and so requiring a turning back, a careful retracing of steps, that often then led down another path to another echoing cavern. All the while I was desperately clinging to a thin thread of hope, and intention, to find the path out to a world of authors and artists: to a world of *auteurs*. That thread to the outside world was the *Cahiers* group's policy for cinematic authors – the *politique des auteurs*: a policy that conceived cinema as a vehicle for personal directorial expression irrespective of material considerations. The *politique's* authors had a "point of departure" – François Truffaut's *"Une certaine tendance du cinema francais"* – and Truffaut also provided my point of departure out of the labyrinth:

> But the qualities of this film ... cannot possibly be seen by anyone who has never ventured a look through a camera eye-piece. We flatter ourselves – and it is in this that we are opposed to another form of criticism – that we are able to retrace the origins of cinematic creativity.[323]

So I ventured to look through the camera eye-piece to retrace the origins of cinematic creativity. That was my starting point and also my challenge: by applying the principles of the *politique* when observing, participating in and analysing production of the cinematic text, I hoped to establish how cinema could be conceived as the aesthetic outcome of an *auteur's* creative intentions. My venture through the camera eye-piece took the form of a filmed experiment to test the *politique* as a vehicle for personal directorial expression, and then a cinematic definition to interrogate the *politique*'s defining concepts of *auteur* and mise en scene. Those films were a search to find the *Cahiers* group's idea of film. This chapter concludes that search and what was found.

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[323] Truffaut, "A Wonderful Certainty" 107.

The term search is apt because it presumes that intentions may not be realised as outcomes are unknown, and this occurred with both the experimental scene and the cinematic definition of the *politique*. Those two films were crucial pieces of research as well as products of that research. Outcomes were realised as much through the practice as through reflecting on the results of that practice: comparing what was intended and attempted with what was achieved. That comparison promoted an understanding of the limits and possibilities of the seventh art form as defined in the *politique des auteurs*. Through producing those films the multi-layered complexity of forces and elements that form the cinematic text became evident. That the text is as much a creative process forming, as a creative result of, the act of cinematic enunciation on screen, also became evident.

Attempting that act of enunciation presented a further challenge, one identified by Alexandre Astruc in 1948. Astruc advised that, "The fundamental problem of the cinema is how to express thought".[324] For the *politique des auteurs* requires that expression of thought: it is not a passive method for cinematically reconstructing another author's ideas and perspective on the world, but a "policy" or "politics" of authorship that demands a director "speak in the first person" through cinematic form.[325] To be a director who speaks in the first person is to have something to say, and for the *Cahiers* group that something was expression of a particular "world-view" representing the director's dialogue with society. Cinematic expression through the principles of the *politique des auteurs* **must** become the filmmaker's dialogue with society or that filmmaker is only a *metteur en scène* who does no more – however expertly – than transfer a plot to the screen. That dialogue, however, has not to be ideologically or theoretically inspired. It has to be the outcome of the director's personal research of the world, through the spectacle of cinema, and attempted engagement with it.

Research through spectacle is a concept key to understanding the *politique des auteurs*, it was how Jean-Luc Godard typified his idea of cinema. Godard was referencing Truffaut at the time, but that concept was expressed in various forms by the other members of the *Cahiers* group: Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette and Eric Rohmer. They believed that an

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[324] Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant-Garde: *La Caméra Styló*" 20.
[325] Andre Bazin citing Jacques Rivette's description of an *auteur* as someone "who speaks in the first person": Bazin, "On the *Politique des Auteurs*" 255.

auteur conducted that research, and held that dialogue, primarily through a story's characters dressed in the spectacle of cinema: the spectacle of a gangster, a secret agent, cowboys and wise-cracking dames, characters of desperate and lonely outsiders and of those who loved them. These were characters as desperate and lonely as Cocteau's beast in a fairytale; a fairytale that became a portrayal of authentic reality – however spectacularly dressed and presented – because that fairytale beast was the sincere expression of the *auteur's* world view formed by witnessing life as lived. That is the moral perspective grounding the *politique's* idea of characterisation and the particular world-view they favoured. It was the moral perspective of getting to know and understand the characters as human beings through development and production of the filmic text. It was not to figure them merely as vehicles of received audience expectations within known generic stereotypes or as dictated by ideology, theory or an admired literary patrimony.

My particular spectacle was Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon*, and the characters of that story were a private eye and the femme fatale who has murdered his partner in her desire for the golden and bejewelled artefact called the "Maltese falcon". I perceived that artefact in Hitchcockian terms, as the "MacGuffin". This is a narrative device for telling the real story. In *The Maltese Falcon*, the real story is one of two people who may or may not have fallen in love, who do not appear to have the capacity to love and so do not have the capacity for change and redemption. They were characters who, when tested, would betray and sacrifice each other. That was my reading of Hammett's narrative. I then applied the moral pre-requisite of the *politique's* – and Bazin's – concept of cinematic realism: the pre-requisite that each character should not be reduced to the "… condition of an object or a symbol that would allow one to hate them in comfort without having first to leap the hurdle of their humanity".[326] With that deeper moral perspective in mind I was able to inscribe my conception of the characters as human beings on screen and so, I hope, have been the author of that film and that story: have spoken cinematically on screen.

But, speaking in the first person cinematically is a particular challenge for a novice director, such as myself. I was a stranger on set with little experience of cinematic techniques and language, and so little experience of their possibilities as codes of signification. That is

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[326] Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality" 21.

when the importance of the *politique's* specificity as a creative paradigm for intending cinematic artists became apparent. The more theoretical paradigms provided by academe could not be used for creative cinematic expression: on set, pre-production, in the edit suite. At no time standing on set was there any creative purpose (though there might have been a sociological purpose) in asking which academic paradigm I might fit within. There was no creative purpose in asking myself – or my collaborators – whether or not I was a subject position in, or effect of, the text, and, if so, then how had I been structured or positioned. There was, however, a purpose to asking myself if I was adhering to the *politique's* concept of an *auteur*. In asking that question I was asking if I had achieved a duality: both the author of the film – as site of meaning in the work, and the cinematic artist – because I had signified that meaning through cinematic form. For the *Cahiers* group identified that form: they identified **specifically** cinematic form – the mise en scene, and, with that identification, they identified the means of expression for those of us wishing to be cinematic artists.

I believed that characterisation was the *Cahiers* group's primary vehicle within the mise en scene complex for the director's "speech" in the first person and I judged that I had achieved "authorship" of the text through my characterisation.[327] But I realised that authorship through characterisation alone was not sufficient to be an *auteur* and expression through a unified mise en scene is required if the second aspect of the *auteur* duality is to be achieved. The mise en scene – the world within the camera frame – is composed of all the elements both plastic and human that make up that world. These are the director's "paint box": the acting, the lighting, the camera movements and framing, the sets and decoration. They are all resources at the director's disposal to be organised and composed as an expressive dynamic within the cinematic space on screen that is the director's blank canvas. Characterisation is still but one element – however important – of that expressive dynamic. The analysis of the scene from Hitchcock's *Psycho* in the cinematic definition revealed how Hitchcock's characterisation of Marion Crane was supported by the other elements to achieve a unified mise en scene. This unity, however, was not achieved during the filmed experiment when the distance between understanding a concept and applying that concept in practice was exposed. The result was that editing then became an important tool for conveying directorial intentions.

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[327] "The position of the author" as an essential element "developed through the characters directly presented": Chabrol, "Serious Things"137.

The conception of the *auteur* as a duality supposes that a director's collaborators throughout the creative process – my collaborators contributing each element to the mise en scene during the filmed experiment – cannot be deemed *auteurs*. While each might become the author of the film if his or her individual contribution became the primary signifier of meaning in the text, none could be the *auteur* because none had the function to unify all of those elements, all individual significations, to compose the mise en scene as a coherent and cinematically articulate perception of the world on screen. This conception of the director's collaborators and their contributions was considered during the experiment and also during the cinematic definition. The outcomes from both pieces of work supported that conception. An analysis of films directed by Howard Hawks, and by Alfred Hitchcock, revealed thematic and stylistic consistencies in those films despite different collaborators, genres and studios. The finding from the filmed experiment was that, while each collaborator was as important as the other for production of the filmed text, only I, as the director, had the organising and authorising function to compose those contributions into a unified whole. This is not to deny the crucial contributions they make or the director's dependence on those contributions. Most of my collaborators were more experienced practitioners than me and I depended not only on the individual elements they were contributing to the text; I also depended on their knowledge, experience and advice to achieve the creative outcome I had envisaged. But as the director, I was the initial and constant reference point. Therefore, I had the authority to authorise action and to decide the form and content of each of their contributions to the mise en scene. It is by virtue of this organising and authorising function that the director can be characterised as a solitary figure standing before a blank page and the other collaborators cannot.

The contribution of the scriptwriter was a particular focus of the *Cahiers* group. The scriptwriter as the author of the script – the initial textual layer – was not accorded *auteur* status by that group. That denial of the writer has often been misunderstood as a denial of the script's contribution to the cinematic text; but that was not the case. The group may not have accorded the scriptwriter *auteur* status but they believed the script was the "opportunity" for the film and an important stage of the creative process. Therefore, they emphasised the director's necessary involvement with the script. Whether the director had

written that script, or been handed it by a producer, the director was required to think through the scripted scenes in terms of the mise en scene to then be able to "over-write" those scenes – signify them – in cinematic language. This perspective was considered during the filmed experiment and it soon became apparent that the script did not constitute the cinematic narrative but was an initial layer of text open to continuous change. Every narrative feature in the form of plot, dramatic arc, subject, themes and characters was seemingly provided to "tell" the story on screen. But cinematic narrative systems and strategies were used to compose those elements into an expressive whole and then to signify particular details of them; while other of those details were omitted from the final film. These omissions and significations "over-wrote" the meaning signified in the script.

Another important finding was the judgement that the very complexity of the collaborative and multi-layered enterprise of filmmaking necessitates a direct relationship between the director and the work to be established; and for the director to have a formal authoring function, even if the material reality of the conditions of production make identifying that function difficult. Within such a collaborative practice, and with so many layers and elements to be brought together, there must be a person who has the necessary connection with the work and all those constituent parts of it, to achieve a unified whole. Even when the text is a "documentary" style definition it is still a dynamic composition. It is a text composed of layers of textual material both visual and audio. These layers represent ideas and emotions that need to be composed into a grammatically coherent and dramatically effective whole. This also suggests that it is appropriate to evaluate a film as an organic unity, and that it is appropriate to evaluate the individual responsible for achieving that unity on how narratively and aesthetically successful he or she has been in terms of the chosen art form.

This thesis has been a reconsideration of the *politique des auteurs* primarily to promote a wider reconsideration of the policy in academe. The literary research revealed misunderstandings and misconceptions about the *politique*. The dual nature of the *auteur* – as defined by the *Cahiers* group – was clarified. A different understanding of that group's attitude to the literary patrimony; and to the function of the script as a stage in the creative process, proposed. The primacy of characterisation within the mise en scene dynamic

identified; with the proviso that authorship through that element alone is not sufficient to satisfy the duality required of an auteur. The cinematic definition provided evidence that the *politique des auteurs,* is a critical method for uncovering the genius of the artist within the genius of the system. The filmed experiment provided evidence that the *politique* offers a heuristic method for reflective practice through an understanding, and application, of their concepts of *auteur* and mise en scene.

