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BARRY NEVIN

“After Hollywood and Its Ever-Blue Skies, How Beautiful Paris Looks!”: Jacques Feyder between France and America, 1928–1934

ABSTRACT: Although generally relegated by present-day historians to the footnotes of film history, Belgian director Jacques Feyder (1885–1948) strove to elevate the artistic standards of French film production throughout the 1920s and 1930s. His departure for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios on the cusp of the transition to sound in France was viewed as a crisis, and his return was hailed as an event. Drawing on contemporary periodicals, this article answers two fundamental questions: Why did France’s leading ambassador leave his adoptive homeland? And what factors motivated his return to France despite the country’s notoriously anarchic mode of production? Core concerns include Feyder’s experience of censorship in France during the 1920s, the impact of the French economy on filmmaking conditions, including sound technology, and Feyder’s desire to direct 1940, an ultimately aborted French project, while under contract to MGM.

KEYWORDS: émigré, Hollywood, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, talkies, transition, sound

INTRODUCTION: FEYDER, FRANCE, AND THE ADVENT OF SOUND

By the time the French film industry had surmounted the economic and technological difficulties of the post–World War I recession and become an internationally acclaimed aesthetic foundation of cinema culture, a new threat faced it: sound. *The Jazz Singer*, which was released in New York on October 6, 1927, premiered at the Aubert cinema in Paris on January 30, 1929, and stimulated the production of French-language sound films: *L’Eau du Nil* (Water of the Nile), shot as a silent film and released with a postsynchronized music track, was released on October 18, 1928; *Le Collier de la Reine* (The Queen’s Necklace), also shot as a silent and sonorized with music but containing a single section of



Fig. 1: Lieutenant de Saint-Avit (Georges Melchior) meets Antinéa (Stacia Napierkowska), predatory queen of Atlantis, in Feyder's lavish colonial epic and first feature-length film, *L'Atlantide* (1921).

dialogue, was released on October 22, 1929; and, eventually, *Les Trois Masques* (The Three Masks), the first French film to be conceived and presented as a talking film, was released in France on October 31, 1929.¹ Despite skepticism among contemporary critics and popular audiences, statistics published by the *Chambre syndicale de la cinématographie* (the French Trade Association for Cinema) revealed that the French public clearly wanted sound: in March 1930, 194 cinemas had been equipped with sound, and by October 1931, this number had grown to 1,027.² How French studios were to provide for their public despite burgeoning economic difficulties and indigenous cultural opposition to America's growing stake in French film production was another matter.

Fear and confusion regarding the French film industry's transition to sound were compounded by an announcement that Belgian director Jacques Feyder (1885–1948), who had been granted French citizenship on November 13, 1928, and had become the French cinema's leading international ambassador, had secured a three-year contract in Hollywood and would play no direct role in guiding his adoptive homeland through the traumatic technological, aesthetic, and economic consequences of sound.³ "A Sign of the Crisis ... Jacques



Fig. 2: Antoine Belot (Jean Forest) is adopted by wealthy American philanthropist Edith Manay (Françoise Rosay) in *Gribiche* (1926), one of Feyder's most critically and commercially successful silent films.

Feyder Has Left for America," read the title of an article published by René Clair in *Pour Vous*.⁴ Originally an actor at Gaumont, Feyder had elevated France's reputation as an internationally competitive producer of artistic films through his audacious colonial epic, *L'Atlantide* (Atlantis, 1921) (fig. 1), which played for a full year at Aubert's Madeleine-Cinéma and was distributed overseas, and a series of prestigious adaptations including *Crainquebille* (1922) and *Gribiche* (1926) (fig. 2), both of which were critical and commercial successes within and beyond France.⁵ By the early 1920s, certain critics considered Feyder France's finest director, alongside Clair.⁶ An apparently bright future now lay before Feyder who, on November 30, 1928, followed in the footsteps of Léonce Perret, Ernst Lubitsch, and Victor Sjöström to join a community of French émigrés whose ranks now included Claude Autant-Lara, Charles Boyer, Robert Florey, Mona Goya, and André Luguet.⁷

Jacques Polet distinguishes between four different categories of émigré directors: immigrants choosing to settle permanently in Hollywood; exiles dreaming of repatriation who are obliged to remain in Hollywood; invitees scheduled to fulfill a fixed-term contract; and *aspirants au départ*, who

emigrated in a misguided attempt to produce, direct, or perform in an ambitious personal project in Hollywood.⁸ Historians to date have tended to align Feyder with the first, third, and fourth of these categories, describing him as a director who optimistically abandoned the French film industry in favor of accepting a fixed-term contract from MGM, which resulted in a series of films that did not ultimately represent the best that either Feyder or MGM had to offer audiences. In what remains the most comprehensive study of Feyder's career to date, Victor Bachy writes that "Feyder believed in Hollywood as a kind of promised land for cinema."⁹ Echoing Bachy, Polet's study of Belgian émigrés argues that Feyder, before commencing his contract at MGM, "more or less shared this idea of a 'Promised Land'" that Hollywood represented for so many others.¹⁰

Contesting these views, this article argues that Feyder's core goal in emigrating to America was to simultaneously increase his reputation and output in France and Hollywood, initially through the opportunity that MGM offered him to adapt to the latest sound technology and, by 1931 at the latest, through the possibility of pursuing projects in France while still under contract to MGM. To this end, this article considers Feyder's reasons for making two key decisions that led to two crucial turning points in his career: first, his voluntary departure from his adoptive homeland; and second, his decision to return to France on an extended six-month vacation while still under contract to MGM. Key to this analysis are contemporary periodicals, particularly the writings of a young Marcel Carné, who acted as Feyder's assistant director on the set of *Les Nouveaux Messieurs* (The New Gentlemen, 1929), provided enthusiastic updates of Feyder's career in Hollywood, and would later serve as Feyder's assistant on three additional films (*Le Grand Jeu* [The Full Tarot, 1934], *Pension Mimosas* [1935], and *La Kermesse héroïque* [Carnival in Flanders, 1935]) following Feyder's return to France before becoming a major filmmaker in his own right.

