

## Chapter Six

# The New Wave's International Influence and Legacy Today

AS WE HAVE SEEN, the New Wave's appearance in France at the end of the 1950s marked a rejuvenation, bringing a new generation into the film industry at a time of creative sclerosis. It arrived 10–15 years after the Liberation, an interval that is both characteristic and original in the evolution of French society's cultural production. The sort of post-World War II disruption brought on by the Italian neorealist model of 1944–6 never occurred in France. The only emblematic film of the French resistance was *La Bataille du rail* (*Battle of the Rail*), directed in 1946 by René Clément, about the resistance of railroad workers, but Clément's ultimate career would be very different from that of his Italian counterparts such as Roberto Rossellini or Vittorio De Sica. Moreover, French directors like Clément, Becker, Bresson, and Clouzot remained strong individualists, isolated from one another, never coalescing into a collective cultural movement like the mythical neorealists of the same period just over the border in Italy.

The milieu of French intellectuals was thus much further removed from the film industry than was the case in Italy. Even when a philosopher as prestigious as Jean-Paul Sartre collaborated on scripts or dialogue for films like *Les Jeux sont faits* (*The Chips are Down*, 1947) by Jean Delannoy, or *Les Orgueilleux* (*The Proud Ones*, 1953) by Yves Allégret, the results were not always definitive or aesthetically productive.

An important area of inquiry posed by cinema history concerns the period just before the French New Wave and its relations to other “young

cinemas” that appeared throughout the world at the turning point between the 1950s and 1960s. A certain French chauvinism sees its own cinema at the root of this international revolution. A closer analysis of the chronologies involved allows us to distinguish several movements of renewal and rupture prior to the French New Wave from those new aesthetic trends motivated more directly by the diffusion of the first feature films by Truffaut, Resnais, and Godard; Chabrol’s features did not attract quite the same audience abroad.

### Precursors

The disasters resulting from the global conflict of World War II do not seem to have had any direct repercussions in the realm of European film aesthetics, except in the case of the Italian neorealists. Certainly, from an industrial point of view, the war led to the disappearance of German cinema for a time and the quantitative reduction of Soviet productions.

Later, in his famous summary of film production for the years 1957–8 (cited in chapter 1), Pierre Billard called attention to the appearance of a number of new and original auteurs in the United States, the Soviet Union, Poland, Italy, and even Franco’s repressive Spain. He cited Robert Aldrich, Grigori Tchoukhrai, Andrei Wajda, Francesco Maselli, and Juan Antonio Bardem. By contrast, France seemed to offer only Roger Vadim and Michel Boisrond.

If we widen the inquiry, we can argue that the 1950s were marked, on both the cultural and political levels, by the hegemony of Hollywood, the crisis of Stalinism, and the difficulties of decolonization, which brought on a new round of concerns regarding the ethics and moral values within most major film-producing nations.<sup>1</sup> Yet this decade also witnessed a crisis within the dominant American film studios. Despite their economic domination of the world markets, Hollywood studios were burdened with changing conditions of domestic production, expensive super-productions, and the emergence of independent producers such as Robert Aldrich and Richard Brooks. Meanwhile, the state-run national cinemas, like those in Eastern Europe, tried to escape the dogmas of “Socialist Realism,” imposed some-

what in vain by Jdanov and the Soviet Union. Italian neorealism did not directly influence these new auteurs. It was the Polish cinema that provided the first example of a certain aesthetic emancipation, with the cinema of Andrei Wajda. He began in 1954 with a movie that bore an emblematic title, *A Generation*. With *Canal* (1956) and *Ashes and Diamonds* (1958), he definitively distanced himself from the codes of Socialist Realism, just like his contemporary colleague Andrei Munk, whose *Eroica* (*Heroism*, 1957) and *Bad Luck* (1960) harbored a very ironic tone and avoided using the standard epic heroism.

In Sweden, Ingmar Bergman pursued a solitary path, creating an oeuvre more and more isolated from the models that dominated conventional scripts. He began in 1945 with *Crisis*, but it was only after his tenth feature film that he developed his auteur output, becoming more and more distinctive. This style was revealed in a stunning manner with *Summer with Monika* (1953), a film that greatly impressed the young critics François Truffaut and Jean-Luc Godard with its liberated tone and the frank presentation of the romantic relations between its two Swedish adolescents.

