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Translation and Nation: Hollywood Remakes of French Films, 1980-1996

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The remake has played a significant role in Hollywood production since the 1930s and yet it is frequently dismissed as a straightforward vertical trajectory from the 'high art' of French cinema to the 'debased commercialism' of Hollywood. Despite the numerous remakes produced since 1980, there has been little sustained analysis of the practice. The thesis begins by establishing a clear framework in which to discuss the remake. Using debates surrounding practices of translation and cross-cultural transposition, it posits a genealogical approach to the remake which avoids the sets of binary oppositions typically used to underwrite much discussion of adaptation. Chapter Two provides an account of the history of the remake, from 1930 to 1980. Through an analysis of Franco-American political, cultural and cinematic relations during this period, it describes the reasons behind the expansion of the process from 1930-1950 and its near disappearance from 1950-1980, concluding with a case study of a pair of films which illustrates the theoretical and empirical conclusions drawn.

Chapter Three puts the remakes of the 1980s and the 1990s into context through an examination of the French and American political economies of that time, the political and cultural relations between the two countries, and the material practices surrounding their respective cinematic production. Thus it explains both the reasons for the proliferation of the remake during this period and the discourses which surround and penetrate the critical condemnation of the process. Chapter Four analyses the construction of national cinemas, national audiences, and high and popular culture, concepts central to much discussion of the remake. The chapter suggests that these alter according to the position and the cultural capital of the individual spectator, thus demonstrating the difficulties inherent to any attempt to define films as hermetic structures, and problematising the notion of transposition. Two case studies provide examples of the various ways in which the nation, the audience and high/low culture are both constructed and interrogated in cinematic works and the transformations such discourses undergo as a film is remade in another context. Chapter Five provides more comparators which enable detailed examination of the remake process, avoiding the sterile binaries unpacked in Chapter One. The first section discusses two pairs of comedies, revealing transformations in terms of genre, the second discusses a pair of films in terms of constructions of masculinity and stars.

Thus this thesis provides a detailed account of the remake process since 1980 via a theoretical and methodological framework which reveals why films are remade and what the implications of this may be for French and American cinemas and cultures. It demonstrates that these films and this process are highly complex structures which do not simply 'reflect' other films or their cultural context but which perform a labour upon both.

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Preface

On 23 September 1996, ITV screened *The Assassin*, John Badham's 1993 remake of Luc Besson's *Nikita* of 1990. In a review in *The Radio Times* of that week, ubiquitous British film critic, Barry Norman, discussed the film in the following terms:

> Another example of Hollywood's unfortunate tendency to remake fine Continental fare and turn it into sensationalist pap. [...] what was once witty if somewhat vacuous entertainment has become plain, one-dimensional thrills.

Upon close inspection, Norman's remarks seem somewhat confused. Although his condemnation of the remake is quite categorical, his assessment of *Nikita* smacks of indecision; 'fine continental fare' suggests whole-hearted praise, yet Norman goes on to describe the film as 'somewhat vacuous entertainment' thus apparently negating his earlier enthusiasm.

To understand the discourses behind this confusion it is necessary to bear in mind that the film which forms the subject of Norman's critique is a Hollywood remake of a French cinematic work. As a result, his remarks must be inserted into a much wider body of European (particularly French) criticism which condemns remakes, dismissing them as 'pap' purely

because they are remakes and, by extension, ignoring the 'vacuity' of the French films upon which they are based, terming them 'fine Continental fare' simply because they are the source of a remake.

Norman's review tells us very little about the film to be screened, nor indeed about its French source. Do they share the same narratives? To what genre conventions can they be seen to adhere? Who are the films' stars and how are they mobilised in each work? Clearly this silence is symptomatic of the review's status as media criticism which is rarely more than impressionistic. However, what it also reveals is the critic's antipathy to the very practice of remaking French films in Hollywood and an unproblematic valorisation of the source film (and European films in general) as inherently superior to the products of Hollywood.

The remake is an extremely prominent feature of contemporary Hollywood production. Since the beginning of the 1980s an increasing number of films have been transposed and transformed and yet it is almost impossible to find any analysis of the process which avoids the type of assumptions visible in Norman's critique. Clearly the current prevalence of the remake must have significant implications for contemporary production whilst also revealing much about the material and aesthetic climate of 1980s Hollywood, yet these potentially fascinating areas of research are invariably ignored.

Thus a close analysis of the practice of remaking French films in Hollywood seems timely. However, to simply study the films whilst ignoring the critical condemnation and silence outlined above would seem to be a rather partial exercise. The

act of remaking the films and the various ways in which they are received should be seen as related components of a wider process of cross-cultural interaction and exchange. Accordingly, the work which follows will not only set out to analyse the remakes of the 1980s and 1990s themselves, but will also attempt to describe the various discourses at work in the critical tendency to dismiss these films as 'pap'.

Chapter One

Setting the Agenda: Originality and Authenticity

What is a Remake?

Since the earliest days of its cinematic production Hollywood has adapted, copied, plagiarised, and been inspired by other works. The terminology used to describe this phenomenon is dependent on the position of the critic but in short it is fair to say that Hollywood has constantly remade. This process can take various forms: the adaptation of a literary text, a 'true' story or a mythic theme, adaptation from another audiovisual medium[1], parody, cinematic sequels and series, and the reworking of earlier screenplays (and here it is possible to differentiate between those screenplays initially adapted from a non-cinematic text and those written specifically for the cinema). It is important to establish a distinction between the different terms employed to describe these works,

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[1] For example, cinematic versions of popular television programmes such as *Mission Impossible* (Brian de Palma, USA, 1996).

a distinction which will enable perception of the various types of adaptation whilst not denying the overlap perceived in certain films. Those films based on non-cinematic works can be termed adaptations (such as the Merchant-Ivory adaptations of E.M. Forster's novels) and it should be noted that certain texts are adapted more than once (consider the numerous cinematic versions of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*)[2]. Sequels and series are those films which continue a theme or a character introduced in an earlier cinematic work. Whereas there will tend to be some narrative continuity between sequels, series may have no connection beyond characters, locations, or themes (compare the *Terminator* sequence and the *James Bond* series).