GOING HOLLYWOOD: FROM ALBATROS TO MGM

Two central reasons for Feyder's decision to emigrate to Hollywood may be ascertained. First, despite Feyder's transnational reputation, he had received little support from the French film industry with which the international market identified him. As early as 1923, Feyder lamented that only directors working in America could direct a big-budget feature and realistically hope to recoup its costs without relying on overseas markets.¹¹ Feyder was not an isolated case: despite quotas placed on imports, France's share of its domestic market only amounted to 20 percent for the years 1920 to 1925, and this fell to 10 percent during the latter half of the decade, leaving few opportunities for

any filmmakers.¹² Feyder's circumstances were aggravated by the commercial failure of *Carmen* (1926) and an abortive adaptation of Pierre Benoît's *Le Roi lépreux*.¹³ Thereafter, he found himself obliged to travel to Berlin to direct *Thérèse Raquin* (1928) and, upon his return to France, to provide a screenplay for Jean Grémillon's *Gardiens de phare* (The Lighthouse Keepers, 1929). Feyder arguably experienced his greatest professional liberty and stability at the Russian-owned Albatros, which had allowed him to collaborate with leading craftsmen and screenwriters including set designer Lazare Meerson, who provided sets for *Gribiche*, *Carmen*, and *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, and fellow Belgian Charles Spaak, who cowrote *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*. However, by the time Feyder had announced his impending departure for Hollywood, Clair was justly criticizing the French film industry for failing to support "the French school's greatest film auteur."¹⁴

The second reason motivating Feyder's departure was the standard of technology available in Hollywood during the transition to sound. Hollywood, particularly a studio as prestigious as MGM, represented high production standards and a fertile market: it was the only studio to turn a profit during the Great Depression and also had the greatest success in exploiting the prestige picture, with what Ronald Haver describes as a "lordly disregard for money."¹⁵ Conversely, French production of the early sound period suffered from excessive costs of film stock (up to 50 percent extra because of the higher speed of emulsion), the price of renting studios (from between two and five thousand francs per day to about twenty thousand francs per day),¹⁶ the necessarily narrow appeal of French-language cinema in the world market, and the difficulties incurred by producers seeking credit in an industry that relied on outside sources for 60 percent of its capital (the highest percentage required by any contemporaneous French industry) and in which credit agencies—themselves in crisis—were understandably reluctant to fund filmmakers.¹⁷ Moreover, studios were generally rented on credit from studios and laboratories in exchange for a portion of the film's projected profits, a practice that did not constitute a reliable basis on which to plan necessary renovations and which problematized the prospect of any future development of filmmaking infrastructure in France.¹⁸

Because these radical economic issues affected standards of essential filmmaking technology, they also carried major ramifications for France's own stake in its national market. The conversion to sound presented a lucrative opportunity for foreign investors, specifically Hollywood and Germany, because France lacked the sufficient economic force (approximately one billion dollars, in Colin Crisp's analysis)¹⁹ to convert its six thousand theaters and fifty-five production stages and American films were already accounting for up to 70 percent

of box-office revenue during the 1920s.²⁰ As Dudley Andrew notes, “Hollywood had France in the palm of its hand.”²¹ Also challenging the French national stake was the German Tobis, which represented Paramount’s main rival in Europe. Originally a Dutch-owned company, Tobis merged with Klangfilm, a German company, to create Tobis-Klangfilm in 1929. The company produced French- and German-language versions of films in Épinay-sur-Seine with leading directors and technicians including Clair, whose first three sound films—*Sous les toits de Paris* (Under the Roofs of Paris, 1930), *Le Million* (The Million, 1931), and *À nous la liberté* (Liberty for Us, 1931)—catalyzed the company’s domination over sound-film technology in Scandinavia and northern and central Europe during the 1930s.²²

The conversion to sound represented a strong motivating factor for Feyder’s departure, not only because of France’s manifest lack of economic and technological resources, but also because he was extremely optimistic regarding the future of sound film within an adequately equipped environment. This view distinguished him from numerous critics who shared a conviction that sound threatened the status of the recently christened seventh art and would transform the cinema from a dignified mode of representation into a degraded, inartistic recording medium. Typifying the latter viewpoint, one reviewer lamented the imminent loss of the unique cinematographic language pioneered by silent filmmakers: “The talking film is an antithesis [*contresens*] replete with formidable dangers.... After thirty years of progress, cinematographic technique has acquired a perfect eloquence which has no cause for envy and owes nothing to the eloquence of the spoken word [*du verbe*].”²³ Amid the traumatic technological and economic upheavals incurred during the conversion, numerous aesthetic debates inevitably unfolded. Clair and Marcel Pagnol came to personify the first of these, that of film versus filmed theater, which became, as Susan Hayward notes, “the one most often cited today as *the* debate of the 1930s” (emphasis in original), Pagnol emphasizing the cinema’s relationship with theater, Clair arguing against the subjugation of visual elements to the alleged primacy of the spoken word.²⁴ A second debate, the distinction between *film parlant* (direct sound) and *film sonore* (postsynchronized sound), in Charles O’Brien’s analysis, “could be said to have marked the fault line in conversion-era aesthetics for the French film community.”²⁵ Whereas direct sound granted a higher degree of realism, the flexibility of post-synchronization permitted an apparent formal continuity with the techniques of rapid editing pioneered by the French impressionist and Soviet schools, then considered by filmmakers and theorists alike as a crucial hallmark of cinematographic art. Antipathy toward sound was aggravated by contemporary perceptions of talking cinema as a regrettable symptom of Hollywood’s

economic, technological, and aesthetic imperialism. As one reviewer pleaded, “we congratulate the United States on their marvelous invention, but we beg them to keep it for themselves.”²⁶

Unlike such commentators, but sharing Pagnol and Clair’s confidence in the future of sound film, Feyder astutely described sound as a crucial device for any aesthetically progressive director. In an article published in 1929, he unhesitatingly confirmed that “talking film is, without question, the imminent global [*partout*], commercial and industrial future” as well as “a cinematographic *art*, finally liberated of subtitles, and intensified by all aural sensations” (emphasis in original).²⁷ Although Feyder’s own reputation largely rested on the silent films that he had directed in Europe (indeed, one horrified critic envisaged the dubbing of Feyder’s own adaptation of *Thérèse Raquin*),²⁸ he readily criticized the limited aesthetic scope of *le film muet*, likening silent filmmaking to “constant acrobatics, as impossible as painting a miniature with a large paintbrush.”²⁹ Furthermore, Feyder admitted his own initial impression that postsynchronization represented the way forward for cinema (“*film sonore*, yes; *film parlant*, no”) but dismissed this view as an “absurd phase” and reduced the *film sonore* to “a rigid and hybrid genre, a transitional genre without a future,” in favor of promoting the *film parlant*.³⁰

One week before setting sail from France, Feyder expressed his confidence in what he and Hollywood had to offer one another, wagering that “even at the very worst, I can only win.”³¹ Many critics would have agreed with Feyder during the months that followed for the reasons described above and for another that confirmed Feyder’s misgivings regarding the French film industry: *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, Feyder’s final production for Albatros and his final contribution to French silent film, became a cause célèbre when its satirical content—a love triangle involving a ballerina (Gaby Morlay), an ageing aristocratic minister (Henry Roussel), and an electrician (Albert Préjean) later appointed labor minister of a new left-wing government—incurred the wrath of the French government (figs. 3 and 4). The film was screened in its entirety for industry officials, government representatives, and journalists on November 28, 1928, the day Feyder set sail for America. However, recalling the censoring of Feyder’s *L’Image* (The Image, 1923), the film was temporarily banned and recut. The decision to censor the film evoked significant controversy for two reasons. First, according to a reporter for *Ciné-Théâtre*, the minister for the interior had banned the film without any intervention on the part of the Commission de contrôle, a censorship board comprised of government representatives and film-industry officials, which had been established by the Édouard Herriot decree on February 18, 1928.³² Second, the questionable unanimity of the decision-making process was interrogated in the French press: writing on the case