A further contribution, I hope, will be the transferability of my chosen method to other practice-based projects. That method was to propose a quasi-hypothesis and then construct a practice-based experiment to test it. The combination of creative practice within an academic context proved to be an acutely reflective process. One outcome was the realisation that reflective practice can lead to the making of a better film. Another outcome was to question if the *Cahiers* group's definition of mise en scene as specifically cinematic form is the only possible definition. The finding that editing can be used to signify, not only coherently articulate, narrative intentions presented questions about the function and importance of the editing's possible contribution to meaning in the text. Further reflection on the production of *The Maltese Falcon* experimental scene also suggested that editing – as the primary narrative strategy – may not be sustainable over an entire film, and a unified mise en scene may need to be the primary narrative source.

There is a need to investigate these findings further for they present bigger questions than asking whether or not an editor helps the director "write" the scene, or whether the edit is taken out of the director's hands. The bigger question is whether editing's modes of signification only ever assemble and perfect something already written, or can be used to "over-write" the text irrespective of who is the editor; and irrespective of how well the mise en scene has been composed by the director. It is to investigate another way to evaluate film as art because editing is a cinematic technique and cannot be dismissed, as was the script-writing function, as non-cinematic and therefore not cinematically defining.

A comparative analysis of a film representing authorship primarily through the mise en scène, with another representing authorship primarily through Eisenstein's montage theory and practice might provide initial answers. The montage theory relies on editing rather than

the composition of the mise en scene for expressing meaning and directorial intentions and Eisenstein's *Bronenosets Potemkin/The Battleship Potemkin* (Sergei Eisenstein, 1925) represents his theory and practice. Rossellini's *Roma, città aperta/Rome, Open City* represents authorship primarily through the mise en scene. There is a scene from each film that is of particular interest to me. The *Bronenosets Potemkin/The Battleship Potemkin* scene is the slaughter of citizens by Tsarist soldiers during the Odessa Steps sequence. The scene from *Roma, città aperta/Rome, Open City* is the final sequence portraying the execution of a priest by a firing squad composed of young soldiers in Mussolini's fascist army during the Second World War. Both scenes show the execution of citizens by soldiers of an oppressive state; but Rossellini's is an aesthetic portrayal of a moral perspective, while Eisenstein's is an aesthetic portrayal of an ideology. Both the mise en scene and the editing of those two films and those two scenes would be cinematically analysed to discover the "how" of each. For the *politique des auteurs* offered the cinematic artist the "how" of cinematic expression and so did Eisenstein. An analysis of these scenes could provide initial research material, but it would not be sufficient to research the creative origins of each policy. To answer the questions: is it only an *auteur* defined by the *politique* who can be labelled the **specifically cinematic** artist, and is the mise en scene the only definition of **specifically cinematic** form, requires production of a cinematic text – in full. Producing and directing a feature length film is necessary to test these questions.

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Sam Spade (Alan Gilchrist) and Miss Wonderly/Brigid O'Shaughnessy (Alex Childs) on
The Maltese Falcon set. Dir. Rosalie Greener. (2006)

AUDITIONS

I am auditioning in Brighton for actors to appear in a scene for a short film I will be shooting in Brighton the week of 12 December as part of my PhD. The scene will be shot with a professional set decorator, director of photography and sound recordist. The rest of the crew will be mostly professional or semi-professional.

The auditions will be filmed and are being held the afternoon of Friday 25th November and the afternoon of Tuesday 29th November in central Brighton.

The scene will be a different version of the first scene from John Huston's The Maltese Falcon set in an office, early 1930s, San Francisco and there are 4 characters.

Sam Spade - male, thirties, slim - private detective, "world weary" has a rigid code of honour but few morals. Would be needed for up to four days filming plus a day for rehearsal paid at a rate of £25 per day to a maximum of £200.

Miss Wonderly/Brigid O'Shaughnessy - female, mid-twenties to early thirties, slim – femme fatale/fraudster/thief/murderess and greedy. Would be needed for three to four days of filming plus a day for rehearsal at a rate of pay of £25 per day to a maximum of £150.

Miles Archer - male, mid to late forties, heavy build - a not too bright private detective and Spade's partner - also identified as the fall guy by Miss Wonderly by the end of the scene. Would be needed for 1 to 2 days filming plus a day for rehearsal at a rate of £25 per day to a maximum of £70.

Effie Perine – twenties to thirties – playful, efficient and with a crush on Spade. Would be needed for only 1 day and will be paid £50.

If anyone is interested then can they send an e-mail requesting further information, together with a CV and a photograph, to r.greener@brighton.ac.uk or call (01273) 601533.

Cast and Crew for *The Maltese Falcon*

Director/Producer/Editor

Rosalie Greener

Cast

Alan Gilchrist (Sam Spade)
Alex Childs (Miss Wonderly)
Nick Johnstone (Miles Archer)
Jennifer Rowe (Effie Perine)
James Paul ("Rehearsal" Sam Spade)

Crew

Evan Pugh (Director of Photography)
Lorna Gay Copp (Art Director)
Tom White (Sound Recordist)
Charlotte Harley (Production Manager)
Alex Niakaris (Gaffer/Runner)
Alan Henning (Stand-in Gaffer/Runner 3rd February)
Tracy Leeming (Make-up/Hair)
Louise Harker (Make-up/Hair)
Elizabeth Frank (Asst. to Art Director/Stills)

Post-production

Janette Grabham (Senior Production Engineer)
Phil Riley (Production Engineer)

Crew for Defining *la politique*: a cinematic definition and The *Politique* in Practice

Narration

Gratia Churchill

Post-production

Janette Grabham (Senior Production Engineer)
Phil Riley (Production Engineer)

Appendix 3: Excerpt from Dashiell Hammett's the novel *The Maltese Falcon*

1 Spade & Archer

Samuel Spade's jaw was long and bony, his chin a jutting v under the more flexible v of his mouth. His nostrils curved back to make another, smaller, v. His yellow-grey eyes were horizontal. The v *motif* was picked up again by thickish brows rising outward from twin creases above a hooked nose, and his pale brown hair grew down – from high flat temples – in a point on his forehead. He looked rather pleasantly like a blond satan.

He said to Effie Perine: 'Yes, sweetheart?'

She was a lanky sunburned girl whose tan dress of thin woolen stuff clung to her with an effect of dampness. Her eyes were brown and playful in a shiny boyish face. She finished shutting the door behind her, leaned against it, and said: 'There's a girl wants to see you. Her name's Wonderly.'

'A customer?'

'I guess so. You'll want to see her anyway: she's a knock-out.'

'Shoo her in, darling,' said Spade. 'Shoo her in.'

Effie Perine opened the door again, following it back into the outer office, standing with a hand on the knob while saying: 'Will you come in, Miss Wonderly?'

A voice said, 'Thank you,' so softly that only the purest articulation made the words intelligible, and a young woman came through the doorway. She advanced slowly, with tentative

1

steps, looking at Spade with cobalt-blue eyes that were both shy and probing.

She was tall and pliantly slender, without angularity anywhere. Her body was erect and high-breasted, her legs long, her hands and feet narrow. She wore two shades of blue that had been selected because of her eyes. The hair curling from under her blue hat was darkly red, her full lips more brightly red. White teeth glistened in the crescent her timid smile made.

Spade rose bowing and indicating with a thick-fingered hand the oaken armchair beside his desk. He was quite six feet tall. The steep rounded slope of his shoulders made his body seem almost conical – no broader than it was thick – and kept his freshly pressed grey coat from fitting very well.

Miss Wonderly murmured, 'Thank you,' softly as before and sat down on the edge of the chair's wooden seat.

Spade sank into his swivel-chair, made a quarter-turn to face her, smiled politely. He smiled without separating his lips. All the v's in his face grew longer.

The tappity-tap-tap and the thin bell and muffled whir of Effie Perine's typewriting came through the closed door. Somewhere in a neighboring office a power-driven machine vibrated dully. On Spade's desk a limp cigarette smoldered in a brass tray filled with the remains of limp cigarettes. Ragged grey flakes of cigarette-ash dotted the yellow top of the desk and the green blotter and the papers that were there. A buff-curtained window, eight or ten inches open, let in from the court a current of air faintly scented with ammonia. The ashes on the desk twitched and crawled in the current.

Miss Wonderly watched the grey flakes twitch and crawl. Her eyes were uneasy. She sat on the very edge of the chair. Her feet were flat on the floor, as if she were about to rise. Her hands in dark gloves clasped a flat dark handbag in her lap.

Spade rocked back in his chair and asked: 'Now what can I do for you, Miss Wonderly?'

She caught her breath and looked at him. She swallowed and said hurriedly: 'Could you—? I thought— I— that is—' Then

she tortured her lower lip with glistening teeth and said nothing. Only her dark eyes spoke now, pleading.

Spade smiled and nodded as if he understood her, but pleasantly, as if nothing serious were involved. He said: 'Suppose you tell me about it, from the beginning, and then we'll know what needs doing. Better begin as far back as you can.'

'That was in New York.'

'Yes.'

'I don't know where she met him. I mean I don't know where in New York. She's five years younger than I – only seventeen – and we didn't have the same friends. I don't suppose we've ever been as close as sisters should be. Mama and Papa are in Europe. It would kill them. I've got to get her back before they come home.'

'Yes,' he said.

'They're coming home the first of the month.'

Spade's eyes brightened. 'Then we've two weeks,' he said.

'I didn't know what she had done until her letter came. I was frantic.' Her lips trembled. Her hands mashed the dark handbag in her lap. 'I was too afraid she had done something like this to go to the police, and the fear that something had happened to her kept urging me to go. There wasn't anyone I could go to for advice. I didn't know what to do. What could I do?'

'Nothing, of course,' Spade said, 'but then her letter came?'

'Yes, and I sent her a telegram asking her to come home. I sent it to General Delivery here. That was the only address she gave me. I waited a whole week, but no answer came, not another word from her. And Mama and Papa's return was drawing nearer and nearer. So I came to San Francisco to get her. I wrote her I was coming. I shouldn't have done that, should I?'

'Maybe not. It's not always easy to know what to do. You haven't found her?'

'No, I haven't. I wrote her that I would go to the St Mark, and I begged her to come and let me talk to her even if she

didn't intend to go home with me. But she didn't come. I waited three days, and she didn't come, didn't even send me a message of any sort.'

Spade nodded his blond satan's head, frowned sympathetically, and tightened his lips together.

'It was horrible,' Miss Wonderly said, trying to smile. 'I couldn't sit there like that – waiting – not knowing what had happened to her, what might be happening to her.' She stopped trying to smile. She shuddered. 'The only address I had was General Delivery. I wrote her another letter, and yesterday afternoon I went to the Post Office. I stayed there until after dark, but I didn't see her. I went there again this morning, and still didn't see Corinne, but I saw Floyd Thursby.'

Spade nodded again. His frown went away. In its place came a look of sharp attentiveness.