In Spain, Franco's state-run production schedule, dominated by popular comedies and conventional melodramas, nevertheless allowed a bit of room for several neorealist-like projects that were fairly original to Europe. These included Juan Antonio Bardem's first two features *Death of a Cyclist* (1955) and *Main Street* (1956), both produced by Georges de Beauregard. But both these films were far from the New Wave aesthetic.

The years 1959–60 were characterized by the appearance of a number of new directors, spread around the globe, who broke with the aesthetic norms of their times. Their disruptions often paralleled those undertaken by the New Wave, without necessarily having any direct influence. In most cases, one or two directors completed an original first feature. These assorted films premiered in theaters at about the same time as Truffaut's and Rivette's first features were being distributed around the globe. This coincidence encouraged in a radical way the steps begun by foreign auteurs, who, following the example of these initial French triumphs, struggled to continue their fledgling careers despite the hurdles offered by their various national industries. According to the findings of historian Barthélemy Amengual, a similar process characterizes the initiation and progress of several new waves, even

in the socialist nations during the 1950s. Such conditions, exemplary in the case of French cinema, could be found to certain degrees all over:

To begin with, critics orchestrated a conflict between the old and younger generations in the areas of aesthetics, ideology, and even morality. One or two magazines ventured to support those champions of change who typically entered the profession by the backdoor: independent productions with low budgets, reduced technical crews, beginning actors. For everyone, Italian neorealism offered the strongest model (even though it was banned in Eastern Bloc countries), but they also looked to the example and experience provided by documentary practice. The new films circulated. Praise echoed back from foreign shores. The media got involved. A new public, prepared by ciné-clubs, cinémathèques, film festivals, art house circuits, and specialized magazines, proved ready. Film schools and institutes fired up. The officials in charge of the cinema, and even producers, allowed themselves to be convinced. The wave is launched. Several years of excitement, comprehension, and occasionally real successes followed, and then it would all dissolve away or become integrated [into the mainstream national cinema].<sup>2</sup>

The situation in Great Britain, however, corresponded only partially to this model. The so-called “Angry Young Men” movement first intervened in the fields of literature and theater, and was more open to avant-garde practice. It was from this path of adapting provocative plays that young directors launched the Free Cinema movement, with films like *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1958), which was adapted from John Braine’s 1957 novel, or, especially, *Look Back in Anger* (1959), which Tony Richardson adapted from a play by John Osborne. These were followed by the films of Karel Reisz (*Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, 1960), a director who came from British documentary, and Lindsay Anderson (*This Sporting Life*, 1963), who had founded the journal *Sequence* in 1946. The latter was a film critic for *The Times* and *Observer*, and author of a manifesto entitled “Stand Up! Stand Up!,” published in *Sight and Sound*, which was every bit as virulent as François Truffaut’s “A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema.”

Even in the United States, but far from the Hollywood studios, the experimental cinema and documentary movement were influenced by the appearance of new practices. In New York, a new style of reportage grew up

around Robert Drew, leading to the birth of direct cinema via the films of Drew (*Yankee No.*, and *Primary*, 1960), as well as Albert and David Maysles, and Donn Pennebaker. The young actor John Cassavetes was inspired by musical improvisation, springing from avant-garde jazz, notably Charles Mingus, in directing his first 16mm version of *Shadows* in 1957, followed by a second version in 1959. This movie is just as original as *Breathless* in terms of its direction of the actors, improvised dialogue, and editing rhythms. However, it remained largely unknown by French critics, who would only discover the significance of Cassavetes when his *Husbands* opened ten years later in 1970.

In Japan, Nagisha Oshima started out as assistant, then wrote reviews and scripts before directing his first three consecutive, very personal features: *A Town of Love and Hope* (1959), *Cruel Story of Youth* (1960), and *Burial of the Sun* (1960). Immediately afterward he proved himself leader of the “Japanese New Wave” with *Night and Fog in Japan* (1960), his tribute to Alain Resnais. The political audacity of his work, in which Oshima violently denounced the renewal of the Japanese–American Treaty, caused quite a scandal in his nation. Working in parallel with his directing, Oshima continued to write analytical reviews for film journals, especially of French New Wave movies, such as *Breathless*, which he greatly admired.