Fig. 3: In one of the most controversial scenes in *Les Nouveaux Messieurs* (1929), a member of the Assemblée nationale dreams that his fellow members have become ballerinas.

of *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, screenwriter Alexandre Arnoux (who later provided the script of Feyder's *La Loi du nord* [The Law of the North, 1939]), reported that the commission had been delegating its responsibilities to a subcommittee, such that "the film industry [*le Cinéma*] like all major modern industries, is dictated by a stenographer."³³ Despite public outcry, the government upheld the decision, and the censorship board later ratified this verdict on December 27, 1928. A truncated version of *Les Nouveaux messieurs* was granted a general release on April 5, 1929, by which time Feyder had spent over five months in Hollywood and silent films were of significantly lower export value.³⁴ The original version of the film would not be granted a general release during Feyder's lifetime and would not be viewable until Alexander Kamenka reintegrated the deleted scenes thirty years later.³⁵

The apparent prudence of Feyder's decision to leave France was further underscored by an article published by Carné on September 20, 1929, almost one year after the premiere of *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*. Referring to the censoring of both this film and *L'Image* "by Jacques Feyder (who really has no luck)," Carné argued that censorship was responsible for the lack of diversity and new directions evidenced by current French films and lamented the power of



Fig. 4: Jacques (Préjean) adjusts to his new role as labor minister in the company of Susanne (Morlay) in *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*.

“producers, editors, and exhibitors who can carve up, amputate, add to, cut, and grind up a work of art without leaving the author any right to control.”³⁶ Carné was not exaggerating: although the Herriot decree aimed to limit the power of local authorities by granting government representatives “a power of absolute veto over certain films whenever they wished to exercise it,” this legislation remained coenshrined with an 1864 decree that vested control of exhibition in local authorities, some of whom still persisted in proscribing films, especially in the southeast region of France.³⁷ Moreover, as Jonathan Buchsbaum observes, the criteria for approving a visa in the French 1928 legal decree were extremely vague, leaving the French commission “wide room for interpretation,” which resulted in cuts to films on a variety of grounds including antimilitarism, communism, attacks on judiciary or state institutions, and the possibility of provoking incidents with foreign powers.³⁸

Feyder was far less likely to fall victim to censors in Hollywood: in 1927, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA, commonly known as the Hays Office) published a code, familiarly dubbed the “Don’ts and Be Carefuls,” which had been compiled by a committee chaired by MGM’s head of production, Irving Thalberg. Despite the validation of a revised American

Production Code on March 31, 1930, these guidelines were not rigorously enforced until an agreement was consolidated between the MPPDA and the Roman Catholic hierarchy in July 1934.³⁹ Clearly, the Hollywood mode of production and distribution boasted significant advantages for a director with Feyder's history. However, as Feyder and his early biographers would later observe, his optimism would not be justified by his output.

LOOKING TOWARD 1940: FEYDER'S RETURN TO FRANCE

Feyder surmised in later years that "I did not direct any truly great [*important*] films in Hollywood, but I learned many things."⁴⁰ Indeed, Feyder was one of few studio directors to work exclusively on silent film while others at MGM were already experimenting with various combinations of dialogue, noise, and music, allowing him to become acquainted with a radically new *métier* from a distance. As Feyder would later remark in his autobiography, "I was immersed in talking film while I was still creating silence and I unconsciously memorized experiences that fate was sparing me; I absorbed sound before employing it myself."⁴¹ This is clear in an open letter dated February 6, 1929, in which Feyder was already observing that "some [films] are merely filmed theater; others that, on the contrary, are pursuing movement, are too jerky, and are copying old filmmaking techniques far too closely; the alternation between silence and sound in some other films is shocking."⁴² Such a variety of approaches was to be expected because sound inevitably posed problems for established stars and crew members alike. Sound craft was problematized by antagonism among different technicians, particularly cinematographers and sound personnel.⁴³ These difficulties were aggravated by technical issues incurred during shooting: total silence was essential on set, accompanying music scores required on-set orchestras, and acoustic difficulties imposed by noisy arc lights and cameras were compounded by omnidirectional microphones.⁴⁴ Robert Florey, a fellow French émigré who worked as a director in Hollywood during this arduous transition, wrote: "We realized that the noise emitted by a sugar lump falling into an empty cup became the same as the noise from a cannon-fire after recording. That is how we learned the value of noises and ways of editing them [*truquer*]."⁴⁵ Feyder himself implied that Hollywood was an ideal place to learn about surmounting these difficulties and synchronizing direct and recorded sound within the desired hierarchy of dialogue, music, and ambient sound, admitting that "there is one thing we cannot take away from the Americans: all of their technical resources are incomparable."⁴⁶ However, his dream of directing a series of prestigious, adequately funded projects in the financially solvent environment that had eluded him (and most other filmmakers) in France did not materialize. His



Fig. 5: Feyder directs Garbo on the set of *The Kiss*.

first Hollywood film fulfilled Feyder's hopes in part. During a brief holiday in Paris, Françoise Rosay (Feyder's wife from 1917 to his death in 1938, who starred in five of his feature-length films) reported to Carné that Feyder himself was contributing to the writing of his first American project, *The Kiss* (1929), a promising star vehicle for Greta Garbo that had been selected after over four months of deliberation (fig. 5).⁴⁷ Carné endeavored to preserve Feyder's image as the quintessential European auteur by stressing his master's creative control over the film: "From what we can ascertain, Feyder has not given in to America's formidable discipline. On the contrary, he has retained his very personal way in the style of controlling directors, overlooking everything and confident in nobody but himself."⁴⁸ Carné particularly emphasized Feyder's own contribution to the visual style of *The Kiss*, reporting that the studio had acquiesced to Feyder's request that MGM's technicians design purpose-built cameras capable of offering an increased degree of mobility at low angles.⁴⁹ When asked by Carné whether or not Feyder intended to return to France in the near future, Rosay responded "unfortunately, I do not think so. Jacques himself does not know the date on which he will return."⁵⁰ Publicly,

at least, Feyder was successfully integrating into MGM's mode of production while maintaining authorial control over his projects.