'He wouldn't tell me where Corinne was,' she went on, hopelessly. 'He wouldn't tell me anything, except that she was well and happy. But how can I believe that? That is what he would tell me anyhow, isn't it?'

'Sure,' Spade agreed. 'But it might be true.'

'I hope it is. I do hope it is,' she exclaimed. 'But I can't go back home like this, without having seen her, without even having talked to her on the phone. He wouldn't take me to her. He said she didn't want to see me. I can't believe that. He promised to tell her he had seen me, and to bring her to see me – if she would come – this evening at the hotel. He said he knew she wouldn't. He promised to come himself if she wouldn't. He——'

She broke off with a startled hand to her mouth as the door opened.

The man who had opened the door came in a step, said, 'Oh, excuse me!' hastily took his brown hat from his head, and backed out.

'It's all right, Miles,' Spade told him. 'Come in. Miss Wonderly, this is Mr Archer, my partner.'

4

Miles Archer came into the office again, shutting the door behind him, ducking his head and smiling at Miss Wonderly, making a vaguely polite gesture with the hat in his hand. He was of medium height, solidly built, wide in the shoulders, thick in the neck, with a jovial heavy-jawed red face and some grey in his close-trimmed hair. He was apparently as many years past forty as Spade was past thirty.

Spade said: 'Miss Wonderly's sister ran away from New York with a fellow named Floyd Thursby. They're here. Miss Wonderly has seen Thursby and has a date with him tonight. Maybe he'll bring the sister with him. The chances are he won't. Miss Wonderly wants us to find the sister and get her away from him and back home.' He looked at Miss Wonderly. 'Right?'

'Yes,' she said indistinctly. The embarrassment that had gradually been driven away by Spade's ingratiating smiles and nods and assurances was pinkening her face again. She looked at the bag in her lap and picked nervously at it with a gloved finger.

Spade winked at his partner.

Miles Archer came forward to stand at a corner of the desk. While the girl looked at her bag he looked at her. His little brown eyes ran their bold appraising gaze from her lowered face to her feet and up to her face again. Then he looked at Spade and made a silent whistling mouth of appreciation.

Spade lifted two fingers from the arm of his chair in a brief warning gesture and said:

'We shouldn't have any trouble with it. It's simply a matter of having a man at the hotel this evening to shadow him away when he leaves, and shadow him until he leads us to your sister. If she comes with him, and you persuade her to return with you, so much the better. Otherwise – if she doesn't want to leave him after we've found her – well, we'll find a way of managing that.'

Archer said: 'Yeh.' His voice was heavy, coarse.

Miss Wonderly looked up at Spade, quickly, puckering her forehead between her eyebrows.

'Oh, but you must be careful!' Her voice shook a little, and

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her lips shaped the words with nervous jerkiness. 'I'm deathly afraid of him, of what he might do. She's so young and his bringing her here from New York is such a serious— Mightn't he— mightn't he do— something to her?'

Spade smiled and patted the arms of his chair.

'Just leave that to us,' he said. 'We'll know how to handle him.'

'But mightn't he?' she insisted.

'There's always a chance.' Spade nodded judicially. 'But you can trust us to take care of that.'

'I do trust you,' she said earnestly, 'but I want you to know that he's a dangerous man. I honestly don't think he'd stop at anything. I don't believe he'd hesitate to – to kill Corinne if he thought it would save him. Mightn't he do that?'

'You didn't threaten him, did you?'

'I told him that all I wanted was to get her home before Mama and Papa came so they'd never know what she had done. I promised him I'd never say a word to them about it if he helped me, but if he didn't Papa would certainly see that he was punished. I— I don't suppose he believed me, altogether.'

'Can he cover up by marrying her?' Archer asked.

The girl blushed and replied in a confused voice: 'He has a wife and three children in England. Corinne wrote me that, to explain why she had gone off with him.'

'They usually do,' Spade said, 'though not always in England.' He leaned forward to reach for pencil and pad of paper. 'What does he look like?'

'Oh, he's thirty-five years old, perhaps, and as tall as you, and either naturally dark or quite sunburned. His hair is dark too, and he has thick eyebrows. He talks in a rather loud, blustery way and has a nervous, irritable manner. He gives the impression of being— of violence.'

Spade, scribbling on the pad, asked without looking up: 'What color eyes?'

'They're blue-grey and watery, though not in a weak way. And – oh, yes – he has a marked cleft in his chin.'

'Thin, medium, or heavy build?'

6

'Quite athletic. He's broad-shouldered and carries himself erect, has what could be called a decidedly military carriage. He was wearing a light grey suit and a grey hat when I saw him this morning.'

'What does he do for a living?' Spade asked as he laid down his pencil.

'I don't know,' she said. 'I haven't the slightest idea.'

'What time is he coming to see you?'

'After eight o'clock.'

'All right, Miss Wonderly, we'll have a man there. It'll help if—'

'Mr Spade, could either you or Mr Archer?' She made an appealing gesture with both hands. 'Could either of you look after it personally? I don't mean that the man you'd send wouldn't be capable, but – oh! – I'm so afraid of what might happen to Corinne. I'm afraid of him. Could you? I'd be— I'd expect to be charged more, of course.' She opened her handbag with nervous fingers and put two hundred-dollar bills on Spade's desk. 'Would that be enough?'

'Yeh,' Archer said, 'and I'll look after it myself.'

Miss Wonderly stood up, impulsively holding a hand out to him.

'Thank you! Thank you!' she exclaimed, and then gave Spade her hand, repeating: 'Thank you!'

'Not at all,' Spade said over it. 'Glad to. It'll help some if you either meet Thursby downstairs or let yourself be seen in the lobby with him at some time.'

'I will,' she promised, and thanked the partners again.

'And don't look for me,' Archer cautioned her. 'I'll see you all right.'

Spade went to the corridor-door with Miss Wonderly. When he returned to his desk Archer nodded at the hundred-dollar bills there, growled complacently, 'They're right enough,' picked one up, folded it, and tucked it into a vest-pocket. 'And they had brothers in her bag.'

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Spade pocketed the other bill before he sat down. Then he said: 'Well, don't dynamite her too much. What do you think of her?'

'Sweet! And you telling me not to dynamite her.' Archer guffawed suddenly without merriment. 'Maybe you saw her first, Sam, but I spoke first.' He put his hands in his trousers-pockets and teetered on his heels.

'You'll play hell with her, you will.' Spade grinned wolfishly, showing the edges of teeth far back in his jaw. 'You've got brains, yes you have.' He began to make a cigarette.

2 Death in the Fog

A telephone-bell rang in darkness. When it had rung three times bed-springs creaked, fingers fumbled on wood, something small and hard thudded on a carpeted floor, the springs creaked again, and a man's voice said:

'Hello . . . Yes, speaking . . . Dead? . . . Yes? . . . Fifteen minutes. Thanks.'

A switch clicked and a white bowl hung on three gilded chains from the ceiling's center filled the room with light. Spade, barefooted in green and white checked pajamas, sat on the side of his bed. He scowled at the telephone on the table while his hands took from beside it a packet of brown papers and a sack of Bull Durham tobacco.

Cold steamy air blew in through two open windows, bringing with it half a dozen times a minute the Alcatraz foghorn's dull moaning. A tinny alarm-clock, insecurely mounted on a corner of Duke's *Celebrated Criminal Cases of America* – face down on the table – held its hands at five minutes past two.

Spade's thick fingers made a cigarette with deliberate care, sifting a measured quantity of tan flakes down into curved paper, spreading the flakes so that they lay equal at the ends with a slight depression in the middle, thumbs rolling the paper's inner edge down and up under the outer edge as forefingers pressed it over, thumbs and fingers sliding to the paper cylinder's ends to hold it even while tongue licked the flap, left

THE MALTESE FALCON

There is no "Corinne", Brigid O'Shaugnessy is a criminal and Floyd Thursby was her former lover and accomplice in stealing a gold, jewel encrusted bird – the Maltese Falcon – from another bunch of crooks and former accomplices she has double-crossed – as she is double crossing Thursby. In this scene Sam and Brigid O'Shaugnessy (aka "Miss Wonderly") start a dance of death. She comes into the office preparing to lead whoever she can beguile down a dark alley to kill. The story ends with her going – almost certainly – to the gallows for the murder of the man she does lead down that dark alley – Archer. And Spade alone has made sure that's where she is going. During her following tale about 'Corrine' she's dropping clues that will frame Thursby for the murder of the private detective who she will lure into an alleyway and shoot. Spade realises that she's not the real deal and something is fishy, Archer doesn't. In Spade she finally meets someone who could protect her from all the rest but he's also someone she can't handle and who could end up destroying her – and she senses this during the scene.

*Brigid's a knockout, wonderful to look at – so the name Miss "Wonderly" (how she sees herself) – but the name works on another level – it's a fantasy name for a woman who lives in a fantasy world where she is the vulnerable victim at the mercy of double-crossing men. But she's the one who always does the double-crossing because she is greedy, wants to keep the gains for herself – which is why she needs to get rid of Thursby. Brigid has a pattern, she beguiles a man into being her protector and accomplice and then starts to worry that he will double cross her and not pay her what she thinks is her due, so she double-crosses him – by killing or framing or stealing from him – and then needs to find another protector to protect her from anyone still alive she has done this to – and the pattern is repeated. She is also a disturbed woman, a femme fatale who kills but **who sees herself** as the frightened, timid victim she plays and she **never** drops this pose, not even when she is revealed as the killer at the end of the story. When she talks about "Corinne" she is talking about one of two things at different points in the script: at Shot 13 "Corinne" is the Maltese falcon, but at shot 23 Corinne is herself, she's talking about herself and her predicament at that moment.*

* Spade is also past redemption but he doesn't delude himself or lie like Brigid. Sam is a Lucifer figure (in the novel Hammett **introduces** him as a "blonde Satan" and there are references throughout typifying him in this way) but he is a powerful man who is feeling weakened and his quest to track down, and hand over to the law for justice, his partner's killer is his means to reclaim his*

image of himself and so his power. A partner he has contempt for, his motivation is a dislike for the man, and he knows by the end of this opening scene that he is letting this same partner walk into a potential trap and danger. What else motivates him? Perhaps guilt. (Spade by the way is having an affair with Archer's wife, a woman he has grown tired of).

In more than one respect Brigid and Spade are similar – each only relies on his/her own image of themselves for a sense of self. BUT Spade's image is based on the coldest, hardest reality – he really is built in his own image; whereas Brigid is all self-delusion. Neither of them really needs anyone emotionally or psychologically, both are cold, calculating even past redemption. But unlike Spade Brigid depends on others in her predicaments – though she has no real understanding or perception of anyone, including herself. Spade, however, isn't a successful private detective because he doesn't know how to sum people up and doesn't know when he's being told a pack of badly delivered lies that don't add up.

Spade must dominate this scene: he is the powerful figure. He really is that overused word – ruthless – and he can be heartless. He has a rigid code of honour but next to no morals. He is singular and he doesn't accommodate anyone else's code of honour. He is NOT a criminal and he doesn't cross that line – ever – but he knows how to do business with them. He is also a superior bastard who looks down on people. Archer's a jerk – but might not be so much of a jerk if Spade didn't always make him feel the lesser man. He is not written of sympathetically in the film or in the novel. Spade has contempt for Archer. But, for all Archer's faults, he might be a more sympathetic character if he had a different partner who didn't always make him feel on the back foot, as though he were the lesser man. He may be a bit dumb; the problem is Spade never lets him forget it.