### The Influence of the New Wave on International Cinema

The discovery of the new French films provoked strong reactions in the State-run cinema schools of Eastern Europe. Poland was first to act and was quickly imitated by young directors in Czechoslovakia and Hungary. In Poland, the young poet Jerzy Skolimowski, who had worked as a scriptwriter for Wajda’s *Innocent Sorcerers* (1960) and Roman Polanski’s *Knife in the Water* (1962), went on to direct *Identification Marks: None* in 1964, for which he was the writer, art director, editor, and principal actor. The movie is intensely subjective, written as an essay, and would have been unthinkable without Godard having first pointed the way by overturning cinematic forms. Skolimowski continued with *Walkover* (1965) and *Barrier* (1966) before leaving Poland in 1967 after his outrageous satire, *Hands Up!*,

was banned by the censors. That same year he made his most Godardian film yet, *Departure*, starring Jean-Pierre Léaud as a young hairdresser fascinated by automobile racing.

As for Czechoslovakia, there was first a timid liberalization around 1956 when several films by Jan Kadar and Vojtech Jasny appeared, but it was really after 1963 that a new generation just out of the state-run film school, FAMU, revealed its existence on the world's screens with several stunning films full of youth and spontaneity. Most important were Milos Forman's *Black Peter* (1963) and *Loves of a Blonde* (1965), Jaromil Jires's *The First Cry*, and Vera Chytilova's *Something Different*, both from 1963. Other young directors followed, including Ewald Schorm, Jan Nemeč, Ivan Passer, and Jiri Menzel, among others. They were so numerous that one now speaks of the "Prague School." As students in their classes at FAMU, they had all watched Truffaut's *The 400 Blows* and Godard's *Breathless* over and over.

On the other side of the globe, it was the Brazilian cinema that launched a "cinema novo," in response to the New Wave and especially Godard. As in many other places throughout the world, Brazil possessed a new generation that was a product of ciné-clubs and student movements who grabbed hold of cameras hoping to produce films marked by the decolonialization of cultural forms. A dozen such new auteurs sprang up around Ruy Guerra, Carlos Diegues, and Joaquim Pedro de Andrade. But the most brilliant of them was clearly Glauber Rocha who, following his rather hybrid production, *The Turning Wind* (1962), presented a flamboyant, even baroque political trilogy – *Black God, White Devil, Land in Anguish*, and *Antonio das Mortes* – that would prove important for cinema history in 1964–69. Glauber Rocha became the spokesperson for this "cinema novo," as well as a formidable polemicist, exploiting his pen as casually and provocatively as the images he created on the screen. In 1963 he published *A Critical Revision of Brazilian Cinema*. But we must not forget Nelson Pereira Dos Santos, who preceded the "cinema novo" with his *Rio, 40 Degrees* (1956) and *Rio, North Zone* (1957), both of which greatly influenced Rocha. Moreover, he edited *The Turning Wind*. His *Barren Lives* (1960) was also very important for young directors, and he himself had been very influenced by the Italian neorealists, especially Rossellini and De Santis.

Italy's situation was fairly unusual. It had gone through its cinematic "revolution" with the fall of fascism, beginning in 1943–4 with films such as *Ossessione* and *Rome, Open City*. The postwar years were very rich, and the decade of the 1950s saw development of major works by a number of auteurs, including Luchino Visconti, who was influenced by opera and the theater, Federico Fellini, who looked to comic strips and humorous caricature, and Michelangelo Antonioni, who was fascinated with documentary practice. But the years 1959–60 witnessed more radical changes in aesthetic practice. Following *The Cry* (1957), Antonioni created a new narrative rhythm based on de-dramatization and elliptical storytelling with *L'Avventura* (1959). Fellini threw himself into his protean work with *La Dolce Vita* (1960), and Visconti ventured forth with a revised neorealism, thanks to the Verga-inspired realism / naturalism of *Rocco and His Brothers* (1960). The Italian cinema was thus much less ossified than its French counterpart had been in 1956–7.

However, the very personal form seen in Roberto Rossellini's early 1950s filmic narratives, especially those inspired by his relationship with Ingrid Bergman – *Stromboli* (1950), *Europa 51* (1952), and *Voyage to Italy* (1953) – were misunderstood and underappreciated by Italian critics of this era, who were still attached to a notion of pure neorealism as seen in Rossellini's *Paisan*. It was actually French criticism, begun with the famous essay by Jacques Rivette in *Cahiers du Cinéma*, that helped safeguard Rossellini's significance:

It seems impossible to me that anyone can look at *Voyage to Italy* without recognizing right away that this film opens a passageway that all cinema should follow to avoid certain death; . . . but here is what I saw: Rossellini's movies, although staged, also obey this aesthetic of direct cinema, with all the advantages that entails, with all its impossible risks, tension, chance, and providence.<sup>3</sup>

It was also at this moment that a director like Francesco Rosi could completely renew the political intrigue movie with his brilliant *Salvatore Giuliano* (1961), constructed as a puzzle with flashbacks and fragments of hypothetical biographies. In a certain sense, the modern Italian cinema did not wait for the lessons provided by the New Wave before creating its own major

works of European cinema, such as Antonioni's trilogy, *L'Avventura*, *La Notte*, and *Eclipse*, Visconti's *Leopard*, or Fellini's *8½*.