However, after directing *The Kiss*, Feyder was relegated to foreign-language versions of MGM's more widely viewed English-language features: *Le Spectre Vert* (The Green Ghost, 1930) was a remake of *The Unholy Night* (1929); Feyder recast *His Glorious Night* (1929) as the German-language *Olympia* (1930) and the French-language *Si l'Empereur savait ça!* (If the Emperor Knew That!, 1930); *Anna Christie* (1930) was a German-language adaptation of the Eugene O'Neill play whose English-language version (also 1930) had been entrusted to MGM stalwart Clarence Brown; Feyder was subsequently replaced by Pál Fejös on *Révolte dans le prison* (1931), a French-language version of *The Big House* (1930). Thereafter, MGM recognized the financial inviability of foreign-language versions of sound films and granted Feyder *Daybreak* (1931) and *Son of India* (1931), two star vehicles for Ramon Novarro, before Feyder opted out of a renewal on his contract. Feyder had previously intended to direct two further talking films in Hollywood, each starring Garbo. The first, an adaptation of Gertrude Atherton's *Black Oxen*, was announced by Feyder as his third upcoming collaboration with MGM's reigning star in October 1931 but was never produced.⁵¹ An ambitious adaptation of Luigi Pirandello's *As You Desire Me* was also intended to reunite Feyder with Garbo. However, studio executives reportedly balked at Feyder's insistence on retaining Pirandello's ending, in which the alcoholic amnesiac protagonist remains uncertain of her true identity, and delegated the project (released with Pirandello's title in 1932) to producer-director George Fitzmaurice. Beyond these projects, Feyder claimed to have refused invitations from studio executives to remake both *L'Atlantide* and *Crainquebille*.⁵² Regardless of the veracity of his claim, the scope of the projects he actually directed remained decidedly limited.

Critical opinions of Feyder's Hollywood output were mixed in France but did encompass some extremely positive reviews: *The Kiss* was described by one critic as "[a] masterly work drawn from a rather thin story,"⁵³ and another review observed that it was superior to contemporary American films because it "bears the brand not only of a great director, but also of an artist."⁵⁴ *Le Spectre Vert*, which ranked as the fifth-highest box-office success of the 1929–30 season,⁵⁵ was praised in France for its "remarkable quality"⁵⁶ and was accredited with renewing the *film policier*,⁵⁷ while *Si l'Empereur savait ça!* was deemed "impeccable in terms of sound cinema"⁵⁸ and was even praised by one critic as "the most authentically *French* work that America has produced" (emphasis in original).⁵⁹ These reviews reinforced Feyder's reputation in France, which had already been bolstered by recent rereleases of *Crainquebille*, *Visages d'Enfants*

(*Faces of Children*, 1925), and *Carmen* in December 1928.⁶⁰ However, Feyder's public comments during this period clearly indicate his disillusionment with the studio system that had initially attracted him to Hollywood. During a six-month vacation from MGM that lasted from August 8, 1931, to January 15, 1932,⁶¹ Feyder granted an interview to Carné, revealing a director who already seemed at odds with Hollywood and reluctant to fulfill his obligations to the studio: "He shuffles along with his hands in his pockets," wrote Carné, "stops, lets a few short words escape from the corner of his lips, and has the moist eyes of a beaten dog."⁶²

Feyder would travel from Hollywood to France for the last time on February 17, 1933.⁶³ Looking back on her husband's experience as a contract director in Hollywood, Rosay recollected: "I had . . . the very clear impression that Jacques was not in his element."⁶⁴ Similarly, in his autobiography (cowritten with Rosay), Feyder observed: "They imported a European and put every advantage in his hands. And here is the result: a film that an indigenous director could have directed in very much the same way!"⁶⁵ Carné, Feyder, and Rosay's writings recall an article entitled "Impressions of Hollywood," published on August 27, 1933, in which Feyder lamented the rarity of opportunities to innovate in films destined for the general public: "I think we can reproach producers for their concern for immediate payback, for their reservations and spinelessness, and for a subjugation of principle to any kind of public taste. It seems that with a little more daring, lucidity, and intuition, they could drive and direct the public (without colliding with it) instead of following it as they are."⁶⁶ It was arguably already apparent to Feyder by the time he was invited to Hollywood that his contract constituted an astute economic move, first and foremost, on the part of MGM. As Kristin Thompson notes, by 1927, the French film industry represented a major stylistic alternative to dominant classical Hollywood cinema and, to some critics, offered real potential challenges to American hegemony of the market.⁶⁷ Feyder, had he remained in Europe, would have represented such an alternative: his own importance not only as a major francophone director but also as a key player in European cinema had recently been elevated by the production of *Thérèse Raquin*, which was shot in Berlin, coproduced by Feyder and Deutsche Film-Union, and viewed by Thalberg during a tour of Europe before he hired Feyder.⁶⁸ In an interview published on February 23, 1933 (five days after his return to France), Feyder maintained that he would be willing to travel to Hollywood again, "but on condition that it be for a relatively short period and that the choice of the subject I am directing be defined in advance."⁶⁹ The freshly disillusioned Feyder undoubtedly recognized the unlikelihood of such privileges being offered, admitting: "After Hollywood and its ever-blue skies, how beautiful Paris looks!"⁷⁰

Feyder's return to France surely appeared as audacious in February of 1932 as it does in hindsight, for although the French industry had definitively converted to sound by the time that Feyder had arrived, its mode of production was nonetheless, in Andrew's words, "unruly, unregulated and utterly speculative,"⁷¹ rationalized by independent producers amid a market in which the major studios that Feyder knew had either radically altered their modes of production or were on the brink of bankruptcy. Ginette Vincendeau notes that in 1933, 229 new production companies were formed while fifty-eight folded, lending credence to Crisp's observation that "each individual firm risked bankruptcy with every project."⁷² The same year, eighty-six cinemas were declared bankrupt and Paramount retreated from France.⁷³ Both Gaumont and Pathé-Nathan were already suffering from burgeoning cash-flow issues and would respectively declare bankruptcy in 1934 and 1936. Furthermore, Albatros, arguably the studio that had contributed most consistently to Feyder's career during the 1920s (*Gribiche*, *Carmen*, and *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*) and home to an efficient system of production that had likely whetted Feyder's appetite for Hollywood's industrial studio structure, had not collapsed, but was no longer in a position to lavishly invest in pioneering set designers and leading technicians. Said Jean Renoir, "the talkie was their Waterloo. Either the Russian actors didn't speak French or they spoke it with an indecipherable accent. They lived among one another, on the fringes of French life, and had no opportunity to learn French."⁷⁴ Writing in March 1934 (the year in which Feyder's first French production of the sound era, *Le Grand Jeu*, was released), Jean-Georges Auriol declared:

French cinema—or, let us reiterate that little of it is French—is struggling because it is targeted by businesspeople and because its efforts are divided, dispersed, and improvised. Our cinema (particularly its mode of production) is in a state of anarchy. There are almost as many anonymous companies as there are films produced. Each film is a special case. Everyone who collaborates is employed by the week, the day, or sometimes the hour. These collaborators often find themselves together for the first time and an ad hoc leader strives to train them as a team in order to control them (or, more precisely, bully them) more effectively.⁷⁵

Feyder's return to France was doubly daring since, as noted earlier, his popularity during the early 1920s had done little to ensure professional stability there during the remainder of that decade. This would also prove to be the case in the early 1930s: Feyder was offered the opportunity to direct Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* by publisher Gaston Gallimard (then owner of La



Fig. 6: Expatriate *légionnaire* Pierre Martel (Pierre Richard-Willm) encounters his Parisian lover's doppelgänger (Marie Bell) in Morocco in *Le Grand Jeu* (1934).