SCREENPLAY: THE MALTESE FALCON

FADE IN: INT. OFFICE, DAY

1. LONG SHOT OFFICE THROUGH A WINDOW, PROFILE SPADE LEFT
    FOREGROUND.
    SAM SPADE is sitting behind a wooden desk, back to the window. rolling a cigarette.
    Tall, thin, thick hair, his suit is not too expensive but reasonable quality and freshly
    pressed.

2. MID C/U ANGLED SHOT SAM SPADE.
    OVER SCENE the SOUND of the office door is opening. He does not look up.

                          SPADE:
               Yes, sweetheart?

3. LONG SHOT OF EFFIE PERINE FROM LEFT BOTTOM CORNER OF FRAME
    BEHIND SPADE.
    EFFIE PERINE is a sunburned girl with playful eyes and a shiny, boyish face, shuts the
    door behind her, leans against it.

                          EFFIE:
               There's a girl wants to see you. Her name's Wonderly.

                          SPADE:
               A customer?

                          EFFIE:
               I guess so. You'll want to see her anyway. She's a knockout.

4.   MID C/U SPADE, FOREGROUND, STILL ANGLED.

SPADE still hasn"t looked up.

                         SPADE:
                    (licking his cigarette)
          Shoo her in, Effie darling – shoo her in.
                     (he puts the cigarette in his mouth, sets fire to it)

5.   REPEAT OF 3.

The door opens again, EFFIE PERINE stands with her hand on the knob, standing just

behind her in the doorway is a shadowy figure.

                         EFFIE:
          Will you come in, Miss Wonderly?

5A. MISS WONDERLY ADVANCES INTO THE ROOM CAMERA SLOWLY TRACKS

BACK. OVER SCENE a voice murmurs something. MISS WONDERLY is tall, slim,

good figure, well dressed and well-groomed, hat, gloves etc., mid-twenties, advances

slowly with tentative steps.

5B. REPEAT ENTRANCE WITH L/S POV SPADE

6.   C/U MISS WONDERLY

Face in shadow but teeth gleam white in a seemingly timid smile.

7.   MID SHOT MISS WONDERLY looks at SPADE, he rises, indicating the wooden chair

beside his desk.

                         SPADE:
          Won't you sit down Miss Wonderly.

MISS WONDERLY:

(softly)

Thank you.

8. MID C/U PROFILE SPADE LOOKING AT MISS WONDERLY.

9. CAMERA TRACKS BACK TO LONG SHOT SIDE VIEW FROM WINDOW.

MISS WONDERLY sits down on the edge of the chair's wooden seat. SPADE sinks back into his swivel chair, makes a quarter turn to face her. OVER SCENE the tappety-tap-tap of EFFIE PERINE's typewriter. SPADE smiles politely. MISS WONDERLY smiles back, uneasily clutches at her bag.

10. C/U BRASS ASH TRAY ON DESK.

On SPADE's desk a limp cigarette smoulders in a brass tray filled with the remains of limp cigarettes. Flakes of cigarette ash dot the top of the desk and the green blotter and the papers there. MISS WONDERLY watches the ashes on the desk twitch and crawl.

11. BIG C/U MISS WONDERLY

CONT. OVER SCENE the tappety-tap-tap of EFFIE PERINE's typewriter. MISS WONDERLY's eyes are uneasy, probing, wary.

12. MID C/U REVERSE SHOT OF SPADE FROM BEHIND WONDERLY

Cont. OVER SCENE the tappety-tap-tap of EFFIE PERINE's typewriter.

SPADE:

Now what can I do for you, Miss Wonderly?

MISS WONDERLY:

(She catches her breath, looks at him, and swallows.)

Could you -? I thought - I - that is …

SPADE:

Suppose you tell me about it from the beginning, and then we'll know
what needs doing. Better begin as far back as you can.

13. MID SHOT MISS WONDERLY.

MISS WONDERLY'S eyes move to the side.

MISS WONDERLY:

That was in New York.

SPADE:

Yes?

MISS WONDERLY:

I don't know where she met him in New York. She's much younger than I
- not yet seventeen – we don't have the same friends. Our parents are in
Europe. It would kill them. I've got to get her back before they come
home.

14. LONG SHOT, SPADE AND MISS WONDERLY

SPADE and MISS WONDERLY facing each other, SPADE rocks back in his chair.

SPADE:

Yes …

MISS WONDERLY:

They're coming home the first of the month.

SPADE: (eyes brighten)
(reassuringly)

That gives us two weeks.

15. MID SHOT OF WONDERLY, ANGLED UPWARDS FROM BEHIND SPADE.

                    MISS WONDERLY:
I didn't know what she had done until her letter came. There wasn't
anyone I could go to for advice. I didn't want to involve the authorities. I
was frantic.
                    (her lips tremble, her hands mash her bag)
I didn't know what to do.
                    (pathetically)
What could I do?

16. REVERSE MID SHOT OF SPADE, ANGLED DOWN FROM BEHIND
        WONDERLY.
        SPADE still relaxed back in chair.

                    SPADE:
Nothing, of course … But then, her letter came?

17. MEDIUM WIDE SHOT SPADE AND WONDERLY

                    MISS WONDERLY:
And I sent her a telegram asking her to come back home. I sent it to
General Delivery here. That was the only address she gave me … I waited
a whole week but no answer came, not another word from her – and our
parents' return was drawing nearer and nearer, so I came out here to get
her. I wrote her I was coming. I shouldn't have done that, should I?

                    SPADE:
Maybe not. It's not always easy to know what to do … You haven't found
her?

MISS WONDERLY:

No, I haven't. I wrote her that I would go to the St. Mark and I begged her to meet me there and let me talk to her. Even if she didn't intend to go home with me. But she didn't come. I waited three days and she didn't come … didn't even send a message.

SPADE nods, frowns sympathetically, narrows his eyes, sits up fidgets with the cigarette lighter.

MISS WONDERLY unsure, not looking at SPADE

MISS WONDERLY:

It was horrible! Waiting …!
(She tries to smile)
Not knowing what had happened to her … what might be happening to her.
(she stops trying to smile – shudders)
I wrote her another letter General Delivery. Yesterday afternoon I went to the post office. I stayed there until after dark but I didn't see her. I went there again this morning and still didn't see Corinne – but I saw Floyd Thursby.

18. MID SHOT SPADE

SPADE's frown goes away. In its place a look of sharp attentiveness.

19. PAN OVER TO MID SHOT MISS WONDERLY THEN SLOW PULL BACK TO L/S FROM WINDOW

MISS WONDERLY:

He wouldn't tell me where Corinne was.
(hopelessly)
He wouldn't tell me anything except that she was well and happy. But how could I believe that, he'd say that anyway, wouldn't he.

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SPADE:

Sure, but it might be true.

MISS WONDERLY:

I hope it is … I do hope it is. But I can't go back home without having seen her and he said she didn't want to see me. I can't believe that. He promised to tell her he had seen me, and to bring her to see me, if she would come, this evening at the hotel. He said he knew she wouldn't. He promised to come himself if she didn't …

The office door opens. She breaks off with a startled hand to her mouth.

20. LONG SHOT OF MILES ARCHER TOP CENTRE FRAME FROM BEHIND SPADE AND WONDERLY.

MILES ARCHER comes in a step, medium height, solidly built, wide in the shoulders, thick in the neck with a heavy jawed, red face. Good suit, loud tie, hat.

ARCHER:

Oh, excuse me –

(hastily takes off his hat, starts to back out.)

SPADE:

It's all right, Miles. Come in. Miss Wonderly, this is Miles Archer, my partner.

Advances into room towards camera, SPADE and WONDERLY.

21. LONG SHOT FROM BEHIND ARCHER.

SPADE and WONDERLY seated, looking at ARCHER standing in front of them.

>   SPADE:
>
> Miss Wonderly's sister ran away from New York with a fellow named
> Floyd Thursby. They are here in San Francisco. Miss Wonderly has seen
> Thursby and has a date with him tonight. Maybe he'll bring the sister with
> him. The chances are he won't. Miss Wonderly wants us to find the sister
> and get her away from him and back home.
>   (he looks at MISS WONDERLY)
> Right?
>
>   MISS WONDERLY:
>
> Yes.

22. CAMERA SLOWLY TRACKS IN TO MID SHOT OF ALL THREE DURING
SCENE.
ARCHER comes forward to the corner of the desk, looks at SPADE and makes a silent
whistling mouth of appreciation. SPADE makes a slight warning gesture with his hand.
SPADE and ARCHER now almost looming over WONDERLY, who looks at her bag,
picking nervously with her gloved hand.. She is still slightly in shadow but not the
other two.

22A.   MED. C/U MISS WONDERLY

23.   M/S ALL THREE

>   SPADE:
>
> It's simply a matter of having a man at the hotel this evening to shadow
> him when he leads us to your sister. If she doesn't want to leave him after
> we've found her – well, there are ways of managing that.

ARCHER:

(his voice heavy, coarse)

Yeah …

MISS WONDERLY looks up quickly. Fear shows on her face.

MISS WONDERLY:

Oh, but you must be careful.

(her voice shakes a little, nervy)

I'm deathly afraid of him – of what he might do, she's so young and his
bringing her here from New York is such a serious – mightn't he –
mightn't he do something to her?

SPADE (smiling):

Just leave that to us. We'll know how to handle him.

MISS WONDERLY:

(earnestly)

But I want you to know that he's a dangerous man. I honestly don't think
he'd stop at anything. I don't believe he'd hesitate to – to kill Corinne if
he thought it would save him. Mightn't he do that?

24. MID C/U SPADE

SPADE:

You didn't threaten him did you?

25. WIDE SHOT ALL THREE

MISS WONDERLY:

I told him that all I wanted was to get her home before our parents came back so they'd never know what she had done. I promised him I'd never say a word to them about it if he helped me, but if he didn't our father would certainly see that he was punished. I don't suppose he believed me, altogether.

ARCHER:

Can he cover up by marrying her?

MISS WONDERLY:
(confused voice)
He has a wife and three children in England.

SPADE:

They usually do, though not always in England.
(reaching for a pencil and pad)

What does he look like?
(writing on the pad)

MISS WONDERLY:

Oh, 35 years old perhaps, and as tall as you. He has dark hair and thick eyebrows. He talks in a loud blustery way and has a nervous irritable manner. He gives the impression of being – of violence.

SPADE:
(without looking up)
What colour eyes?

MISS WONDERLY:

Blue-grey and watery, though not in a weak way. And, oh yes, he has a cleft in his chin.

SPADE:

Thin, heavy or medium build?

MISS WONDERLY:

Quite athletic, broad shouldered. He was wearing a light grey suit and a grey hat when I saw him this morning.

SPADE:

(laying down the pencil)

What does he do for a living?

MISS WONDERLY:

I haven't the slightest idea.