All the same, the effects of the French New Wave are observable in the first efforts by young directors like Bernardo Bertolucci (*Before the Revolution*, 1967, and then the very Godardian *Partner*, 1968), or Marco Bellocchio (*Fists in the Pockets*, 1965). They can also be spotted in the first cinematic projects by the young poet Pier Paolo Pasolini, whose work transformed the codes of neorealism beginning with *Accatone* (1961) and *Momma Roma* (1962), by accentuating research on plasticity and forms, inspired by Brecht. Pasolini went on to develop a critical and creative dialogue with Godard throughout the 1960s, beginning with *RoGoPaG* (1963), where they collaborated on the episodic project, up until *Pigsty* (1970). Just like Rocha during this era, Pasolini even borrowed specific actors from the French New Wave, such as using Jean-Pierre Léaud (in *Pigsty*, as well as Rocha's *The Lion Has Seven Heads*, 1969), and Pierre Clementi (*Pigsty*, but also Bertolucci's *Partner* and *Conformist*, 1970, and Rocha's *Heads Cut Off*, 1970).

By 1969–70, the modern cinema transcended national boundaries, while aesthetic interactions became the rule with creative forces such as Godard, Pasolini, and Glauber Rocha, but also Ingmar Bergman, Luis Buñuel, and Federico Fellini, all of whom directed their films in a freer fashion, clear of all rigorous narrative constraints. This was all a consequence of the international reception of French films of the New Wave that had begun in 1960.

We have referred to the new documentary forms appearing in the American investigative cinema around 1959 and 1960, especially with Robert Drew and Richard Leacock. This movement intervened in an even more spectacular manner with the New Wave when French Canadian cinema began to make regular exchanges between Jean Rouch's camera operators and the National Film Board. The central figure in this interaction was Michel Brault. He backed up the poet Pierre Perrault when he began *Pour la suite du monde* (*For Those Who Will Follow*) in 1963. But the new Québécois cinema was not limited to documentary practice. A number of young directors began to discover their own country thanks to a most original and personal form of cinematic expression. The auteur who demonstrated the most marked influence of the Jean-Luc Godard of *Les Carabiniers* was surely Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, originally a critic for the



journal *Objectif*, then director of *Révolutionnaire* (1965), a first feature film that is a political essay with a very free style. It would be followed by many other films, but Lefebvre was certainly not the only participant; from 1965 on, a new expressive francophone cinema would receive international distribution, including the films of Gilles Carle, Gilles Groult, Claude Jutra, and Denys Arcand.

### The New Wave, Avant-Garde, and Experimental Cinema

At various points in its existence, the French cinema has witnessed periods rich in experimental research, as, for instance, during the period beginning in 1917, with the arrival of the first feature films by Abel Gance (*La Roue* (*The Wheel*), 1922), Marcel L'Herbier (*L'Inhumaine* (*New Enchantment*), 1924), and Jean Epstein (*Coeur fidèle* (*Faithful Heart*), 1923), then a bit later, the surrealist films by Buñuel and Dali (*Un chien andalou* (*An Andalusian Dog*), 1928, and *L'Âge d'or* (*The Age of Gold*), 1930) and Jean Cocteau's contributions (*Le Sang d'un poète* (*Blood of the Poet*), 1930). During the 1950s, this tendency is made concrete in the "lettriste" cinema of Isidore Isou and Maurice Lemaitre.

Paradoxically, the New Wave's movies would push the vague subversive desires of these creative young directors into feature-length narrative filmmaking. The truly "experimental" cinema – that is, the non-narrative and sometimes non-representational form – would disappear for a few years, only to return in the mid-1960s with the first films by Philippe Garrel (*Les Enfants désaccordés* (*Out of Tune Children*) in 1964, *Anémone*, and *Marie pour mémoire* (*Marie for Memory*) both in 1967) as well as Marcel Hanoun (*Octobre à Madrid* (*October in Madrid*), 1965, and *L'Été* (*Summer*), 1968), and Jean-Pierre Lajournade (*Le Jouer de quilles* (*The Skittle Player*), 1968, and *La Fin des Pyrénées* (*The End of the Pyrenees*), 1971). Nonetheless, Jean-Daniel Pollet, director of the first New Wave film never to find a distributor, the mythical *La Ligne de mire* (*The Focal Line*, 1960), would provide one of the masterpieces of the avant-garde cinema in 1963, *La Méditerranée* (*The Mediterranean*), with its voice-over commentary spoken by Philippe Sollers. Several years after 1968, this experimental tendency would enrich a number

of works, but not without causing friction with the political cinema, which was only rarely preoccupied with questions of cinematic écriture.