Nouvelle Société de Films) in 1932 with dialogue by novelist Roger Maxim du Gard, but this proposition fell through.⁷⁶ Although his subsequent project, *Le Grand Jeu*, did not collapse during preproduction, Feyder admitted that the film was produced by Les Films de France (a minor French company) “with ... limited means,”⁷⁷ and Carné remarked that the film’s producer had been “richer in ambition than means.... It was a miracle that we made it to the end!”⁷⁸ *Le Grand Jeu* recounts the story of Pierre Martel, whose family discovers that he has been embezzling funds from their business and subsequently forces him to flee the country, leaving his avaricious mistress, Florence (Marie Bell), and assets behind him. Pierre joins the Foreign Legion in Morocco, where he encounters Irma (also Marie Bell), an amnesiac cabaret singer bearing an uncanny resemblance to Florence (fig. 6). Much of the narrative recounts Pierre’s obsessive dual attempt to efface Irma’s uniqueness and to determine whether or not Irma is actually Florence, even though Irma’s voice differs noticeably from that of Pierre’s one-time lover (an effect achieved by the dubbing technique that Feyder had originally hoped to deploy in his adaptation of *As You Desire Me*).⁷⁹

Despite budgeting constraints, Feyder's experience prompted him to champion the French system over the American studios: shortly after completing the film, he stated that "there is no doubt that in France, we lack funding" and "everything is improvised, but one has this feeling: one is at home, one is free, and when one screens the film, one does not ask oneself, as one does in America, 'Am I the one who made that?'"⁸⁰ *Le Grand Jeu* was welcomed as "the work of a master of cinema, that is to say an incomparable technician and an artist of noble inspiration and ambitions,"⁸¹ and as a film that marked "new beginnings in sound cinema."⁸² It also ranked as the number-one box-office success of the 1933–34 season, attracting some 600,000 viewers in Paris alone in a year when fewer films than at any other time during the decade topped 300,000 spectators in the capital and one-third of French cinemas had not yet been equipped for sound.⁸³ *Le Grand Jeu* owed its success to Feyder's enduring popularity among French audiences, growing public enthusiasm for French colonial film (a genre he had played a major role in establishing by directing *L'Atlantide*),⁸⁴ and the film's innovative use of sound-recording techniques that Feyder had previously hoped to deploy in Hollywood.

Although the film reestablished Feyder as one of France's leading filmmakers, one should resist an unduly simplified, linear vision of Feyder's journey from France to Hollywood and his subsequent reintegration into the French film industry as an unexpectedly short-lived attempt to integrate permanently into the Hollywood mode of production (what Polet describes as an *aspirant au départ*). Instead, historians should consider Feyder's desire to temporarily work in Hollywood with a view to directing films in France with an adequate budget, suitable technology, and a satisfactory degree of creative liberty. Contemporary periodicals, specifically articles penned by Carné and Feyder, suggest that Feyder's experience as a contract director from at least 1931 onward was primarily oriented toward a return to a more secure involvement in the French film industry. In an aforementioned interview with Carné that was granted during Feyder's extended vacation in France, Feyder hinted at his intention to reestablish his career in France: "Perhaps I will direct a film here . . . No, nothing that has been confirmed. All that we were able to say or write had absolutely no foundation."⁸⁵ In a later article, Feyder clarified that, before leaving Hollywood, MGM had authorized him to direct one film in France.⁸⁶ The film, provisionally entitled *1940* was, like Feyder's *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*, ostensibly a political satire. The proposed film, based on an original story by Feyder and Spaak (who had cowritten *Les Nouveaux Messieurs*), was intended to satirize the opposition of two politicians—one male and one female—in a future French society where women's suffrage had been ratified, and was slated to star Rosay in the lead

role opposite Charles Boyer and Jacques Grétilat. In an interview published in October 1931 (a little over a month before the release of *Daybreak*, his final Hollywood film), Feyder stated that he intended to begin filming the story at Joinville in November in collaboration with Yves Mirande, a fellow Hollywood expatriate who had provided the screenplay for *Si l'empereur savait ça!*, and to complete shooting by late January 1932.⁸⁷ That January, however, Feyder announced that producer Bernard Natan, who had agreed to commence shooting on January 6, had foreclosed on the project in the latter half of December.⁸⁸ Before returning to Hollywood, Feyder stated that he still intended to complete the film and that his plans had advanced considerably: "My vacation in France? As you know, I worked on the screenplay [*découpage*] of *1940* for three months. The research on documentation regarding the feminist movement, not only in France but also across the entire world, is absorbing me to an enormous degree."⁸⁹ In an interview with Carné published on February 23, 1933 (five days after his return to France), Feyder enthusiastically announced: "*1940*. This time, it has been settled [*décidé*]. The film will see the light of day very soon. After a misunderstanding that was quickly resolved, everything has now been arranged. I also hope to get to work very quickly and to make up for lost time."⁹⁰ The film was never made.

Documentation surrounding *1940* is relatively scarce, limited to comments from Feyder and Carné in contemporary newspapers, and the precise reasons for Feyder's ultimate failure to mount the project are difficult to determine. Bachy claims (without evidence) that powers in the French film industry successfully conspired against Feyder's project.⁹¹ One may more legitimately speculate that Natan, aware that *L'Image* and *Les Nouveaux Messieurs* had previously met with the disapproval of French censors, eventually realized that the film's subject matter would be considered nothing short of incendiary in contemporary France. Feyder had claimed that the film "will not resemble *Les Nouveaux Messieurs* in any way whatsoever. There is nothing satirical about it. . . . I want to make a film with fantasy and humor."⁹² However, his view was hardly convincing: during the 1930s, women were not allowed to vote and had limited access to capital, and the Front populaire did little to introduce women to spheres of political decision-making despite fundamentally improving workers' social conditions. Furthermore, until 1938, the *code civil* stipulated that a married woman could not run a business, own property, or hold a passport without her husband's permission. Although legislation introduced in 1935 and 1938 would respectively abolish a man's right to administer corporeal punishment to his children and wife, the country would, in reactionary fashion, ratify the pronatalist *Code de la*

Famille in 1938, aggravating conditions governing women's lives that had already been enforced by the Napoleonic code. Women's suffrage, which Feyder's fictional universe sought to ratify by 1940, would not ultimately be granted in France until 1944.