Remakes are specifically those films based on an earlier screenplay, for example sound remakes of silent films, 'auto-remakes' or those films made twice by the same director (*The Man who Knew too Much*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock in 1934 and 1956), Hollywood remakes of earlier Hollywood works ((*Sabrina*, directed by Sydney Pollack in 1996, a remake of *Sabrina* directed by Billy Wilder in 1954), and Hollywood remakes of non-Hollywood cinema. Thus the remake can be seen to cross both spatial (national) and temporal (historical) boundaries. The practice of remaking foreign films has been a particularly prolific part of the Hollywood adaptation process and the large majority of the films chosen for remaking are French. Indeed, since 1930 Hollywood has remade over fifty

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[2]There have been at least fifteen cinematic versions of Hugo's novel, including: *Les Misérables* (Raymond Bernard, France, 1934), *Miserabili* (Riccardo Freda, Italy, 1947), *Les Misérables* (Lewis Milestone, USA, 1952), *Les Misérables* (Jean-Paul Le Chanois, France, 1958), and, most recently, *Les Misérables* (Claude Lelouch, France, 1995).

French sound films, thus outstripping by a significant majority its remakes of the products of any other country, excepting of course those of the United States themselves.[3]

Clearly the term 'remake' can be used to describe many forms of cinematic adaptation. Whilst not wanting to deny the existence or indeed the significance of these various processes, the term will be used here to refer specifically to Hollywood remakes of French cinematic works made during the sound era; in other words, those Hollywood films based upon earlier French screenplays and the films to which they gave rise. Although these remakes are part of the wider process of cinematic adaptation described above and, more specifically, part of a Hollywood process of remaking 'foreign' screenplays, focus on the French example is necessary by virtue of the sheer numbers involved. It is also vital to distinguish between the remakes of the silent period and those of the sound era; huge numbers of silent films were remade as the cinema industry converted to sound in the late 1920s. The practice took place in similar proportions in all national industries as these early films provided easily accessible material for the new medium. The process was not questioned and did not give rise to the same types of discourse surrounding later remakes and as such the two processes demand differentiation.

The remake within the context of other forms of adaptation

However, it is clearly not possible to entirely abstract the remake process from the wider context of other forms of

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[3]See Appendix.

adaptation, both cinematic and non-cinematic, and from the network of discourses within which these practices are situated. Thus before embarking upon a detailed study of the specific process of remaking it is appropriate to examine different forms of adaptation and the paradigms used to talk about them.

The various definitions of the 'remake' outlined above demonstrate the diversity of adaptation within the cinema alone; cinematic adaptations can be based upon other films, novels, plays, television programmes, and comic strips. Yet adaptation is not confined to the cinema, it also forms an important part of literary and theatrical production. Indeed, according to the Arts Council of Great Britain, adaptations of novels for the stage made up five percent of live theatre performances in 1985. By 1986 this figure had risen to thirteen percent and by 1992 between seventeen and twenty percent of theatrical performances in Britain were based on novels[4]. The process of adaptation, whose very frequency shows it to be of extreme significance, leads to cross-fertilisation, both aesthetically as one art form borrows from another, temporally as works from another age are adapted, spatially as cultures adapt across national boundaries, and culturally as works shift between location in 'high' and 'popular' cultures. This cross-fertilisation can be seen to be of great value to the producer of the adapted work and indeed to the culture in which it is situated and its sense of national identity. The adaptation of a 'classic' work both brings a new audience to an integral product of the national

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[4]Reynolds, Peter (ed.): *Novel Images: Literature in Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.5

culture and gives rise to a work immediately possessing a certain degree of cultural capital. This increases if the adaptor of the 'classic' work also has cultural status (for example, eminent film and theatre directors) thus helping the adaptation itself to become a 'classic'. These works, with their three-tiered cultural capital, play an important role in the formation of the national culture, particularly when the 'classic' works adapted are indigenous products. Peter Reynolds points out that the BBC has a long history of adaptation reaching back to the early days of radio broadcasting. Discussing these early broadcasts, he states:

> They were part of that institution's commitment to national public broadcasting, programmed at a time - usually a Sunday, in late afternoon or early evening - when family members could be supposed to be gathered together and thus able to share in the infusion of morally uplifting doses of their cultural heritage.[5]

A similar example of adaptation of an indigenous 'classic' work being used to invoke a national cultural identity can be found in Claude Berri's *Germinal* of 1993. This film's cultural capital was multi-faceted; a well-established and much admired director, a script based upon Emile Zola's novel, and various French cinema stars including Gérard Depardieu. As a result the film provided the perfect vehicle for reassertion of a French cultural identity[6], and its timely arrival as the French government 'defended' French culture against the

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[5]Reynolds (1993), p.4.

[6]It should be noted that the film was mobilised rather differently by the French Left and the French Right. Indeed Mitterrand caused some controversy by stressing the film's articulation of a 'traditional' working class culture and his hopes for the rejuvenation of the Northern mining communities it portrayed whilst enjoying a lavish meal on a train journey to these same locations for the film's launch.

onslaught of the GATT agreements led to extra copies being made and the launching of *Germinal* into a ratings battle against Steven Spielberg's highly successful *Jurassic Park* (1993)[7]. It is perhaps significant that Hollywood, which aims for transnational appeal, tends to adapt popular works more frequently than it adapts 'classics'[8]. However the same type of dynamic can be perceived here as the author of the source text takes on status if the adaptation proves successful at the box-office (thus cultural capital is attained through economic capital). It is surely due to the huge financial success of *Jurassic Park* that subsequent adaptations of novels by Michael Crichton use this source as a selling point in their publicity. Indeed the extent to which films are marketed according to their source texts does seem to depend upon the status of the source, be it economic or cultural. The Merchant-Ivory adaptations of the novels of E.M.Forster are publicised as such, thus establishing a ready-made audience: the readers of Forster's novels and all those who enjoy this type of 'literary' cinema. Other films, whose source is unlikely to improve either their financial success or indeed their cultural status, will not be marketed as adaptations.

Adaptation and anxiety

Despite, or perhaps because of, the prevalence of the adaptation process, writings on the subject demonstrate that it gives rise to much anxiety. This unease tends to be centred

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[7] See Chapter Two for discussion of the GATT and Chapter Four for discussion of national cultural identities.

[8] This is not to suggest that American national identity is not in play in the products of Hollywood. See Chapter Four for further discussion of these issues.

around questions of authenticity, fidelity, specificity (texts of any value should be confined to the specific medium in which they developed) and popularisation (the adaptation is by definition more accessible than the 'original' and thus the process leads to the production of unskilled and unchallenged consumers)[9]. As Peter Horton and Joan Magretta point out in their work on French cinematic adaptation of literary works:

> The prevailing trend of beginning with fine books that have yielded indifferent films has led to a highly suspect body of generalizations about adaptation and the generic differences between literature and film. [...] Films can't handle complexities in point of view, films can't abstract or generalize, good films come from bad books, and so on.[10]

Adaptation is seen to decentre the work, to threaten its identity and that of the author. The higher the cultural status of the work to be adapted the greater these anxieties tend to be. As shown above this anxiety can be annulled when the adaptation itself takes on high cultural status, but if this is not the case the 'original' is seen to be threatened. Thomas Leitch betrays this anxiety in his discussion of remakes[11]. He claims that of all forms of adaptation only remakes compete directly with other products of the same aesthetic medium without economic or legal compensation. When the film remade is itself an adaptation, Leitch claims that the producers of the remake deny the cinematic work entirely,

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[9]I am indebted to John Thompson of the University of Cardiff for these categories.