SPADE:

At what time is he coming to see you?

MISS WONDERLY:

After eight o'clock.

SPADE:

All right Miss Wonderly. We'll have a man there. It'll help if …

MISS WONDERLY:

Could either of you look after it personally? I don't mean that the man you'd send wouldn't be capable but …

26. MID C/U ARCHER EXTREME ANGLE UP, MISS WONDERLY IN SHOT

                    ARCHER:
            I'll look after it myself.

27. MID SHOT ALL THREE
            SPADE gives him a glance of concealed amusement.

                    MISS WONDERLY:
                    (standing up)
            Thank you … thank you.
She opens her handbag with nervous fingers, brings out two bills, puts them on
SPADE's desk.

                    MISS WONDERLY:
            Will that be enough?

SPADE nods and she gives him her hand.

                    MISS WONDERLY:
            Thank you … thank you.

                     SPADE:
            Not at all … It'll help some if you meet Thursby in the lobby.

                    MISS WONDERLY:
            I will.

                    ARCHER:
            And don't look for me, I'll see you all right.

MISS WONDERLY nods.

28. LONG SHOT FROM WINDOW, CAMERA SLOWLY FOLLOWS SPADE
THROUGHOUT SCENE

SPADE goes with MISS WONDERLY to the door.

                    MISS WONDERLY:
          Thank you.

When she is gone, SPADE comes back to his desk. ARCHER has picked up one of the
bills and is examining it.

                    ARCHER:
          They're right enough.
                    (he folds and tucks it into his vest pocket)
          And they have brothers in her bag.

SPADE examining ARCHER pockets the other bill, moves around desk to window
looks out. ARCHER goes and sits behind his desk.

                    SPADE:
          Well don't dynamite her too much. What did you think of her?

                    ARCHER:
          Sweet. Maybe you saw her first Sam, but I spoke first.

SPADE, moves back to his desk, sits down, grins at ARCHER.

                    SPADE;
          You've got brains … you have.
                    (he begins to make a cigarette).

                                        DISSOLVE.
                                        27.1.06

Shooting Script

Day 1

12. MID C/U REVERSE SHOT OF SPADE FROM BEHIND WONDERLY
16.   REVERSE MID SHOT OF SPADE, ANGLED DOWN FROM BEHIND
        WONDERLY.
18. MID SHOT SPADE

19. PAN OVER TO MID SHOT MISS WONDERLY THEN SLOW PULL
     BACK TO L/S FROM WINDOW

23. MID C/U SPADE

Shots 21, 22, 26: LONG SHOT FROM BEHIND ARCHER.
With Dolly wide to mid

Shot 24. WIDE SHOT ALL THREE (from you didn't threaten him..)

Shot 25. MID C/U ARCHER EXTREME ANGLE UP

Day 2: SAM at start and wonderly/sam 2 shot scene wides

Shots 2, 4, 8,9, 17: MID C/U ANGLED SHOT SAM SPADE tracking out to
MEDIUM WIDE SHOT SPADE AND WONDERLY (track as she goes to sit
down)(and can be broken down between statics and dolly)

Shot 14: LONG SHOT, SPADE AND MISS WONDERLY

Day 3:.
11. C/U MISS WONDERLY (REVERSE SHOT OF 8)

        CONT. OVER SCENE the tappety-tap-tap of EFFIE PERINE'S typewriter.
MISS WONDERLY'S eyes are uneasy, probing, wary.
     13. MID SHOT MISS WONDERLY.
15.   MID SHOT OF WONDERLY, ANGLED UPWARDS FROM BEHIND
SPADE.

Shot 1: LONG SHOT OFFICE THROUGH A WINDOW, PROFILE SPADE LEFT

     FOREGROUND. (Shot 1, daylight permitting).

1

No Nick am

* Shots 3 AND 5: LONG SHOT EFFIE PERINE AND WONDERLY O/S SPADE WITH DOLLY.

CU EFFIE (no ref but for safety)

Shot 7: MID SHOT MISS WONDERLY

Shot 6: C/U MISS WONDERLY

Shot 20: LONG SHOT OF MILES ARCHER TOP CENTRE FRAME FROM BEHIND SPADE AND WONDERLY.

Shot 27: LONG SHOT FROM WINDOW, CAMERA SLOWLY FOLLOWS SPADE THROUGHOUT SCENE

Shot 10 whenever suitable

2

Appendix 7: Excerpt from Edit Script

Programme Title: Maltese Falcon – Scene 1 – *Version 2*.

Director/Producer: Rosalie Greener

Contact Numbers: 01273 601533 *and 07901985975*

Number of Tapes: Three

Page 1.

Programme Duration: *VHS. TAPE ②*

	Description	IN/OUT Words	IN TC	OUT TC	Comment
Set-up A Take 1.	2 SHOT – Miss Wonderly & Spade – sitting at table	won't you sit down … suppose you	00.15.01.	00.15.25	~~Alex f~~ Actor missed words NO
Set-up A: Take 2	"	won't you sit down … she promised to come herself if he didn't.	00.15.32	00.18.48	Like Alex's turn of surprise at the end. Alex forgot a line ~~YES~~ NO
Set-up A Take 3 YES	"	Won't you sit down … come in Miles.	00.19.05.	00.22.18.	YES – turn of surprise – good "I shouldn't have done that should I?" Good
Set-up A Take 4 NO	"	"	00.22.28	00.22.37.	No.
Set-up A Take 5 YES	"	"	00.22.46	00.26.07.	Good. Particularly that "He'd say that anyway wouldn't he?" 4-3
Set-up A Take 7 YES.	"	"	00.27.32.	00.30.43.	Particularly good " But I saw Floyd Thursday "
Set-up B Take 1.	m/s Spade sitting down/seated. ~~from behind~~ Miss Wonderly. ~~first profile in shadow~~) extreme c/u of Miss W profile in shadow.	Now what can I do … … what needs doing.	00.30.56	00.31.20.	No Actor forgets words.

Too dark for other cut-away shots.

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Maltese Falcon - Scene 1/ Page - 2
Version 2 / Tape 2 (VHS)

	Description	IN/OUT Words	IN TC	OUT TC	Comment
Set-up B. Take 2	M/S Spade seated from behind Wonderly – Extreme c/u of Miss W's profile in shadow	Now what can I do.... .... Come in Miles.	00.31.38	00.34.38	Good shots 1 2 #16 only? He hat sometimes across his face. He's blinking? Sound poor?
Set-up B Take 3	,,	,,	00.34.57.		YES - in case. NO. EXCEPT.
	c/A.	"I saw Floyd Thursday".	00.37.17.	00.37.20.	SHOT. 18?
				00.37.57.	
Set-up B2. Take 1.	c/u. Spade seated.	I wrote her I was coming. ..... and I tagged her	00.38.08.	00.38.25.	OK.
B2 Take 2	,,	,,	00.38.37.	00.38.52.	No.
B2 Take 3	~~I wrote~~ ,,	I wrote her I was coming ... to 4 o St. Mark.	00.39.14.		No. EXCEPT. c/A?
c/A	,,	it's not always easy to know what to do	00.39.18.	00.39.22.	YES (in case)
				00.39.28	
t-up 2/B2 take 1.	c/u Spade seated YES.	I went there again .... tell me where she was.	00.39.42	00.39.54.	YES - looks bored & cynical. Shot 18?
t-up 2/B2 Take 2.	,,	~~00.40.05~~ ,,	00.40.08	00.40.22	NO. (tho' maybe Shot 18.?)

Maltese Falcon - Scene 1/ Page - 3. Version 2/Tape 2

Description		IN/OUT Words	IN TC	OUT TC	Comment
Set-up C Take 1.	M/S Miss Wonderly from over Spade's shoulder.	Won't you sit down ... ... what needs doing	00.40.35.	00.41.	No. Spade forget lines
Set-up C Take 2.	"	won't you take a seat...	00.41.12.		I like this set-up
	C/A.	Suppose you... was in New York.	00.41.31	00.41.39	YES.
YES... whole take	C/A	They're coming home the first of the month "	00.41.59.	00.42.01.	YES.
	C/A	what could I do .... letter came.	00.42.17	00.42.21	YES.
	C/A.	Not always easy to know what to do	00.42.47.	00.42.51.	YES.
	C/A.	Didn't come. Didn't even send me a message.	00.43.10	00.43.15.	YES.
	C/A.	He'd say that anyway wouldn't he (Also ~~no, she did it~~ so ~~to~~	00.43.49	00.43.50 ~~00.44.13~~ 00.43.50.	YES Actors forgot lines but opted otherwise (ADD)
Set-up C Take 3.	"	Won't you sit down....	00.44.28.		
	C/A	suppose you tell me about it from ... needs doing	00.44.45	00.44.49	YES - only this bit from this take
		... what she had done until.	~~00.~~	00.45.20	Stopped because of sound off Stage
Set-up C Take 4	"	C/A YES. ~~00.47.29.~~ what might be happening to her	~~00.47.29.~~ 00.47.29	00.47.34.	~~only this from take 4.~~
		C/A YES. "but I saw Floyd Thursby "	00.47.48	00.47.50.	YES / Alternative to set-up B. Take 3 c/A, P.2.
		· Miles come in		00.48.34.	

* This was the final version of the script prior to the final edit.

"The *politique des auteurs*: a cinematic definition"

1.   FILM OF ERIC ROHMER FOLLOWED BY SHOT OF ROHMER, CLAUDE
     CHABROL, JACQUES RIVETTE, JEAN-LUC GODARD, FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT
                         V/O
     Eric Rohmer, Claude Chabrol, Jacques Rivette, Jean-Luc Godard, François Truffaut.
     The *Cahiers du Cinéma* group who, as young critics for the French film magazine

2.   SHOT OF *CAHIERS DU CINÉMA* FRONT COVER
                         V/O
     Cahiers du Cinéma, believed that the author was more important than the work. Their
     author?

3.   SHOT OF DIRECTOR's CREDIT & (HAWKS)
                         V/O
     the director. The work?

4.   CONTINUE WITH CREDITS
                         V/O
     the film. They believed the director, as author – as the *auteur* - was more important
     than the work. More important

5.   *BIG SLEEP* CREDITS
                         V/O
     than the sum of the collaborative parts, than the writer, actors, editor, director of
     photography and all the others contributing to the cinematic text.

6.   HOWARD HAWKS *CAHIERS DU CINÉMA* ARTICLE

                V/O

In identifying the director as the cinematic author – their *auteur* – they were identifying cinema as an art of personal expression.

7.   SHOT OF ASTRUC

                V/O

They were following in the footsteps of Alexandre Astruc who in 1948 wrote an article

8.   SHOT OF ASTRUC's ARTICLE

                V/O

"The birth of a new *avant-garde: La Caméra-Stylo*" – *La Caméra-Stylo* - the camera pen, about cinema's future as an art of expression as personal and abstract as painting a picture or writing a novel.

9.   SHOT OF MOVIE SET

                V/O

How can cinema be an art of personal expression. How can one person claim to be the *auteur,* the author of the cinematic work?