Vincendeau, Noël Burch, and Geneviève Sellier have convincingly argued that this socioeconomic division between men and women conditioned gender representation in French cinema of the 1930s and valuably illuminates the unreceptive cultural context that conspired against Feyder's stillborn project. Discussing French family-focused films of this decade, Vincendeau observes that French cinema of the 1930s, unlike Hollywood, never produced films "attempting to tell a story from a woman's point of view or, more ambitiously, to portray a woman's subjectivity and desire."⁹³ On the contrary, women generally function "to facilitate relationships between male characters,"⁹⁴ and their own desires are always perceived as transgressive. Furthermore, Vincendeau asserts that portrayals of families in French cinema of this period frequently featured Oedipal father-daughter relationships in which middle-aged "powerful male figures ... often won young women from young (and conventionally more attractive) rivals."⁹⁵ Considering the political context described above, Burch and Sellier locate this model in approximately three hundred films out of a corpus of one thousand specifically French films produced between 1929 and 1939, and suggest that the Oedipal model of gendered interrelations observed by Vincendeau in family-focused cinema of this period reflects "a whole psychosocial paradigm in real life that extended well beyond arranged marriages between older men and young women."⁹⁶

Narratives of the 1930s undoubtedly sanction couplings of older men and younger women as a means of naturalizing the age discrepancy that prevailed following the decimation of France's youth by the Great War. However, Vincendeau proceeds further, convincingly arguing that gendered relations in French cinema of this period also stem from the influence of ageing male playwrights and stars emerging from the pre-World War One theatrical tradition of male casts, which virtually eliminated opportunities for female-centered dramas in French cinema of the 1930s.⁹⁷ Documentation regarding *1940* suggests that Feyder planned to generate subversive discourses drawn from the social realities of French women's lives and to reject a narrative paradigm that then provided the existing French patriarchal social order in both political and industrial spheres with an essential foundation for subject construction. Therefore, it is likely that Natan abandoned the project on the grounds that the finished film would be refused a general release. Although *1940* was never completed, it is important to note that the story set a key direction for his next three films—*Le Grand*



Fig. 7: Louise (François Rosay) plants a controversial kiss on the lips of her adopted son (Paul Bernard) as he lies dying in *Pension Mimosas* (1936).

Jeu, *Pension Mimosas*, and *La Kermesse Héroïque*—which all challenge conventional gender roles rather than reproducing contemporary norms. As Burch and Sellier observe, *Le Grand Jeu* “calls sexual roles into question” by interrogating the broader motifs of virility and prostitution that structured popular cinema at the time.⁹⁸ *Pension Mimosas*, a *Phèdre*-esque melodrama, examines an ageing woman’s romantic affection for her adopted son (fig. 7) and, as Christian Viviani notes, constitutes one of France’s rare contributions to female-centered melodrama.⁹⁹ In the third, *La Kermesse héroïque*, the formidable women of seventeenth-century Flanders welcome Spanish invaders when their town’s cowardly male mayor feigns death in order to avoid receiving the troops (fig. 8). All three films lend credence to Burch and Sellier’s observation that Feyder and Spaak “both individually and together, were used to making family films that approached issues of sexual roles from a critical standpoint.”¹⁰⁰ However, none would explicitly satirize gender divides within the French political machine to the same extent as Feyder’s proposed vision of *1940*.



Fig. 8: In the absence of her husband, Cornélia (Rosay again) commands local women to welcome invading Spanish troops in order to preserve the Flemish village of Boom in *La Kermesse héroïque* (1935).

CONCLUSION: THE EMERGENCE AND DECLINE OF AN AUTEUR

The contours of Feyder's career from 1928 to 1934 evoke the numerous émigré directors who accepted contracts in Hollywood in order to film personal projects within an economically sound and technologically advanced environment during the studio era. However, through his attempt to retain a foothold in France during his experience as a contract director in Hollywood, the trajectory of Feyder's career during these years resists any easy categorization within Polet's model. His story also problematizes both Polet and Bachy's simplified view of Feyder as a director who viewed Hollywood as a "promised land." Contrary to their assertions regarding the trajectory of Feyder's career, Feyder's enduring engagement with the French film industry, ratified by MGM, suggests that he may never have intended to abandon filmmaking in France while abroad and that by 1931, his primary goal in fulfilling the remainder of his contract in Hollywood was the simultaneous renewal of multiple opportunities for filmmaking in both France and America.

Two additional conclusions concerning the impact of Hollywood on Feyder's French films of the 1930s may be established. First, Feyder's involuntary sacrifice of creative liberty in Hollywood, followed by his intimate involvement in the inception of *1940*, valuably reinforced his own insistence on authorial control in France. Interestingly, although five of Feyder's seven feature-length French silent films (as well as his German production of Zola's *Thérèse Raquin*) were adaptations, the three box-office successes that Feyder directed following his return to France were based on original screenplays that he had cowritten with Spaak. Feyder's consistently close involvement in these screenplays suggests that the constraints to which he had previously been subject in Hollywood provoked him to bring his newly refined technical skills to a project of his own personal design. However, he astutely opted for commercially viable stories that contested broader sociocultural patterns discernible in contemporary French cinema but which, unlike *1940*, improved his prospects within the French film industry.

The second conclusion that may be drawn concerns continuities in Feyder's visual style. Drawing on technology that he had previously mobilized on the set of *The Kiss*, Feyder imported his concept of mobile cameras back to France at a time when the absence of capital for updating French production facilities contributed, in Crisp's analysis, to "a general air of clumsiness and amateurishness" and "undercut any future improvement in the level of technical finish" exhibited by French cinema of the 1930s (especially films of 1930–35).¹⁰¹ As I have illustrated elsewhere, numerous shots in *Le Grand Jeu* are staged in depth and feature extensive lateral camera mobility, deepening the relevance of André Bazin's praise for Feyder as a key proponent of the French realist school in his groundbreaking treatise on perceptual cinematographic realism.¹⁰² Despite Feyder's ultimately unsatisfying experience at MGM, the studio's aforementioned input toward such sophisticated compositions in Feyder's French films of the 1930s should not be overlooked.

Feyder remained in France after the release of *Le Grand Jeu*, having abandoned both Hollywood and *1940*. He had undoubtedly glimpsed the possibility of rapidly reestablishing himself as both a major commercial force in France and an aesthetically progressive one, without competing with other key filmmakers in the country: by the time that *Le Grand Jeu* had been released, Grémillon was working in Spain and Alberto Cavalcanti was in London, soon to be followed by Clair. The same year, Jean Vigo (*L'Atalante*, 1934) died and André Sauvage, having completed *La croisière jaune* (The Yellow Cruise, 1933), codirected with Léon Poirier, renounced filmmaking as a profession. Renoir, who had replaced Feyder on Gallimard's production of *Madame Bovary* (released in January 1934), began filming *Toni* (1935) in the summer of the same year but had yet to attract a wide



Fig. 9: Feyder (center) directs Marlene Dietrich (right) on the set of *Knight Without Armour* (1937).