### The Historical Consequences of the Movement: The New Wave Today

One of the New Wave's most direct consequences was to impose the idea that cinematic creation requires a regular renewal by young directors. Mechanisms put in place within France during the 1970s have promoted the continued flowering of first features, though few of them are very promising. An advance on box office receipts is now reserved for the production of first films that can be financed on the presentation of a scenario. Roughly 30 films are produced each year under these circumstances, which represents, on average, about one quarter of all French films. It has become almost as easy to produce a first feature as to publish a first novel, even though the financial investment necessary is nowhere near comparable. But out of the hundreds of new directors, very few authentic new auteurs appear.

What is striking is the continued absence of a collective movement. The example set by all the former *Cahiers* critics who have followed in the steps of the first generation – Truffaut, Godard, Chabrol, Rivette, and Rohmer – provides a telling test case. While, successively, Luc Moullet, André Téchiné, Pascal Kané, Jean-Louis Comalli, Serge Le Peron, Danièle Dubroux, Léos Carax, and Olivier Assayas all wrote for *Cahiers* and then made movies, they in no way present a coherent group like that of the 1958 generation. However, Paul Vecchiali has tried, by the intermediary of a production company, Les Films Diagonale, to stimulate a team of young auteurs connected by shared interests: Jean-Claude Guiguet, Marie-Claude Treilhou, Jean-Claude Biette, Jacques Davila, and Gérard Frot-Coutaz. But the venture has remained somewhat marginal, since the box office returns and international distribution for their films have remained fairly modest.

Only André Téchiné, after a difficult beginning, has successfully attained a spot in cinematic production roughly equivalent to that held by François Truffaut prior to Truffaut's death in 1984. Téchiné owes his triumph to the unfailing support he receives from the internationally famous star Catherine Deneuve, beginning with his *Hôtel des Amériques* (*Hotel of the*

Americas, 1981) through *Ma saison préférée* (*My Favorite Season*, 1993), to *Les Voleurs* (*Thieves*, 1996).

But if the younger auteurs found it difficult to thrive within French cinema during the 1980s and 1990s, a period dominated by the strong presence of Maurice Pialat (whose *Van Gogh* was one of the rare masterpieces of 1990s French cinema), it was in part because they had to compete with the now aging New Wave filmmakers, who remained as inventive as they had always been. Truffaut died in 1984 leaving a legacy of 21 features, while Pierre Kast and Jacques Doniol-Valcroze died in 1989 and Jacques Demy in 1990. By contrast, Jean-Luc Godard passed the 40-feature mark with his *Forever Mozart* (1996), not counting the many short films and hours of television production he has accomplished. In 2001, his *Eloge à l'amour* (*In Praise of Love*) was a great critical success at Cannes and beyond as well. In 1997, Chabrol completed his 50th feature film with *Rien ne va plus* (*Swindle*); he has made more than 20 films for television, and in 2001 he shows no sign of slowing down. Despite initial problems getting their careers started, Jacques Rivette and Eric Rohmer continue to produce important films: Rivette has provided more than 15 features (with some, such as *Out One* and *Belle Noiseuse* being very long works), while Rohmer has made more than 20. Rohmer's creative originality is indeed astounding, since his more recent "Comedies and Proverbs" and "Moral Tales" often seem even more liberated and youthful than his earliest movies. At the age of 80, he remains more than ever the director of adolescence and young people of today.

This high output among the original New Wave directors is only a partial explanation. As we saw in the first chapter, directors like André Berthomieu and Jean Boyer possess filmographies that are just as lengthy. Rather, an historical chance allowed a modest ciné-club in the Latin Quarter and a small film journal to bring together a dozen auteurs united by discovery and love for the cinema. At any other moment in history, they might have been moved instead into writing novels, undertaking anthropology, journalism, art history, literary theory, or launching some enterprise.