[10]Horton, Andrew, S. & Magretta, Joan: *Modern European Filmmakers and the Art of Adaptation* (New York: Ungar, 1981), p.2.

[11]Leitch, Thomas: 'Twice-Told Tales: the Rhetoric of the Remake', *Literature and Film Quarterly*, vol.18, no.3, 1990, pp.138-149.

citing only the 'original' text as a source. Remakes compete with the films upon which they are based rather than creating new audiences for their source. He states that if a remake does invoke its source it is to entice spectators into the cinema, only to deny this relationship once the film begins: 'The true remake admires its original so much it wants to annihilate it'[12].

There are clear differences between remakes and other forms of cinematic adaptation such as the sequel for example. The identity of the sequel depends upon its relationship to the source film; audiences view *Terminator 2* in order to revisit the themes, characters, and narrative seen in the first film of the series. As such the sequel must market itself according to this relationship. This is not necessarily the case with remakes, which can use the source film as part of their identity but may equally be publicised as 'original' works. However Leitch's depiction of the remake process is overly simplistic; as this thesis will demonstrate, his assessment of the material and legal practices surrounding remakes is highly superficial if not erroneous. Nevertheless, his comments are typical of the sense of disquiet inherent to much discussion of both the aesthetic/cultural and the material implications of the adaptation process.

Why adapt?

Nevertheless, adaptation does take place, and, as demonstrated above, it takes place frequently. Indeed adaptation can be seen to form an integral part of aesthetic production; for

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[12]Leitch (1990), p.145.

example, one only has to think of the French 'tradition of quality' of the 1950s and the numerous reworkings of novels such as *Les Misérables* to find proof of its central role in cinematic production. This begs the question as to why works are adapted. This is frequently put down to purely financial motives, particularly in terms of Hollywood cinematic adaptations. As Peter Horton states, Hollywood adapts for money and French cinema adapts for aesthetic reasons[13], thus neatly reinforcing binary oppositions between French 'art' and Hollywood 'commercialism'. Hollywood, it is claimed, needs to find good material without excessive financial risk; adaptation can provide this material. Other forms of adaptation are frequently subjected to the same sort of reductive discourse.

Clearly the processes which give rise to adaptation are far more complex than this would suggest. Material practices are not negligible but they are only one part of a whole set of discourses which surround and penetrate the adaptation process, a fact demonstrated by the discussion of cultural status outlined above and one which will be further clarified through the ensuing study of remakes. Certainly it seems clear that new paradigms for the discussion of adaptation must be constructed. The work which follows will problematise the discourses surrounding the remake practice, move towards an understanding of the motives behind it and provide a new framework for discussion of this particular phenomenon and its specific identity as well as for the analysis of other forms of adaptation.

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[13]Horton & Magretta (1981), p.4.

The remake: criticism and condemnation

The cinematic remake has been received in various ways. Some have met with great commercial success, for example Leonard Nimoy's *Three Men and a Baby* of 1988. Others, for example John Landis' *Oscar* of 1991, have failed miserably at the box office. A similar variety can be perceived in the style, genre, and indeed age of the films selected for remaking. It is frequently claimed that works are chosen solely on the basis of their commercial success, however, although it is true to say that many of those films remade have done extremely well at the French box office it is certainly not true of all of them; *Blame it on Rio* (1983), Stanley Donen's remake of Claude Berri's *Un moment d'égarement* of 1979, was neither a commercial nor indeed a critical success and yet the remake went ahead.

It is however possible to discern a certain homogeneity when one examines the critical discourse surrounding the practice of remaking. To date no serious, sustained comment on the process has been produced. The large majority of work on remakes is journalistic and certainly in France its attitude is overwhelmingly negative[14]. Remakes rarely achieve critical approbation; they are almost routinely described as inferior to the French 'original' and their commercialism is condemned. As such, critical reception of the remake can be located

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[14]There are numerous examples of this type of journalistic comment. The following is not an exhaustive list but does provide a useful cross-section: Harlé, P.A: *La Cinématographie française*, no.1038, 23 September 1938, p.11. Bazin, André: *Le Parisien libéré*, 15 February 1952. *International Herald Tribune*, 11 November 1978. *La Revue du cinéma*, no.420, October 1986. *Ciné Finances*, no.17, 5 November 1990, p.1. *The Economist*, 27 February 1993. *France-Soir*, 24 March 1993. *Studio* (French version), no.73, May 1993, pp.110-113. *Empire*, no.49, July 1993.

within the discourses surrounding other adaptation practices described above. In 1938 this attitude was clearly expressed by P.A. Harlé in his discussion of *Algiers* (1938), John Cromwell's remake of Julien Duvivier's *Pépé le Moko* (1937). He points out the dangers of remakes for the French film industry, claiming that they are produced simply in order to make money and that in the process they prevent the success of the 'original' film, 'La vente du sujet d'un film français peut briser sa carrière à l'étranger [...] le remake est un danger'[15]. In 1951 André Bazin expressed similar sentiments. Like Harlé he perceived the remake process as utterly commercial, claiming that films were selected according to their reception at the box office, 'Lorsque le succès d'un film a été assez grand pour que son souvenir ait encore valeur commerciale, on ne se borne pas à remettre l'original en circulation, on refait le film'[16]. Bazin manifestly shares Harlé's opinion that remakes have a detrimental effect upon the film on which they are based. More recently still the French director Luc Besson rearticulated these notions. His film *Nikita* of 1988 was remade by John Badham in 1993 and released in the United States as *Point of No Return* (in Britain the film was released as *The Assassin*). Initially Besson intended to be involved in the remake process but he pulled out at the last minute expressing his dislike of what

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[15]Harlé, P.A.: *La Cinématographie française*, no.1038, 23 September 1938, p.11.