audience, and each film only met with moderate financial success. Conversely, Feyder would follow through with *Pension Mimosas* and *La Kermesse héroïque*, the latter garnering Feyder the award for Best Director at the Venice Film Festival. Furthermore, Feyder's first three productions following his return to France all ranked among the top ten films of their respective seasons (*Le Grand Jeu* at number one, *Pension Mimosas* at number ten, and *La Kermesse héroïque* at number seven) in a period when industrial production had fallen 20 percent below that of 1930 and was showing no sign of recovery.¹⁰³

By 1936, Feyder's reputation in France was arguably more secure than it had ever been. However, in early 1935, before even deciding to film *La Kermesse héroïque*, Feyder had agreed to direct a film for Alexander Korda, owner of the prestigious London Films. Unable to resist the temptation to leave France once again, he agreed to direct an adaptation of James Hilton's *Knight Without Armour* starring Robert Donat and Marlene Dietrich, and left France the following year (fig. 9). Three central reasons, some of which coincide with those motivating Feyder's first journey to MGM, may be given for Feyder's departure. First, the proposed adaptation offered Feyder a combination of authorial control, economic means, and longstanding collaborators that had eluded him in

Hollywood: Feyder was guaranteed a minimum of twenty-two weeks to direct and a minimum fee of £5,000, and would be answerable only to Korda, who had been impressed by Feyder's methods as a young journalist while watching him shoot *L'Image*.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, the project would reunite Feyder with Harry Stradling, cinematographer on *Le Grand Jeu* and *La Kermesse héroïque*, and with Meerson, who had recently moved to England to design sets for *As You Like It* (1936) and Korda's most recent production, *Fire Over England* (1937). Second, on May 26, 1936, membership of the Commission de contrôle altered to include ten public servants from government departments and ten members appointed personally by the minister of national education. All were selected from outside the filmmaking profession, a move that totally eliminated representation from the cinema and allowed political considerations to dominate decisions.¹⁰⁵ Feyder was approached to direct *Knight Without Armour* during December 1935–January 1936 and began shooting on September 16, 1936,¹⁰⁶ and the restructuring of the commission between these dates likely strengthened his resolve to film abroad. A third reason for Feyder's departure to England was that *Knight Without Armour* represented a valuable intersection of Korda and Feyder's shared desire for international success. Korda had already garnered major American acclaim for *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933) and, as Sarah Street notes, his collaboration with Feyder "was intended as a showcase for Korda's ambition for British films in the world market."¹⁰⁷ Echoing Korda, Feyder reported during shooting that he aimed to create his own production company with a view to producing French- and German-language films in Paris.¹⁰⁸ In fact, while directing his subsequent film, *Les Gens du voyage* (People Who Travel, 1938), during November 1937, he even announced that he would return to Hollywood the following February and that he was considering filming Richard Hughes's *A High Wind in Jamaica* among other stories that had been proposed by MGM.¹⁰⁹ Although Feyder would not ultimately return to Hollywood, the timing of his journey to Britain could not have been better from a technical perspective. Korda's Denham studios, whose renovations had only been completed in May 1936, boasted the latest sound-recording equipment and the largest electric power plant used at that time by any private company, not to mention two thousand production personnel in its cutting rooms.¹¹⁰ The development of this infrastructure would also explain why Feyder, who originally intended to direct his collaboration with Korda in 1935, delayed his departure until the following year.¹¹¹

However, *Knight Without Armour*, whose budget spiralled from £200,000 to £309,333,¹¹² was a critical and commercial failure that dented Feyder's reputation in a period when Carné's and Renoir's reputations were soaring. Feyder's future at Denham appeared bleak since London Film's debts already amounted

to £1,794,222 by the end of 1936, and the British film industry experienced a major crash in 1937, the year of the film's release.¹¹³ He subsequently directed *Les Gens du voyage* at Tobis in Munich in both French- and German-language versions, and later travelled to Villard de Lans and Kiruna, Sweden, to direct *La Loi du nord* (screened on one occasion for corporate personnel in 1939 but shelved until 1941, and released with cuts in 1942). During his wartime exile in Geneva, he filmed *Une femme disparaît* (A Woman Disappears, 1942) and also taught filmmaking at the Conservatoire de Musique de Genève. Weakened by ill health (owing in part to a history of heavy drinking),¹¹⁴ he acted as technical supervisor on *Matura-Reise* (1943) and, following the liberation, as artistic director on the set of *Macadam* (1946).¹¹⁵ As recently as 1936, Feyder appeared to be virtually unstoppable, and he had continued to pursue opportunities to further elevate his status as a leading international director without the constraints imposed by a Hollywood contract. However, by 1937, his luck had already run out.

Notes

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3. Regarding Feyder's citizenship, see Victor Bachy, *Jacques Feyder: Artisan du cinéma* (Louvain: Librairie universitaire, 1968), 97.
4. René Clair, "Un symptôme de la crise ... Jacques Feyder est parti pour l'Amérique," *Pour Vous* 4 (December 15, 1928); 3. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. René Clair directed *Paris qui dort* (Paris Asleep, 1924) and *Un Chapeau de paille d'Italie* (The Italian Straw Hat, 1928).
5. On *L'Atlantide*, see Richard Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915–1929* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 154; on *Crainquebille* and *Gribiche*, see Abel, *French Cinema*, 126, 129.
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18. Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 93.
19. Crisp, 16.
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24. Susan Hayward, *French National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 2005), 136. See also Marcel Pagnol, "The Talkie Offers the Writer New Resources" (1930), in *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology, 1907–1939*, vol. 2, 1929–1939, ed. Richard Abel (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 56; and René Clair, "Les auteurs de films n'ont pas besoin de vous," *Pour Vous* 85 (July 3, 1930): 3.
25. O'Brien, *Cinema's Conversion to Sound*, 69.
26. Cited in Icart, *La révolution du parlant*, 187.
27. Jacques Feyder, "Je crois au film parlant," *Pour Vous* 31 (June 20, 1929): 3.
28. Cited in Icart, *La révolution du parlant*, 186.
29. Feyder, "Je crois au film parlant," 3.
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31. Nino Frank, "Jacques Feyder va partir pour l'Amérique," *Pour Vous* 1 (November 22, 1928): 7.
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74. Jean Renoir, *Ma vie et mes films* (Paris: Flammarion, 2005), 117.
75. Jean-Georges Auriol, "L'importance des 'Compagnies' dans le cinéma," *Pour Vous*, March 29, 1934, 2.
76. Robert Aron, director of NSF, recalls that Feyder had a disastrous lunch with Gallimard and lead actress Valentine Tessier, whom Feyder deemed inappropriate for the titular role. Gallimard, then Tessier's lover, instead delegated the project to Renoir, and du Gard, who had already begun pre-production on the film with Feyder, withdrew from the project. See Robert Aron, *Fragments d'une vie* (Paris: Plon, 1981), 56–57.
77. Roger Régent, "Les difficultés du cinéma français selon Jacques Feyder," 5 July 1934, Recueil factice d'articles de presse sur Jacques Feyder, vol. 2: 1928–1938, ref. 8-RK-403(2), Bibliothèque nationale de France.
78. Marcel Carné, *Ma vie à belles dents* (Paris: L'Archipel, 1996), 51.
79. Feyder and Rosay, *Le Cinéma*, 38–39.
80. Charles A. Rickard, "Existe-t-il un cinéma sonore? Ce qu'en pense Jacques Feyder," 2 May 1934, Recueil factice d'articles de presse sur Jacques Feyder, vol. 2: 1928–1938, ref. 8-RK-403(2), Bibliothèque nationale de France.