10.   ASTRUC, SHOTS OF *CAHIERS* GROUP

                V/O

Astruc began the search for how, not through the words of the script-writer or the pictures of the photographer, but through cinematic language. The *Cahiers* group *continued that search* and conceived how in their

11.   *POLITIQUE DES AUTEURS*

                V/O

Politique des auteurs. Their policy for authors. This was the *Cahiers* group's contribution to the history of art, the history of cinema, at a certain time, in a certain

place. And this cinematic text is the author's chosen method to define the essential principles of that idea of film.

TITLE "CHAPTER ONE: THE *POLITIQUE DES AUTEURS*": A CINEMATIC DEFINITION
 (TITLE MUSIC FROM *THE 400 BLOWS*)

12.   BLACK SPACE
                        V/O
When did they conceive the politique? Half a century ago,

13.   SHOT OF EXT. SCENES OF PARIS, EARLY 1950s
                        V/O
In Paris – this was Rohmer's certain time, in the history of art.

14.   SHOT OF GODARD MERGING INTO SHOTS OF PARIS
                        V/O
A time Godard remembered it was "good to be alive" because "there still existed something called magic" something that held them "together as intimately as a kiss".

15.   QUOTE ON SCREEN
"…What held us together as intimately as a kiss (was)… the screen and nothing but the screen."

16.   QUOTE CONTINUING OVER SHOTS OF FILMS FOLLOWED BY V/O
                        V/O
The screen and nothing but the screen. This was Godard's magic, the *Cahiers* group's magic. Magic on screen, Cinema, directed by their auteurs. Directed by

17.   SHOTS OF DIRECTORS ON SCREEN FROM ROHMER DOCUMENTARY

            V/O

Jean Renoir, Jean Cocteau, Robert Bresson, Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, Roberto Rossellini, Nicholas Ray. These and others were their *auteurs* – gifted directors they considered were the authors of their films. And included in that list of auteurs were Hollywood directors. They *did not confine their idea of cinematic art to the art house but* recognised

18.   SHOTS OF STUDIO MOTIFS

            V/O

Hollywood as a site of the seventh art when others did not.

19.   SHOT OF HAWKS AND HITCHCOCK FROM TRUFFAUT'S FILM THEN CdC
      HAWKS ARTICLE SHOT

            V/O

Alfred Hitchcock and Howard Hawks. The *Cahiers* group were known as Hitchcocko-Hawksians such was their devotion to these directors as two of the greatest auteurs at a time when they were usually considered little more than Hollywood functionaries. To understand why they recognised Hollywood directors as auteurs – cinematic artists – is to understand their idea of cinema as

20.   SHOT OF HITCHCOCK ON SET

            V/O

an art of personal directorial expression. Is to understand how their *auteurs* created that magic on screen?

21.   SHOT OF SET

            V/O

How such a collaborative, industrial business as cinema could be an art as personal as writing a novel or painting a picture. How is the starting point. How?

22. MISE EN SCENE

                V/O

Through the mise en scene

23. THE MISE EN SCENE -THE WORLD WITHIN THE CAMERA FRAME.

                V/O

– the world within the camera frame.

24. SCENE FROM *REBECCA*

                V/O

and all the elements that make up that world: the lighting, sets, camera shots,

costumes, attitude and behaviour of the actors. These elements within the frame were

the director's paint box and the director's composition and direction of those elements,

of the scene, was how the *Cahiers* group believed he or she wrote cinematically in

cinematic language expressing thought on screen. As stated by

25. SHOT OF RIVETTE

                V/O

Jacques Rivette. "What is cinema,

26. *REBECCA*

                V/O

if not the play of actor and actress, of hero and set, of word and face, of hand and

object".

27. STILLS OF DIRECTORS WITH SCRIPT

                V/O

But what of the writer? The film has a script and the script is words on a page

authored by the scriptwriter not the director. Yes, but the *Cahiers* group believed

those words, in the script, were not the story but the opportunity for the story to be

realised on screen. And to realise this opportunity they believed a director's profound

and intense involvement with the script was necessary so the writer's plot, dialogue,

characters *and* the subject of the film were not just transferred to the screen with pictures added but thought through and expressed in terms of the mise en scene.

28.   FROZEN FRAME OF SCENE FROM *LES DAMES DU BOIS DE BOULOGNE* MERGING INTO FULL SCENE

                    V/O

Look at Robert Bresson's film about the revenge of a spurned woman *Les dames du Bois de Boulogne*. In this scene, the woman learns the love affair is over and she has been spurned. The dialogue on the page is simply "Bonne nuit, Hélèn. Bonne nuit Jean" …

29.   FROZEN FRAME OF SCENE FROM *LES DAMES DU BOIS DE BOULOGNE* MERGING INTO FULL SCENE

                    V/O

The scene on screen becomes.

30.   FROZEN FRAME OF SCENE FROM *LES DAMES DU BOIS DE BOULOGNE*

                    V/O

As with *Rebecca*, dialogue is of secondary narrative importance and the primary meaning of the scene is based on

31.   REPEAT SCENE FROM *LES DAMES DU BOIS DE BOULOGNE*

                    V/O

The relation of the actors to each other and the set, the acting, the camera movement, the sound, the lighting - the elements of the world within the camera frame composed as an expressive dynamic.

32.   CREDITS FROM *LES DAMES DU BOIS DE BOULOGNE*

                    V/O

But what of the other collaborators responsible for those elements within the frame: the actors, the director of photography, the art director, the editor, and all the others - what of them? According to the *politique* they served the director's purpose.

33. SHOT OF ROHMER

                    V/O

As stated by Eric Rohmer - *mise en scene* was the director's conception then realised
by the crew at his or her disposal.

34. REPEAT SCENE

                    V/O

The director was identified as the cinematic author, distinct from the other
collaborators because he organised and unified their contributions when composing
the mise en scene (stet?). Really? Could that really be the case? What was the
Cahiers group's evidence for that belief?

35. HOWARD HAWKS – THE *AUTEUR'S* SIGNATURE ON SCREEN

36. ONE SHOT OF HAWKS

                    V/O

Howard Hawks directed films for almost 50 years, with different collaborators and
some of the greatest stars. So was he recognisably the author of those films?

37. SHOT OF TITLE FOR *THE BIG SLEEP*

                    V/O

The Big Sleep was a Hawks thriller.

38. SHOT OF BOGART AND BACALL

                    V/O

Starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall – a legendary pairing, an iconic star in
Bogart.

39. SCENE FROM *THE BIG SLEEP*

40. RETURN TO SHOT OF BOGART AND BACALL

                    V/O

Who are these characters? The man is tough, uncompromising and nobody's fool.
The heroine sassy, independent, knowing, able to live and deal on equal terms in that
man's world.

41. REPLAY OF SCENE

                    V/O

There is a barbed combative exchange, an air of suspicion, even rudeness.

42. REPLAY FROM BOGART TAKING THE GLOVES

                    V/O

A battle between the sexes of wits and wills.

43. REPLAY THEM BOTH SITTING SIDE-BY-SIDE ON DESK

                    V/O

But there is also complicity, comradeship, an equality of status signalled by

44. SHOTS OF EXCHANGE OF TELEPHONE

                      V/O

an *exchange*, not only of words, but of shared objects and roles.

45. *THE BIG SLEEP* SCENE

                      V/O

This is not a domestic scene, there is no hint of domesticity about the woman - an air
of the street-smart rather than the kitchen sink. Hawks didn't inhabit the domestic
world and he didn't place his women – or men - there either. But, is this a typical
Hawksian scene, with a typical hero and heroine?

46. SHOTS OF *RED RIVER* TITLES, CLIFF, DRU AND WAYNE

>   V/O

Red River was a Hawks western, starring a lesser-known actress - Joanna Dru, the
most iconic western star of all - John Wayne - and the young Montgomery Cliff in his
first major screen role.

47. BEGINNING OF SCENE FROM *RED RIVER*

48. SCENE CONTINUED

>   V/O

And there's the same exchange of objects.

49. SHOT OF DRU

>   V/O

The same idea of a woman, in a man's world. The same absence of domesticity.

50. CONTINUE SCENE …

>   V/O

The same battle of wits and wills.

51. LAST FRAMES OF SCENE

>   V/O

The same combative sense of complicity.

52. SHOTS OF BOTH SCENES AGAIN

>   V/O

And **that** was the *Cahiers* group's evidence. **If** there were stylistic and thematic
consistencies within the mise en scene, over the body of an *auteur's* work then those
consistencies were the *auteur's* signature. So irrespective of who wrote the script, the
actors, the studio, the other collaborators, the *auteur* director could be identified as
author because the evidence was there, on screen.

53.   SHOTS OF BOTH SCENES AGAIN WITH DIALOGUE

V/O

Even if much of those scenes were based on dialogue?

54.   WRITING CREDITS

V/O

There were different writers for each film. The screenplay for *The Big Sleep* was by
William Faulkner, among others, from a novel by Raymond Chandler; and for *Red
River*, the screenplay by Borden Chase and Charles Schnee, adapted from a short story
by Chase.

55.   SHOT OF HAWKS

V/O

But only the one director on both films.

56.   ALFRED HITCHCOCK: THE *AUTEUR'S* SIGNATURE ON SCREEN

57.   SHOT OF HITCHCOCK

V/O

Hitchcock also directed films for over 50 years with numerous collaborators, in both
Britain and Hollywood.

58.   OPENING CREDITS AND OPENING SCENE OF *REBECCA*

V/O

This is the opening shot of Hitchcock's first Hollywood film, *Rebecca*, made in 1940.
A voice over locates us in the scene. The camera is a trespasser like a *voyeur* on
forbidden ground, looking to uncover something sinister, repressed. It creeps up to,
and in, through a window.

59.   SHOT OF OLDER HITCHCOCK

V/O

And 20 years later, Hitchcock's *Psycho*,

60. SHOT OF OPENING SCENE OF *PSYCHO*

        V/O

and we are also located in the scene as the camera again creeps up to, and in, another window.

61. FREEZE FRAME ON HITCHCOCK

        V/O

Hitchcock's consistent visual style reveals his presence as the author because he used visual style, not just as a decorative flourish, but to represent a way of seeing the world. The camera is used as his eye on the world. So, the question is: if another director made a shot by shot copy of a Hitchcock film, then wouldn't the same visual style be there on screen? And wouldn't this mean the work was more important than the author? Not according to the *politique* because the artist,

62. SHOT OF OLDER HITCHCOCK

        V/O

Hitchcock, would not be composing **all the elements** of the mise en scene to form that visual style, so there would not be the same perception of the world revealed on screen.

63. OPENING CREDITS OF GUS VAN SANT'S *PSYCHO* RE-MAKE

        V/O

In 1998 the American director Gus Van Sant re-made

64. OPENING CREDITS OF HITCHCOCK'S *PSYCHO*

        V/O

Hitchcock's *Psycho*

65.   OPENING CREDITS OF GUS VAN SANT'S *PSYCHO* RE-MAKE OF SCENE
                   V/O

though in colour and with different collaborators, actors, sets; but otherwise, as a shot
by shot exact copy of the original: same camera set-ups, same plot, characters,
dialogue; even the same music and opening credits. So, is it the same film or, in
Rohmer's words, is "the author more important than the work". Let's see a scene
from those two *Psychos*, filmed almost 40 years apart.