[16]Bazin, André: 'A propos des reprises', *Cahiers du cinéma*, no.5, pp.52-56, cited in Protopopoff, Daniel & Serceau, Michel (eds.): 'Le remake et l'adaptation', *Cinémaction*, no.53, October 1989.

he also perceived to be a purely financial procedure[17]. Perhaps not surprisingly Besson claimed that films are selected for remaking solely on the basis of their commercial success; American studios want new ideas without excessive financial risk, the rights to a successful French screenplay come cheaply by Hollywood's standards hence the popularity of remakes. Besson, clearly not a disinterested observer, bemoaned the fact that Hollywood studios frequently purchase the distribution rights to French films in order to prevent their release in the United States before that of the remake thus effectively destroying their chance of success in the American market. Besson here echoes somewhat uncannily the comments of both Harlé and Bazin; it would seem that this is one critical debate which has failed to develop over the last fifty years.

There has been one attempt in France to produce a collection of serious comment on remakes; in 1989 *Cinémaction* published an edition entitled 'Le remake et l'adaptation'[18], edited by Michel Serceau and Daniel Protopopoff. However, despite some useful filmographies and interesting attempts at definition, the essays tend to re-express the type of negative critical response voiced by Harlé, Bazin and Besson. Once again remakes are condemned as a commercial practice. They are described as an act of violence against the films from which they develop and it is claimed that only very rarely is a remake not worse than its 'original':

> Alors que le cinéma américain bénéficie aujourd'hui
> d'une aura de supériorité (au demeurant

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[17]Besson, Luc: *Nikita* (Paris: Editions Bordas, 1989).

[18]Protopopoff & Serceau (1989).

> injustifiée), le cinéma français apparaît comme un
> maître auprès duquel les "Yankees" viennent
> modestement chercher modèles et références. [...]
> Dans la crise (d'inspiration) actuelle que traverse
> le cinéma mondial, force est de constater que le
> cinéma français est à peu près le seul qui ait
> conservé sa capacité d'innovation et son
> originalité, quel que soit par ailleurs son taux de
> réussite.[19]

> Plagiat, trahison, détournement, usurpation, les
> qualicatifs ne manquent pas pour désigner ces films
> de seconde main. Ici, il n'est point question de
> créativité, mais de gros sous, et seul l'aveuglement
> des producteurs américains prête à sourire.[20]

Discussing Joseph Losey's film *M* (1951), a remake of Fritz
Lang's film of the same title (1931), Daniel Protopopoff and
Michel Serceau claim its artistic inferiority and go on to
suggest that 'classic' works should be left untouched:

> S'y attaquer (et, de bien des façons, faire un
> remake constitue une attaque), c'était se condamner
> aux comparaisons les plus cruelles de la part des
> spectateurs avertis. Bien entendu, l'idée générale
> est qu'on ne refait pas les chefs-d'oeuvre. [21]

Translation Studies and Rewriting

The arguments outlined above are clearly highly simplistic.
They enable a description of the practice of remaking as a
one-way, vertical trajectory from the high art of the French
'original' to the popular commercialism of the American
'copy'. What is striking about these arguments is that they
repose upon a whole set of binary oppositions; French high

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[19]Daniel Serceau: 'Hollywood à l'heure de Paris', Protopopoff
& Serceau (1989), pp.113-121 (p.114).

[20]Daniel Protopopoff: 'Sur quelques films récents', Protopopoff
& Serceau (1989), pp.110-111 (p.111).

[21]Protopopoff, Daniel, and Serceau, Michel: 'Les remakes
américains de films européens: une greffe stérile',
Protopopoff & Serceau (1989), pp.98-107 (p.101).

culture as opposed to American popular entertainment, the value and tradition of French art as opposed to debased Hollywood commercialism, and the authenticity of the French 'original' as opposed to the American 'copy'. Binary divides of this type render easy the task of the critic wishing to evaluate a particular text. In the words of Fredric Jameson, value itself, '...fatally programs every binary opposition into its good and bad, positive and negative, essential and inessential terms'[22]. It is clear that in order to attempt a more detailed study of the practice of remaking all these oppositions require close examination. They are bound up with notions of the national, of the distinction between high and mass culture and indeed what we understand a cinematic text to be. Fundamental to the discourse surrounding remakes is the opposition established between the 'original' text and its reproduction. It is possible to discern in much of this critical debate an assumption that the French film, as the 'original', must be superior to its Hollywood 'copy'. It is evidently vital to examine how this opposition fits into the wider discourse about adaptation and cultural reproduction, and notions of originality and authenticity, thus enabling perception of the extent to which the negative and indeed overly simplistic value judgements outlined above are underwritten by this particular dichotomy.

Much debate about questions of textual reproduction and notions of originality has gone on in the somewhat marginalised domain of translation studies. Like remakes, for

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[22]Jameson, Fredric: 'Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture', in *Signatures of the Visible* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.9-34 (p.16).

many years the practice of translation lacked any sustained comment. This situation began to change in the 1960s with the work of theorists such as J.C. Catford[23] and Eugene Nida[24]. Although now frequently discredited for focusing overly exclusively on linguistics and notions of equivalence, their work did contribute to the development of a science of translating, a systematic approach which was successful in improving the low status accorded to the discipline at this time. Translation studies then began to move away from the purely linguistic and towards an analysis of the role of translation in given literatures and an examination of the constraints governing textual production and reception. The development of this kind of study was advanced by the theory of polysystems. Gideon Toury[25] and Itamar Even-Zohar[26] describe cultural production as a complex and dynamic system which can not be analysed through a rigid, prescriptive theory but which necessitates a constant interplay between theoretical models and practical case studies. They go on to stress the importance not only of seeing translation as a system in its own right but also of conceiving of its position within other systems. This they claim would enable theorists to examine the exact role of translation in a given culture

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[23]Catford, J.C.: *A Linguistic Theory of Translation: An Essay in Applied Linguistics* (Oxford: O.U.P., 1965).

[24]Nida, Eugene: *Towards a Science of Translating* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1964).

[25]Toury, Gideon: *In Search of a Theory of Translation* (Tel Aviv University: The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, 1980).

[26]Even-Zohar, Itamar: 'The Position of Translated Literature within the Literary Polysystem', in Holmes, J. et.al.(eds.): *Literature and Translation* (Leuvan: Accol, 1978).

and to establish its relation to other aspects of this culture:

> Seen from this point of view, translation is no longer a phenomenon whose nature and borders are given once and for all, but an activity dependent on the relations within a certain cultural system.[27]

The work of the systems theorists led to the development of much of the recent study of translation and specifically a body of work which is frequently termed 'the cultural turn' in translation studies. Theorists such as André Lefevere, Susan Bassnett, and Lawrence Venuti have attempted to bring together work from a wide variety of fields in order to examine the functions of ideology, change and power in literature and society and so to affirm the role of translation as a shaping force. Lefevere uses the term 'rewriting' to refer to both translation proper and all forms of adaptation and cross-cultural transposition, '(translation/adaptation? - the term rewriting absolves us of the necessity to draw borderlines between various forms of rewriting, such as "translation", "adaptation", "emulation")'[28]. He stresses the significance of rewriting by underlining its proliferation in Western cultures, using the term to describe such activities as translating, criticism, adaptations for stage and screen, the writing of literary histories, anthologies, reference works and editions. He maintains that it is vital to study this phenomenon as a means of establishing the factors influencing cultural production, reception and evolution. Central to his theory is the notion of 'manipulation'. Rewriting does not

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[27]Even-Zohar (1978), p.125.