81. Régent, "Les difficultés du cinéma français."
82. Rickard, "Existe-t-il un cinéma sonore?"
83. Colin Crisp, *French Cinema: A Critical Filmography, 1929–1939*, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), 106.
84. Indeed, Charles O'Brien observes that the term *cinéma colonial* "appears to have become a part of the vocabulary of the film industry" following the commercial success of *L'Atlantide*. See Charles O'Brien, "The 'Cinéma colonial' of 1930s France: Film Narration as Spatial Practice," in *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film*, ed. Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 226.
85. Carné, "L'Amérique et le cinéma américain," 10.
86. Maine, "Pourquoi J. Feyder n'a pas tourné '1940,'" 5.
87. Content regarding participants provided in Marcel Carné and Suzanne Chantal, "Françoise Rosay nous parle des laborieuses vacances de Feyder" (1931), in Morisson, *Marcel Carné*, 425–26; Frank, "On travaille, en France," 3; and Janine Spaak, *Charles Spaak, mon mari* (Paris: France-Empire, 1977), 56. *Daybreak* was released on December 5, 1931, in America. For release date, see Warren and Tixier with Aventin, "Filmographie commentée," 232.
88. Maine, "Pourquoi J. Feyder n'a pas tourné '1940,'" 5. Explicit references to Natan's involvement are rare but his name is specifically mentioned in Jacques Bernier, "Le départ de Jacques Feyder," *Ciné-miroir*, 22 January 1932, 51, Recueil factice d'articles de presse sur Jacques Feyder, vol. 2: 1928–1938, ref. 8-RK-403(2), Bibliothèque nationale de France.
89. Carné, "Avant son départ pour l'Amérique," 427.
90. Carné, "'1940 sera un film de fantaisie,'" 3.
91. Victor Bachy, *Jacques Feyder* (Paris: Anthologie du Cinéma, 1966), 422.
92. Nino Frank, "On travaille, en France," 3.
93. Ginette Vincendeau, "Melodramatic Realism: On Some French Women's Films in the 1930s," *Screen* 30, no. 3 (1989): 51. Vincendeau's assertion requires some tempering: Germaine Dulac and Marie Epstein were pioneers in this regard. For an analysis of Dulac's career, see Sandy Flitterman-Lewis, *To Desire Differently: Feminism and the French Cinema* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 47–140. For an analysis of Epstein's career during the 1930s, see Flitterman-Lewis, 141–87. For an analysis of Epstein's *La Maternelle* (1933), see Flitterman-Lewis, 188–214.
94. Vincendeau, "Melodramatic Realism," 79.
95. Ginette Vincendeau, "Daddy's Girls (Oedipal Narratives in 1930s French Films)," *Iris* 8 (1988): 75.
96. Noël Burch and Geneviève Sellier, *The Battle of the Sexes in French Cinema, 1930–1956*, trans. Peter Graham (London: Duke University Press, 2014), 6, 15–53.
97. Vincendeau, "Daddy's Girls," 77, esp. 75–77. Exceptions are noted in Burch and Sellier, *Battle of the Sexes*, 54–90.
98. Burch and Sellier, *Battle of the Sexes*, 18–19, 60.
99. Christian Viviani, "Who Is Without Sin? The Maternal Melodrama in American Film, 1930–39," trans. Dolores Burdick, in *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, ed. Christine Gledhill (London: BFI, 1992), 83.
100. Burch and Sellier, *Battle of the Sexes*, 55.

101. Carné, "1940 sera un film de fantaisie," 5.
102. See Barry Nevin, "Reste un moment sans parler": Sound, Realism and Simulacrum in Jacques Feyder's *Le Grand Jeu* (1934)," in *Le grain de la voix dans le monde anglophone et francophone*, ed. Michaël Abecassis, Gudrun Ledegen, and Maribel Peñalver Vicea (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2018); André Bazin, "L'évolution du langage cinématographique," in *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma*, 18th ed. (Paris, Cerf-Corlet, 2008), 68; and André Bazin, "Quinze ans de cinéma français," in *Le cinéma français de la Libération à la Nouvelle Vague*, 2nd ed., ed. Jean Narboni (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma, 1998), 25.
103. Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 5.
104. Details regarding Feyder's autonomy provided by Charles Drazin, *Korda: Britain's Movie Mogul* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 172. Comments on Korda the journalist are provided by Rosay, *La Traversée d'une vie*, 207–8. Details of the contract provided by Bachy, *Jacques Feyder: Artisan du cinéma*, 133.
105. Crisp, *Classic French Cinema*, 251.
106. Without providing a precise date, Bachy states that Korda offered Hilton's property to Feyder one month after the release of *La Kermesse héroïque*, which was released in Paris on December 1, 1935. Approximate date of Korda's offer provided by Bachy, *Jacques Feyder: Artisan du cinéma*, 133. Release dates and shooting date provided by Warren and Tixier with Aventin, "Filmographie commentée," 238–40.
107. Sarah Street, "Sets of the Imagination: Lazare Meerson, Set Design and Performance in *Knight Without Armour* (1937)," *Journal of British Cinema and Television* 2, no. 1 (2005): 22.
108. Robert de Thomasson, "J'ai vu 'tourner' Marlène qui m'a parlé en toute franchise," *Pour Vous* 419 (November 26, 1936): 10.
109. "Promenades internationales: En bavardant avec Jacques Feyder," *Ciné France*, December 17, 1937, n.p., Recueil factice d'articles de presse sur Jacques Feyder, vol. 2: 1928–1938, ref. 8-RK-403(2), Bibliothèque nationale de France.
110. Street, "Sets of the Imagination," 23–24.
111. Roger Régent, "Je voudrais tourner un film gai' dit Jacques Feyder," *Pour Vous* 325 (February 7, 1935): 11; Feyder also offered Korda the opportunity to produce an English-language version of *Kermesse* at Épinay, but Korda reportedly refused on the grounds that the film lacked sex appeal (see Rosay, *La Traversée d'une vie*, 207).
112. Financial details provided by Drazin, *Korda*, 170; and Street, "Sets of the Imagination," 24.
113. Street, "Sets of the Imagination," 24.
114. Anecdotes regarding Feyder's heavy drinking feature in the following texts: Carné, *Ma vie à belles dents*, 52–53; and Bachy, *Jacques Feyder: Artisan du cinéma*, 149.
115. Release dates provided by Warren and Tixier with Aventin, "Filmographie commentée," 109–19.

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