66.   SHOT OF HITCHCOCK'S SCENE OF MARION CRANE DRESSING &
      PACKING AFTER SHE HAS STOLEN THE MONEY
                   V/O

This is Hitchcock's version. Marion Crane, has just stolen money from her employer.
She is about to go on the run.

67.   SAME SCENE FROM VAN SANT'S 1998 FILM AND THEN REPEAT
                   V/O

And Van Sant's version?

68.   FROZEN FRAME
                   V/O

Same shots, same character, same plot event. But, not the same mise en scene. Not
the same scene. Not the same film. In Hitchcock's version

69.   SHOTS FROM HITCHCOCK'S SCENE
                   V/O

Marion enters the scene looks at the money. During yet another extended tracking
movement Hitchcock focuses on the stolen money, the half packed suitcase and
Marion. The camera is used as a judgmental intelligence suggesting, silently, the
moral question. The actress wraps her dress about herself, buttons it to the neck.
Looks in the mirror. Ties her belt, too tightly. Looks again at the money on the bed.
Every movement significant, every movement exposing the character's tension,
anxiety, guilt. Her air of desperation, sense of loneliness. The behaviour of the

actress, the camera movement, the drab monochrome set. Each element of the mise en scene signifying a moral perspective, each element a significant part of the unified whole. And Van Sant's scene?

70. SHOTS FROM VAN SANT'S SCENE
                    V/O

The actress does not look at the money on the bed *as she enters the scene*. She dresses herself; turns from the mirror *again without looking at the money*. Her behaviour is not the same, her manner is more of a suppressed, even childish, excitement at what she has dared to do, a degree of stress, yes, but not guilt, desperation and moral uncertainty.

71. REPEAT CAMERA MOVEMENT
                    V/O

And the camera movement, supposedly replicating Hitchcock's scene, does not. There is a slight but significant difference to the timing: it shows, there is not the sense of moral questioning. And the camera movement there is, does not connect with the vivid, messy business of Marion's room or with the behaviour of the actress. The elements of the mise en scene do not signify, do not reflect and enhance each other but are disconnected parts of a meaningless whole.

72. FROZEN FRAMES FROM BOTH SCENES
                    V/O

Most importantly, the different characterisation of Marion Crane. Characterisation - the human element within the mise en scene dynamic – was the politique's primary element for directorial authorship. *How the director could speak to the audience.*

73. SHOT OF CHABROL
                    V/O

In Claude Chabrol's words, it was … "the position of the author … developed through the characters…". This was, to the *Cahiers* group, more than simple character subjectivity, it was the director's perspective on the world presented through those

205

characters. And this focus on characterisation demanded a certain realism. A realism that allowed the magic of cinema but demanded …

74. CONTINUING SCENE FROM *LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE*

            V/O

realistic acting, realistic expression of feeling, a state of mind that the audience could recognise as authentic.

In 1962 Godard said, … " I have always wanted, basically, to do research in the form of a spectacle. The documentary side: is a man in a particular situation. The spectacle comes when one makes this man a gangster or a secret agent." Jean-Luc Godard

To the *Cahiers* group the camera was the director's investigating eye and cinema was research of the world, the world in which one lived through spectacle, through the characters of that spectacle, and that world then presented as authentic as real – even the world of a beast in a fairy tale - because inspiration has been drawn from real life and expressed as a lived experience.

75. FREEZE FRAME OF *LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE*

            V/O

Did this spectacle of cinematic art demand technical excellence. No, the *Cahiers* group did not require their *auteurs* to be great technicians of film. Jacques Rivette, called

76. RAY INTERTITLE

            V/O

Nicholas Ray's films a eulogy to poverty - because the means of expression – the spectacle - did not depend on large budgets and elaborate studio productions.

77.   SHOT OF TRUFFAUT

> V/O

Truffaut wrote that Ray "was not of great stature as a technician … the editing is deplorable…", but he argued "that the interest lay elsewhere, in the beautiful positioning of the figures within the frame…". Truffaut called Nicholas Ray the poet of nightfall". And in this scene from Ray's *They Live by Night*

78.   FULL SCENE FROM *THEY LIVE BY NIGHT*

> V/O

… can be seen the poetry of nightfall. The beautiful positioning of the figures within the frame. The deplorable editing. The same use of mise en scene to convey the meaning of the scene, the same focus on characterisation, on the people rather than the plot events – not on what happens to the characters but how it happens to them. A focus that not only demanded a certain realism, but signified a moral position, a moral position the Cahiers group required of all their auteurs. And when that moral position was realised cinematically, on screen, as a way of seeing the world, it became an aesthetic style. According to the *Cahiers* group, and to Andre Bazin.

79.   SHOT OF ANDRE BAZIN

> V/O

Bazin was the *Cahiers* group's *eminence grise,* it was his concept of cinematic realism, of a moral position realised as an aesthetic style, that was the theoretical foundation underpinning the *politique des auteurs*. And to understand and define that concept we turn once again to the screen.

80.   SHOT OF ROSSELLINI FROM TRUFFAUT'S FILM

> V/O

Roberto Rossellini, the neo-realist director Truffaut called his "Italian father", and all the *Cahiers* group called a great *auteur*. And in his film

81.   SCENE FROM *ROME, OPEN CITY*

                              V/O

Rome, Open City, about the Italian partisan struggle against fascism during the Second World War can be seen a moral position realised as an aesthetic style. Meaning is primarily conveyed through composition and direction of the image not primarily through manipulation of that image by editing. So all within the frame are shown, their relation to each other, the other elements in the scene and to their setting. Again the focus is on the people, not the politics, their reaction to what is happening to them rather than to the event itself. We are shown a young soldier, an executioner. So often the firing squad is just part of the event, not here. They are all within the frame and part of the scene, because the director has made them all equally important. And another young soldier. The audience is allowed some degree of choice between antipathy and sympathy, because in Truffaut words there is "an equality of treatment". Of course the filmmaker decides what to show and how. Our gaze is directed by Rossellini. But because the image is not primarily manipulated by the editing to signify meaning but shown, because the people portrayed on screen are not manipulated and objectified out of context to each other and the facts within the scene by editing but shown, because realistic acting is demanded of everyone, whatever their dramatic importance, the **ambiguity** of reality is shown and the moral, humane position that ambiguity implies. In the words of Andre Bazin, no character is reduced to the "condition of an object or a symbol that would allow one to hate them in comfort without having first to leap the hurdle of their humanity".

82.   INTER TITLE

"As far as I am concerned it is primarily a moral position which gives a perspective on the world. It then becomes an aesthetic position, but its basis is moral." Roberto Rossellini.

83.   SHOTS OF *LA BELLE, PSYCHO, LA DAME, REBECCA, RED RIVER, THE BIG SLEEP, THEY LIVE BY NIGHT, ROME,OPEN CITY*

V/O

Rome, Open City is a film so very different from Bresson's *Les dames du Bois de Boulogne* or Hitchcock's *Rebecca* or the *Red River* of Howard Hawks or Cocteau's *La Belle et La Bête* but according to the *Cahiers* group these films and Ray's *They Live By Night* represented the same idea of cinematic realism, of cinematic art, because the *politique des auteurs* was an idea of film that allowed the spectacle of cinema, of film as entertainment, of Hollywood, because it did not require a film have a significant social or political subject matter to be considered serious cinema, to be considered art, but demanded a way of seeing, and realising, a world on screen.

84.   SHOT OF *AUTEURS*

V/O

Their *auteurs* were a duality, both authors of their films and cinematic artists. That duality had to be achieved for a director to be regarded as one of their *auteurs*. And not all did so.

85.   SHOT?

V/O

Those directors chastised by Godard for being so far aesthetically and morally from what they had hoped.

86.   SHOT?

V/O

But the *Cahiers* group's definition the only way to define a cinematic artist? No, it is not. Is the *politique des auteurs* the only way to read and evaluate a film? No. The *Cahiers* group rejected other ideas of film as art and did not allow a full view, denying other important aspects of the creative process of filmmaking – such as the editing, the grammar of film. As they realised when they

87.   SHOT OF TRUFFAUT STILL THEN *THE 400 BLOWS*

V/O

too became directors. Taking their idea of film from the page to the screen. Some of their ideas changed as they experienced the realities of filmmaking. Some even renounced the *politique des auteurs* for ideological reasons.

It was a policy conceived at a certain time in a certain place. But it is more than just an historical point in time, it remains a starting point for those wishing to use cinema as a means for personal expression because it identified specifically cinematic art, distinct from all other visual and narrative art forms, it identified how cinema's own specific language could be used "to extend a state of mind and express thought on screen".

For François Truffaut. The qualities of a film could not "... possibly be seen by anyone who had never ventured a look through a camera eye-piece. He believed that they had retraced the origins of cinematic creativity."

And this cinematic text is one person's definition of that idea of film.

88.   SHOT OF ANDRE BAZIN/ALEXANDRE ASTRUC/*CAHIERS* GROUP

89.   BLACK SPACE

90.   EXCERPT FROM GODARD'S FILM
"This is cinema …"

Rosalie Greener
9.6.08

* This was the final version of the script prior to the final edit.

"THE *POLITIQUE DES AUTEURS* IN PRACTICE"

1.   BLACK SPACE

>   V/O

What is cinema? Cinema fills this space. Cinematic space, narrative space for expression. But is it space for **personal** expression? Can any **one** person be responsible for the creative possibilities held within this space?

2.   CREDITS

>   V/O

Cinema is collaborative, numerous people are needed to bring a cinematic text to the screen. Can one person, the director, claim to be the author of the text.

3.   SHOTS OF *CAHIERS* GROUP

>   V/O

The authors of the *politique des auteurs* believed one person could be the author and that their *politique* was a policy for cinematic authorship. That, despite

4.   SHOTS FROM *MALTESE FALCON* SET

>   V/O

the collaborative and industrial nature of cinema, the director was a lone artist "standing

5.   SHOT OF BLACK SPACE

>   V/O

before a blank page".

6.   BLACK SPACE

                V/O

Why does it matter, why this bourgeois pre-occupation with who might be the author

of a film – IF that is possible. Because that is the question for the

7.   SHOT OF ROSALIE

                V/O

author of this cinematic text. The question, and her inspiration. The possibility of

filling

8.   BLACK SPACE

                V/O

this space with a cinematic work she could claim to have authored as the director of

that work. The possibility for personal expression held within this immense space.

And with that possibility in mind, a filmed experiment was devised. The experiment:

9.   THE EXPERIMENT/ SHOT OF RG

                V/O

For a novice director, with virtually no previous practical experience, and with limited

resources at her disposal, to film the first scene of

10.   SHOT OF NOVEL COVER/HAMMETT

                V/O

Dashiell Hammett's novel *The Maltese Falcon*, applying the principles of the *politique

des auteurs* when directing that scene. The experimental scene then to be compared

with the first scene from

11.   SHOT OF HUSTON CREDITS/HUSTON?

                V/O

John Huston's filmed version of that novel, the comparative text. For this experiment

12.   BLACK SPACE

                    V/O

minimal previous experience was a necessary element. For, if the hypothesis was to

be proven then the principles of the *politique* **had to be** the starting point. The

hypothesis:

13.   THE HYPOTHESIS

                    V/O

that the *politique* introduced a method for directorial personal expression – an heuristic

method – a method for achieving knowledge through reflective practice.