[28]Lefevere, André: *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.47.

take place in a vacuum, its exponents hold a particular place in a particular society and they all operate under certain ideological, material and formal constraints. According to Lefevere, rewritings provide 'images' of texts and it is these images which reach out to the great majority of a society's potential readers and viewers (these 'images' can include critical pieces, publicity, merchandising in the form of any number of products which may arise from a successful film or television programme – clothing or games for example – as well as adaptation 'proper'). Consider here the Merchant-Ivory cinematic adaptations which to many people are now far more familiar than the E.M. Forster novels upon which they are based, or the *Inspector Morse* television series based upon novels by Colin Dexter. Dexter's work reached a far wider audience through the television adaptation which in turn increased the readership of the source novels. The success of the television programme led to tours of Oxford (setting of the Morse stories) described as 'Inspector Morse tours' thus suggesting yet another 'image' of the text produced through rewriting. Texts are manipulated to provide rewritings which in many cases then 'become' the text for readers and spectators. Lefevere himself gives the example of the numerous rewritings of Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* in which the poetics and ideology of a particular society are clearly displayed by the translator's decisions over the transposition of certain sexual references. The different rewritings vary enormously yet for many theatre goers and lovers of Greek comedy a specific translation is the only text available and thus this text 'becomes' *Lysistrata*:

What concerns me here, though, is the "simple" fact

that the interpretations quite literally become the
play for those who are unable to read the original
or, in other words, that the translation projects a
certain image of the play in the service of a
certain ideology.[29]

Lefevere's work is certainly of interest in its attempts
to deconstruct accounts of translation as a 'transcendental'
process, free from the discourses of its particular context of
production. His coining of the term 'rewriting' to describe
all types of textual reproduction enables analysis of the
various forms this practice may take (critical works, inter-
lingual translation, adaptation and so on) whilst avoiding
artificial separation between them. Thus by describing the
remake as a form of rewriting it becomes possible to situate
this specific process within the wider discourses surrounding
other forms of adaptation and reproduction. Nevertheless,
Lefevere's use of the concept of 'manipulation' to describe
the ideological, material and formal work of the practice of
rewriting is somewhat problematic. It suggests a rather
simplistic Marxist account of cultural production whereby
power is exercised in an unmediated, hierarchical structure
which establishes binary relationships between 'active'
producers and 'passive' consumers. Thus whilst Lefevere
usefully demonstrates the concrete cultural factors that
influence the production and reception of texts, positing
rewriting as central to the 'acceptance or rejection,
canonization or non-canonization of literary works'[30], his use
of the term 'manipulation' tends to underplay the shifting
nature of power in society. Following Foucault he does

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[29]Lefevere (1992), p.42.

[30]Lefevere (1992), p.2.

acknowledge that power is not just a 'repressive force'[31]:

> ...what makes power hold good, what makes it
> accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn't only
> weigh on us as a force that says no, but that it
> traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure,
> forms knowledge, produces discourse.[32]

However, by retaining 'manipulation' as a central descriptive term, Lefevere tends to reinforce traditional Marxist accounts of power as a binary structure, figured through activity and passivity, rather than underlining the complex processes of negotiation, coercion and consent which make up power relations in society[33].

Translation strategies: dominance and domination

Lawrence Venuti's work on translation is perhaps more successful in avoiding this particular pitfall. Venuti sets out to describe the ideological work of the translation process and the ways in which it works upon, and is worked upon by, the discourses and structures of power in specific societies and cultures. He claims that the hegemonic construction of translation in the West has been a 'fluent' strategy; traditionally rewriters have attempted to transpose texts into a target culture by effacing any trace of the process of translation. Thus they have committed acts of cultural appropriation whilst at the same time exercising a fluent strategy which denies the act of rewriting and thus

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[31]Lefevere (1992), p.15.

[32]Foucault, Michel: *Power/Knowledge*, Garden, Colin (ed.) (New York, Pantheon, 1980), p.119.

[33]These terms follow Gramsci's description of power relations. For an account of Gramsci's work on power and his concept of hegemony see Chapter Four.

somewhat paradoxically valorises the 'original', 'Fluency produces an individualistic illusion, in which the text is assumed to originate fundamentally with the author, to be authorial self-expression, free of cultural and social determinations'[34]. This practice is evidently in line with Western traditions of expressive realism; just as the text is supposed to 'reflect' the individual experience and talent of the author so the translation sets out to 'reflect' the 'essence' of the foreign work. The ultimate result of this strategy is the production of translations which do not read like translations but which can masquerade as 'original' works. Thus H.T.Lowe-Porter apologises for his translation of Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, claiming that a translation 'should, in English, at least not come like a translation'[35]. This in turn renders invisible the translator, the producer of the 'effaced' translation, thus maintaining a hierarchical division between debased reproduction and reproducers, and dominant 'originals' and creators.

This silencing of the translation process is then determined by the individual concept of authorship dominant in the Western literary tradition. According to this concept, the text unproblematically reflects the intentions, feelings, and 'essence' of the author, free from external influences (cultural, historical, or material) which may hamper the text's status as 'unique original'. Similarly, the fluent translation sets out to mirror the intentions of the

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[34]Venuti, Lawrence: 'Translation as Cultural Politics: Regimes of Domestication in English', in *Textual Practice*, vol.7, no.2, Summer 1993, pp.208-223 (p.213).

[35]Introductory note to Mann, Thomas: *Buddenbrooks*, trans. Lowe-Porter, H.T. (London: Penguin, 1957).