Raymond Borde, after having initially opposed the *Cahiers du Cinéma* team when he was a critic writing alongside his friends at *Positif*, returned to the theses of his attacks of 1962 for the preface to Francis Courtade's

polemical book on the many curses and problems facing French cinema, *Les Malédictions du cinéma français*:

For this stage of analysis, I think I must introduce the topic of the ultimate factor of pure chance, people. I really understood the *Positif* of the late 1950s. We were exemplary moralists, we were not filmmakers. Some among us, such as Bernard Chardère, Louis Seguin, Jacques Demeure from television, and Ado Kyrou, for instance, had handled a camera and directed quite rigorous short films, but none of us was a “cinema fanatic.” We lacked the sort of motivation that has already enabled Chabrol to complete his 37th feature (in 1977). Thus we were – and here I refer to our collective document, which was often quite lucid, entitled *La Nouvelle Vague* and published in *Premier Plan* – obliged to bet on paltry values. To the detestable and sanctimonious right wing *Cahiers* critics (this is still Borde writing), we can only counter with Georges Franju (who has already said what is most important), Claude-Bernard Aubert, Paul Paviot, Robert Menegoz, Jean-Claude Bonnardot, Louis GrosPierre, and Pierre Kast. . . . It was touching. What a riot.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed.

### The Perpetuity of the New Wave Films

Finally, it is essential to consider one last criterion, which involves the power and originality of the central films directed by French filmmakers in the years bridging the 1950s and 1960s. When projected today, roughly 40 years later, *The 400 Blows*, *Hiroshima mon amour*, *The Cousins*, *Breathless*, but also *Me, a Black Man*, *Paris Belongs to Us*, *Adieu Philippine*, *Lola*, *Cléo de 5 à 7*, not to mention *Pierrot le fou* and even as marginal a short film as Rohmer's *The Girl at the Monceau Bakery* (and we could easily extend the list to more than 30 titles), are all just as lively as when they first appeared, because they miraculously knew how to seize the most authentic “present tense” of their era. When discovered today at the beginning of a new century by French film students born in the 1980s, these films can still generate an emotional effect that is just as remarkable as the results provoked in the young viewers of 1960.

The same holds for international filmgoers who are still, and again, discovering French society and its behavior, lifestyles, gestures, ways of speaking, moral attitudes, etc., via the films of François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and Eric Rohmer. This is equivalent to how the world's *cinéphiles* have come to know New York City or the various American landscapes from watching Hollywood's films, without ever setting foot in America. The New Wave audience worldwide today consists of both *cinéphiles* and college students. The latter are initiated into the history of cinema in part by watching Truffaut and Godard, and, as a result, the subsequent generations of American, Asian, and Middle Eastern filmmakers have learned much from *Shoot the Piano Player* and *Band of Outsiders*, as clearly seen in the movies of Martin Scorsese and Quentin Tarantino, among others, and of course Jean-Pierre Melville has proven to be a huge influence on Paul Schrader and John Woo.

It is obviously not just their discourse that makes these films retain their youth and vigor; it is certainly the way in which this discourse is delivered to the spectator. New Wave films appeared at the same moment that jazz was becoming more “free” and undergoing radical formal and stylistic upheavals. Similarly, the New Wave became a field for experimentation in cinematic creation that proved just as varied and rich as that of Soviet cinema in the 1920s. Godard provides the most obvious example, but even Rivette's explorations throughout the decade culminated in a unique film, *L'Amour fou* (*Mad Love*, 1968). The New Wave proved to be an aesthetic revolution that forever marked film history. In the strictest sense, the only true heirs to the New Wave of 1959 were Jean Eustache (from *Mauvaises Fréquentations* (*Bad Company*), 1963, to *Photos d'Alix* (*Photos of Alix*), 1981) and Philippe Garrel (from *Lit de la vierge* (*The Virgin's Bed*), 1969, to *Baisers de secours* (*Kisses of Help*), 1989, to *J'entends plus la guitare* (*I No Longer Hear the Guitar*), 1991, to *Coeur fantôme* (*Phantom Heart*), 1995), both of whom, in their own manner, have prolonged the experimental ventures of their predecessors.

It is even regrettable that the original New Wave films, so vibrant in themselves, have been co-opted by marketing and commodification as trinkets: images from the films are sold on everything from posters and t-shirts to ashtrays. But this is the inevitable price of success in the “society of spec-

tacle.” The best way to console ourselves is by going back to the movies, rediscovering the films themselves for the first or fiftieth time, in a film theater, like the first day of their public premiere.

“All in all, if you’ve got to . . . you’ve got to,” as Michel Poiccard proclaims at the opening of *Breathless*.