14.   ME ON SET TURNING BACK INTO ROOM

                    V/O

would be a test of the *politique des auteurs* in practice.

15.   TITLE: "THE *POLITIQUE DES AUTEUR* IN PRACTICE"

16.   COVER OF THE NOVEL *THE MALTESE FALCON*

                    V/O

The Maltese Falcon, the novel authored by

17.   SHOT OF HAMMETT

                    V/O

Dashiell Hammett. Here is

18.   SHOT OF HUSTON

                    V/O

John Huston's filmed version of that novel was his first film as a director, and he also

wrote the script. He narrated Hammett's story on screen and introduced the characters

of that story:

Sam Spade – a private detective

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Miles Archer – his partner

Effie Perine – their secretary

Brigid O'Shaughnessy in the guise of Miss Wonderly – a murderess.

19.   SHOT OF HUSTON ON SET

                  V/O

But was John Huston the author of the film?

20.   CREDITS FROM FILM

                  V/O

This is the first scene taken, almost word for word from the novel.

21.   FULL SCENE FROM HUSTON'S FILM.

22.   SHOT OF HAMMETT THEN HUSTON.

                    V/O

John Huston narrated Hammett's story as a film but was he the author of that film?
No, not in terms of the *politique des auteurs*, within the terms of that policy of
authorship Huston, as the director, was not the author, was not an *auteur*. He failed to
present a coherent personal vision. He merely transferred Hammett's plot to the
screen. How else could

22.   SHOTS OF RG, HUSTON, NOVEL

                  V/O

The Maltese Falcon, the novel authored by

23.   SHOT OF HAMMETT

                  V/O

Dashiell Hammett have been filmed applying the principles of the *politique* to
introduce us

24.   SHOTS OF HUSTON'S CHARACTERS

              V/O

To an office girl who is the moral conscious of the story, a murderess, her victim and her nemesis - the man who will become the lover who betrays her?

25.   SHOT OF RG

              V/O

This filmed version of the first scene of that novel was **her** first film as a director, and she also wrote the script. She narrated Hammett'S story on screen and introduced the characters of that story:

26.   SHOTS OF MY CHARACTERS

              V/O

Sam Spade – a private detective

Miles Archer – his partner

Effie Perine – their secretary

Brigid O'Shaughnessy in the guise of Miss Wonderly – a murderess.

27.   SHOT OF HUSTON ON SET

              V/O

But was she the author of the film?

28.   CREDITS FROM FILM

              V/O

Here is her first scene.

29.   THE EXPERIMENTAL SCENE

30. SHOT OF RG AT TABLE

          V/O

The experiment was conceived to test if the *politique des auteurs* was a manifesto for cinematic authorship. Here is the experimental director's analysis and application of the main principles of the *politique* in practice, and her directorial intentions.

31. SHOT OF SCENE BEING CONSTRUCTED

          V/O

The first principle, the scene on screen must be written in cinematic language: the plot, characters and dialogue all to be analysed and expressed through the mise en scene dynamic: through composition and direction of the lighting, sets, camera shots, costumes, attitude and behaviour of the actors.

32. SHOT OF HUSTON'S SCENE

          V/O

But Huston did not take the novel as the opportunity to write his own story in cinematic language, his own perception of the characters and the world they inhabited. He only used the techniques and language of film to transfer the plot to the screen.

33. OPENING SHOTS FROM FILM

          V/O

For example, these opening shots establish the location of the story in San Francisco but are not used to introduce the film's moral and aesthetic universe and together with the soundtrack they contradict the sense of threat and mystery created by the music and images of the opening credits.

34. SHOTS OF EXPERIMENTAL SCENE

          V/O

In the experimental scene all the elements of the mise en scene dynamic were employed. With this opening shot of Spade, the lighting, framing and acting were composed to set the scene, create atmosphere and introduce this character: to suggest his isolation from other and his inner world. The music chosen from the era, the

1940s, was intended to heighten the narrative impact and to suggest the nature of the story to follow. Second principle:

35. SHOT OF NOVEL, SCRIPT, RG AND ACTORS DISCUSSING SCRIPT

    V/O

The director's profound and intense involvement with the literary source material. This does not mean that the director must write an original script but that the literature should not be viewed as the story to be transferred to the screen but as a creative opportunity, and the script only the blueprint for the story to be written on screen in cinematic language.

36. SHOTS FROM SCENE

    V/O

Huston failed to do this. He cut and rearranged some of the dialogue in the novel but otherwise merely re-structured that scene in script form and then filmed it.

37. SHOTS OF RG'S SCENE

    V/O

This director cut most of the dialogue but otherwise wrote the scene in the script as it was written in the novel. And then, in the editing suite the scene was composed as a flash back – a dramatic device allowing the reduced dialogue to be heard as selected conversation provoking Spade's memory of the event.

38. SHOTS OF RG WITH ACTORS

    V/O

Third principle. Characterisation, the human element of the mise en scene dynamic, used as the director's primary narrative strategy. Most importantly, the director must have a moral perception of each character **and** a moral perspective on them.

39. SHOTS OF THE ACTORS AND SCENES ON SET

    V/O

Equal attention given to all the characters, to direction of the actors, irrespective of their time on screen

40. SHOTS OF THE CHARACTERS

    V/O

Huston failed on both counts.

41. SCENE FROM FILM

    V/O

What story has he started to tell? Who are these people? What has he made significant about them? Do we care about them, what happens to them – any of them? In Hammett's novel:

42. SHOTS FROM FILM

    V/O

• Sam Spade – a private detective, a Lucifer figure, almost past redemption, weakened and emasculated by his affair with his partner's wife, a woman he had grown tired of, a man he's contemptuous of.

• The partner, Miles Archer, is not too bright, lecherous, vindictive. There is active malicious dislike between the pair.

• Effie Perine – their secretary, the only truly moral person in the novel and the only one that Spade ever apologises to.

• Brigid O'Shaughnessy, in the guise of Miss Wonderly – a devious, disturbed murderess and the woman Spade will use to reclaim his psychological and emotional strength, his potency.

43.   SHOT OF HUSTON's SPADE

V/O

In Huston's film is there any sense of his spiritual and psychological malaise, his isolation, as this scene begins? His limited but troubled moral conscience and his deep suspicion of, but attraction to, this woman?

44.   SHOT OF RG's SPADE

V/O

In the experimental scene portraying all those characteristics, but also his underlying dominance and danger, was attempted through composition of the scene, the framing of his shots, the lighting, his command of the frame at the beginning and at the end.

45.   FREEZE FRAME ON SPADE AND ARCHER FOLLOWED BY THEIR SHOTS

V/O

Does Huston suggest the **depth of** antagonism between this pair? The camera set up might suggest rivalry, the acting and dialogue suggest amused derision. But is there any real sense of active, malicious dislike?

46.   FINAL CAMERA MOVEMENT FROM HUSTON's SCENE

V/O

This camera movement is only a stylistic flourish, the technique has not been used to signify a narrative point or to indicate the director's eye on this world and his perception of it.

47.   FINAL SHOT OF SPADE FROM BOTH SCENES

V/O

At this moment Spade is knowingly allowing his partner to walk into a trap, and is rather amused. This narrative fact was attempted in the experimental scene, to make evident that Spade realised …

48. SHOT OF BRIGID

> V/O

"Miss Wonderly's" story, Brigid O'Shaughnessy's story, was not authentic and she might be dangerous, even though Archer had not.

49. SHOT OF ARCHER

> V/O

The Archer character is given less screen time in the experimental scene but the depth of antagonism between him and Spade was attempted during the final shots when the scene was composed so that both men remained standing, with no eye contact and spatial distance between them.

50. FREEZE FRAME ON EFFIE THEN HER INTRODUCTION

> V/O

In Huston's scene, Effie Perine is just a bit part introducing Miss Wonderly. Is there any intimation that she more than just a walk-on role and will play a significant role in the story if not in the plot events?

51. SHOT OF RG's EFFIE

> V/O

This director read Effie as the moral heart and conscience of the story, Spade's conscience, and wanted to suggest her importance and continued presence in the film. So she was framed in close-up, in full light, the first character in Spade's memory of the event and attention paid to how such a character, an office girl, would be likely to introduce a glamorous woman calling herself Miss Wonderly.

52. SHOTS OF BRIGID

> V/O

And Miss Wonderly, Brigid O'shaughnessy. A complicated, devious character, not sympathetically drawn by Hammett.

53. FREEZE FRAME ON BRIGID FOLLOWED BY SOME OF HER DIALOGUE

           V/O

In Huston's scene she is just a nervy, rather irritating dame telling a story. Is there any sense of how sinister and devious she is?

54. SHOTS OF RG's BRIGID

           V/O

This director's reading of Brigid was of a psychologically disturbed woman, a *femme fatale* who murdered while perceiving herself as the frightened victim she pretended to be, and she never dropped that persona. If the moral pre-requisite was to be realised

55. SHOT OF HER LOOKING AT ARCHER UNAWARES

           V/O

attention had to be paid to at least attempting a sense of her deviousness and disturbed psyche, her choice of Archer as victim, the mortal danger she represented and her lack of moral conscience. And in according her that equality the director realised that this first scene belonged not only to Spade but equally to her.

56. CONTINUING SCENE

           V/O

And what of this director's collaborators? Cinema is a collaborative practice and the text on screen was not created by the director alone. According to the *politique* crew and cast are not co-authors but resources at the director's disposal because the director has the primary creative function for composing the mise en scene. What was the reality in practice? On set were the actors, the director of photography, the art director and her assistant, the hair and make-up professionals, the sound recordist, the production manager, the gaffer. Off-set and post-production were editing and audio professionals. On set each function was as important as the other for **producing** the creative **work** because each function had to be present at the same time on-set to make the film, and each collaborator on-set contributed his or her expertise, experience and talent according to their function on-set. This filmed text is a result of that

collaborative effort. But, all asked the same question. What is your vision? What is your direction? What is our starting point, and where are we going?

All collaborators were depending on the Director to communicate her vision of the film being made, and, the Director then depended on them, to help her achieve that personal vision. They would do so, with no guarantee that repayment would come in the form of a finished film that fully realised each of their contributions as a coherent narrative and aesthetic whole. The Director was the initial, and constant, reference point. There was no other central figure to establish the film's personality and style; its identity and then to set the process in motion and make the decisions that would draw all the other contributed elements together in each shot forming the mise en scene.

The authors of the *politique des auteurs* typified the Director as a lone artist "standing before a blank page". In practice this Director found that conception of the Director's function accurate. Because, in practice, this Director faced the reality of filmmaking. A script, a set, cast and crew, their talent, expertise and experience were all at her disposal, but where to begin. She did indeed feel a lone figure standing before a blank page.

But, whether or not this novice, experimental Director seized ownership of the creative act and made the text a vehicle for her personal expression in cinematic language can only be judged by the audience, the readers of the text.

Rosalie Greener
4.8.08