'original' author, denying the very process of reproduction:

> [transparent discourse] values the foreign text as original, authentic, true, and devalues the translated text as derivative, simulacral, false, forcing on translation the project of effacing its second-order status with a fluent strategy. It is here that a Platonic metaphysics emerges from beneath romantic individualism to construe translation as the copy of a copy, dictating a translation strategy in which the effect of transparency masks the mediations between and within copy and original, eclipsing the translator's labor with an illusion of authorial presence, reproducing the cultural marginality and economic exploitation which translation suffers today.[36]

This valorisation of the author and the ensuing de-valorisation of translation can be seen to be echoed in the cinematic conception of *auteurism*[37]. Like the author of the literary text, the director as author is frequently mobilised to bestow a sense of completion and uniqueness upon a filmic text. Thus the *auteur* enables differentiation between creativity (the 'works' of the individual director) and mass (re)production (the 'products' of the cinema industry) within the domains of both 'art' and 'popular' cinema:

> ... art cinema specifically uses authorship to unify the film text, to organise it for the audience's comprehension in the absence of clearly identifiable stars and genres. Art cinema addresses its audience as one of knowledgeable cinemagoers who will recognise the characteristic stylistic touches of the author's oeuvre. The art film is intended to be read as the work of an expressive individual, and a small industry is devoted to informing viewers of particular authorial marks: career retrospectives, press reviews and television programmes all contribute to introducing viewers to authorial codes.[38]

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[36]Venuti, Lawrence: *The Translator's Invisibility* (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.289-290.

[37]See the analysis of *A bout de souffle* and *Breathless* in Chapter Four for further discussion of *auteurism*.

[38]Cook, Pam: *The Cinema Book*, rev. edn.(London: BFI, 1993), p.116.

Just as the concept of the individual author of the literary text can be seen to underwrite the hierarchical division between literary production and translation, so the cinematic *auteur* enables a division between artistic creation and industrial (re)production which surely reinforces negative assessments of the adaption/remaking processes. These mobilisations of the author correspond to Foucault's description of the 'author-function'. An author's name is not a simple element of speech; its connection to a text informs us that this piece of discourse is not to be immediately consumed and forgotten, it denotes the status of the discourse within a specific society, characterising it as distinct from other forms of 'non-authored' discourse:

> ... the 'author-function' is tied to the legal and institutional systems that circumscribe, determine, and articulate the realm of discourse; it does not operate in a uniform manner in all discourses, at all times, and in any given culture; it is not defined by the spontaneous attribution of a text to its creator, but through a series of precise and complex procedures; it does not refer, purely and simply, to an actual individual insofar as it simultaneously gives rise to a variety of egos and to a series of subjective positions that individuals of any class may come to occupy.[39]

Central to Venuti's account of the practice and reception of translation in Western cultures is the opposition between dominant and dominated cultures. He points out that very few translations are actually published in English, and of those published only a tiny minority become bestsellers. So in 1990, British publishers brought out 63,980 books, of which only 1625 (2.4 percent) were translations. American publishers

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[39]Foucault, Michel: 'What is an Author?', in Bouchard, D. (ed.): *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault* (New York: Cornell, 1977), pp.113-138.

brought out 46,743 books in the same year. Of these, 1380 (2.96 percent) were translations. Publishing practices in other western European countries have tended to put rather more emphasis on translation, particularly from English. In France the total translation rate has varied from eight to twelve percent, figures which are significantly higher than those for Britain or the United States yet also somewhat lower than those for Italy and Germany (in 1989, 25.4 percent of Italian publications were translations, and in 1990, 14.4 percent of the output of the German publishing industry, which is incidentally somewhat larger than its British and American counterparts, took the form of translations)[40].

As these figures may begin to suggest, since World War II English has been the most translated language worldwide whilst it translates other languages very little[41]. Clearly this situation both resides in, and is perpetuated by, the status of English as 'international language' and the material power of large publishing conglomerates, many of them American controlled. Venuti condemns this state of affairs, claiming that it has led to the reinforcement of Anglo-American cultural hegemony, and cultures utterly resistant to the 'foreign', constantly engaging in a narcissistic search for self-recognition within a cultural other:

> British and American publishing [...] has reaped the financial benefits of successfully imposing Anglo-American cultural values on a vast foreign readership, while producing cultures in the United Kingdom and the United States that are aggressively monolingual, unreceptive to the foreign, accustomed to fluent translations that invisibly inscribe

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[40]Venuti (1995), p.12.

[41]Venuti (1995), p.14.

foreign texts with English-language values...[42]

Thus hegemonic fluent translation strategies can be seen to reside in (and reinforce) the particular relations of dominance existing between given cultures and societies. The material and cultural power of the United States enables translation which replaces the linguistic and cultural difference of the source text with a product familiar to the target consumer:

> The aim of translation is to bring back a cultural other as the same, the recognizable, even the familiar; and the aim always risks a wholesale domestication of the foreign text, often in highly self-conscious projects, where translation serves an appropriation of foreign cultures for domestic agendas, cultural, economic, political. Translation can be considered the communication of a foreign text, but it is always a communication limited by its address to a specific reading audience.[43]

Venuti's distinction between dominant and dominated cultures is clearly central to his account of the translation process. A 'dominated' culture (in other words, a relatively small or poor culture, or one in the process of formation) will tend to translate much more than a 'dominant' culture. These translations will perceive the source text, coming as it does from a stronger, or more well established culture, as the site of authority and so translation strategies will entail some incorporation of features of the source language and culture; the translation will involve some 'foreignising' or 'othering' of the target text. However, when the text to be rewritten comes from a dominated culture the rewriter takes on all authority and incorporates the source text into the

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[42]Venuti (1995), p.15.

[43]Venuti (1995), pp.18-19.

hegemony of the target culture. Nevertheless, by effacing the very process of translation and appropriating the reproduction as an 'original', binary valorisations of production and reproduction, original and copy are retained.

Venuti's work is extremely useful in that it enables an understanding of the particular processes which influence both decisions to rewrite texts and the rewriting strategies adopted. His account of these cultural, ideological and material factors permits an understanding of power relations as shifting and mediated, thus avoiding the somewhat limited possibilities of Lefevere's concept of 'manipulation'. However, both Lefevere and Venuti concentrate almost entirely on literary texts, despite Lefevere's assertion that his term 'rewriting' is intended to cover all forms of adaptation, including televisual and cinematic work. Clearly it would be foolish to ignore the differences between literature and cinema. Both are multifarious systems, made up of texts themselves, the producers and consumers of texts, the various discourses which surround and penetrate them (critical work, publicity, prizes, extension through other media such as television shows and magazines, and so on) and their specific material and cultural context of production. Evidently there are great differences in the ways in which literary and filmic texts are both produced and consumed, differences which will shift and alter over time. An example of this would be the notion of 'individual' consumption; whilst aware of a wider community of readers, the consumer of the literary text tends to read alone and frequently in a broken manner, in other words the book will not be read in one sitting but over time. In contrast the cinematic film has traditionally been consumed

by a group of people (in a movie theatre) in a single act of viewing (the duration of the film). This particular difference is clearly altering as the viewing of films on video and pay television becomes increasingly common. Like reading, filmic viewing can now also be experienced as an individual practice and can be disseminated over time; the book-shelf may well now contain both novels and films[44].

The film, or the total cinematic sign, is particularly complex. Dick Delabastita distinguishes four types of film sign:

> ...verbal signs transmitted acoustically (dialogue), non-verbal signs transmitted acoustically (background noise, music), verbal signs transmitted visually (credits, letters, documents shown on the screen), non-verbal signs transmitted visually.[45]

Thus the film is both visual and acoustic and is shaped by numerous codes, both 'on-screen' and 'off-screen', for example verbal, narrative, vestimentary, and cinematic codes (such as genre, stars, and the visual codes of lighting, camera angles and editing) as well as the material and ideological discourses of its context of production and reception. The polysemic nature of the filmic sign must evidently be considered when examining rewriting for the cinema. It is not sufficient to simply analyse the translation of dialogue, rather the transposition of all the codes outlined above needs to be studied.

The differences between literary and cinematic rewriting

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[44]For further discussion of cinema spectatorship see Chapter Four.

[45]Delabastita, Dick: 'Translation and the Mass Media', in Bassnett, Susan & Lefevere, André (eds.): *Translation, History and Culture* (London: Pinter, 1990), pp.97-109 (pp.101-102).

are not limited to the text's identity as a signifying system. When describing the remake as a form of translation or rewriting it is vital to bear in mind the existence of other forms of cinematic translation; these include the various adaptation processes described earlier in this paper as well as 'cinematic translation proper' or dubbing and subtitling. Whereas the literary text will only exist in its translated form for all but a minority of bilingual consumers, the film may well be released both as remake and in its dubbed or subtitled form. Venuti's 'fluent' translations are always already an act of cultural appropriation, the presentation of the 'other' in the 'same'. However, whilst the remake can be seen to mimic such fluency, this must be complicated by the possible dual presence of the source film. Dubbing and subtitling also present the spectator with a cultural other in the terms of the target culture, however this could perhaps be described as an 'intermediary' form of rewriting, difference is not entirely effaced, something of the 'foreign' film remains. As previously discussed, many French critics have condemned the fact that French films remade tend not to be released in the American market before the remake. Nevertheless, whether their release comes before or after the remake, in cinemas or on video, a double translation is possible in a way that is not true of the literary text.

This dual circulation will determine the remake's status as 'translation' or 'original'. Remakes are rarely marketed as such and whether or not they are consumed as adaptations will depend upon the audience's knowledge of the source film. Thus a film based upon a French work unreleased in the American market will be perceived by a popular American audience as an

'original' work. Venuti points out that publishing companies tend to perceive translation as a risk, hence the employment of fluent strategies which incorporate the text into the hegemony of the target culture. Remakes however are seen by American producers as a safe option as they have almost invariably denied their status as adaptation and masqueraded as 'originals'. This may seem somewhat paradoxical considering the possible co-presence of the 'source text'. However, if released in the American market, a French film will tend to be limited to a very small circulation and thus a restricted audience, so ensuring the remake's ability to disguise its source from all but a small minority of the spectators.

The remake can then be seen as a fluent translation, however this identity must be complicated by the possible presence of 'intermediary' translations (the dubbed or subtitled source film). Moreover, when discussing the remake it is imperative to complicate Venuti's concept of dominant and dominated cultures. As later chapters will demonstrate[46], relationships of power between France and the United States can not be reduced to any simple binary but must rather be seen as complex and shifting. As the translation figures cited above demonstrate, despite translating more than the United States, France still only produces a relatively small number of translations. Moreover, like English, French has made claims to be the 'universal' language, a belief which resulted in a domesticating translation method in line with nationalist ideology, exemplified by the following remarks:

> It has been my intention to distill from the English
> Young a French one to be read with pleasure and

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[46]See particularly Chapters Two and Three.

interest by French readers who would not have to ask themselves whether the book they were reading was a copy or an original. It seems to me that authors who write in foreign languages should be translated in this way since they are not always models of taste, even if their superior literary merit is not in doubt. If we translated this way we would assimilate all that is good in our neighbors and reject the bad we have no need to read or know of.[47]

I have suppressed English customs where they may appear shocking to other nations, or made them conform to customs prevalent in the rest of Europe. It seemed to me that those remainders of the old and uncouth British ways, which only habit prevents the British themselves from noticing, would dishonor a book in which manners should be noble and virtuous. To give the reader an accurate idea of my work, let me just say, in conclusion, that the seven volumes of the English edition, which would amount to fourteen volumes in my own, have been reduced to four.[48]

Similarly, both France and the United States make claims to a universal model of democracy located in each nation's experience of revolution. Clearly such claims problematise attempts to perceive either culture as dominant or dominated. Indeed Kristin Ross claims that France's very identity is patterned by the contradictions between dominance and domination[49]. Claiming that accounts of the post-war experience of modernisation and decolonisation in France have typically been separated, Ross states that it was the very co-existence of these processes that underwrote contemporary French cultural identity:

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[47]Le Tourneur, Pierre: Extract from the preface to his translation of Young's *Night Thoughts* (1769) in Lefevere, André (ed.): *Translation, History, Culture: A Sourcebook*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p.39.

[48]Abbé Prévost: Extract from the preface to his translation of Richardson's *Pamela* (1760) in Lefevere (1992), p.39.

[49]Ross, Kristin: *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1995).

> [many narratives of the post-war period] tend, even today, to choose between the two stories, the story of French modernization and Americanization on the one hand, or the story of decolonization on the other. I have tried instead throughout this book to hold the two stories in the tension of what I take to be their intricate relationship as it was lived then and as it continues into the present. The peculiar contradictions of France in that period can be seized only if they are seen as those of an exploiter/exploited country, dominator/dominated, exploiting colonial populations at the same time that it is dominated by, or more precisely, entering more and more into collaboration or fusion with, American capitalism.[50]

Having experienced a very real domination through German occupation, France entered a period figured by these contradictions. As the former colonies struggled for, and achieved, independence, so France was in turn 'colonised' by the United States. Indeed, as Etienne Balibar suggests, this tendency to perceive American influence as a form of colonisation was dependent upon its intersection with France's own longstanding identity as a coloniser[51].

This problematising of relations of dominance between France and the United States is central to an analysis of the remake and the discourses which surround and penetrate it. Economically and materially Hollywood dominates the French cinema industry. As such the remake can be seen to mirror the fluent strategies evolving from dominant cultures described by Venuti. However, despite Hollywood's ability to define a popular aesthetics which arises from its material power, French cinematic production is typically seen as aesthetically dominant in that it is described as high cultural and thus

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[50]Ross (1995), p.7.

[51]Balibar, Etienne: *Les frontières de la démocratie* (Paris: La Découverte, 1992), pp.57-65.

superior. This opposition between a high cultural French cinematic work and a mass cultural Hollywood product is central to the negative critique of the remake previously described. Clearly it is highly problematic, the opposition between high and popular culture is neither immanent nor unchanging.

High culture/popular culture

Pierre Bourdieu describes society in terms of 'fields'. He claims that all societies are composed of hierarchically structured fields: for example the economic field, the political field, and the cultural field. Each functions according to its own rules and is relatively independent of the other. However the different fields are structurally homologous and these structures are determined by the position and power relations of agents in the individual field. As agents compete and struggle for the capital specific to the field (cultural capital, economic capital) so the structure of the field can change; these are dynamic systems[52]. This notion of the field enables an examination of the cinematic artefact in terms of its position within a particular field and via its relations to other social structures thus complicating the simplistic binaries established between high culture and popular culture, art cinema and 'mass' entertainment. Both art cinema and popular cinema are situated within a cultural field

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[52]Bourdieu, Pierre: *La Distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979), *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Johnson, Randal (ed.), (Oxford: Polity Press, 1993). Forbes, Jill & Kelly, Mike (eds.): 'Pierre Bourdieu', *French Cultural Studies*, vol.4, 1993. For further discussion of Bourdieu and spectatorship see Chapter Four.

and will be involved in struggles for symbolic or cultural capital. However, as industries, both cinemas will, to a greater or lesser degree, be situated within an economic field and thus engaged in competition for economic capital. Clearly art cinema is more firmly situated within the cultural field and the major part of its struggle will involve the accumulation of cultural capital (prestige and critical success). Popular films will be more clearly situated in the economic field; the accumulation of economic capital will outweigh the struggle for cultural capital. This positioning of different films and cinemas within specific fields is highly complex and it is further complicated in the process of cross-cultural transposition as films which have been produced for a popular audience in France, and which are thus engaged in the accumulation of economic capital, become 'foreign' and consequently prestigious upon release in the United States and as such are then seen as sites for the struggle over cultural capital. Similarly, many French films are remade in Hollywood in order to increase their chances of popular success. In Bourdieu's terms, they are transferred from the cultural field (in which they are situated owing to their status as 'foreign' works) to the economic field, thus becoming accumulators of economic capital. This method of analysis enables a clearer understanding of why certain films are selected for remaking; rather than reducing such decisions to mere formal or aesthetic factors, it is possible to see that they are closely bound up with different social fields and struggles over the accumulation of capital.

Bourdieu's theories allow us to perceive films as a site of struggle for economic capital and cultural capital, the

ability to determine what is or is not aesthetic. Aesthetic value and notions of taste are not natural (although we experience them as such), instead they are socially and historically constituted. Indeed, the central concern of Bourdieu's work *La Distinction* is to identify the ways in which certain cultural forms take on cultural capital, in other words, become prestigious or part of 'high culture'. He claims that aesthetic discourses, and most specifically taste, are constructed according to the power relations and hierarchies at work in a given society. As such they can be seen to be bound up with particular socio-historical formations rather than as some sort of transcendental knowledge existing in a vacuum. Thus films, in this case remakes and the films upon which they are based, are not inherently good or bad or inherently part of high or popular culture. Indeed the very notion of high/popular culture is itself the manifestation of the logic of a particular social formation. Instead Bourdieu's work leads to a perception of these films as part of the struggle for distinction, for the accumulation of different forms of cultural and economic capital. Such a perception negates the possibility of reducing the remake process to a simplistic and evaluative binary divide. Bourdieu points out that the field of cultural production is structured by the opposition between the field of restricted production (e.g. art cinema) and the field of large-scale production (e.g. popular cinema). The symbolic value of the restricted field is sustained by an apparatus consisting of museums, schools, art cinemas and so on. The extent to which a cultural artefact is part of this field is determined by its ability to ignore outside pressures and obey

only the logic of this particular field. The large-scale field is supported by the culture industry whose principle area of struggle and thus differentiation is economic capital. Artefacts from this field will be devised in order to 'make money', hence the 'non-classifying' products of Hollywood which are produced to appeal to as wide an audience as possible. Clearly the remake process involves transfer between these two fields; the Hollywood remake is frequently part of the second field. This fact is further complicated by the cross-cultural nature of the remake process; a film belonging to the second field in its country of origin may well become part of the first field after exportation.

Bourdieu's work provides an extremely useful framework for the study of the remake process. It enables analysis of the aesthetic properties of the films themselves without falling into the excessive subjectivism of other 'formalist' approaches. It permits close study of the socio-historical conditions surrounding the moments of production and reception whilst avoiding overt determinism. It also, and perhaps most interestingly, enables an unpacking of the oppositions established between high and popular culture and the ways in which these cinematic works are evaluated according to this binary logic. Bourdieu's notion of 'the objectivity of the subjective' and the framework he constructs around it permit a reexamination of questions of what is and is not 'good' culture. Moreover it demonstrates the socio-historical formations behind such evaluations and the way in which they are used as sites for struggle.

Despite the highly complex nature of definitions of high and popular culture and of an individual film's relation to

each field, this binary remains a central trope in the critical establishment's assessment of the remake process. Although many source films are in fact popular works (often comedies), the critical account of the remake posits an authentic French 'original', vastly superior to the debased American 'copy'. This manifestly demonstrates the impossibility of casting either the United States or France as dominant or dominated cultures. Thus, although the theoretical debates established in the domain of translation studies are fruitful in that they begin to permit an unravelling of the complexities of the remake process, they can clearly not be transferred unproblematically to this specific form of adaptation. Rather a new theoretical approach needs to be devised which will borrow from this work whilst expanding it and altering it according to the particular dynamics of the remake.

Originals and Copies

Underlying much critique of remakes, and hegemonic translation strategies, is then the Manichean opposition established between the 'original' and 'copy' and the value judgements to which this dichotomy invariably leads. The effacement of the process of rewriting described by Venuti, and the dismissal of the remake process, are bound up with a system that establishes clear distinctions between production and reproduction. Typically production has been gendered as male whilst reproduction is gendered as female; consider the numerous descriptions of translations as *les belles infidèles*. Gendered as female, reproductions are unable to bestow

authority and thus only original texts can be described as truly authentic, 'Such an attitude betrays real anxiety about the problem of paternity and translation; it mimics the patrilineal kinship system where paternity - not maternity - legitimizes an offspring'[53]. As discussed above, this particular relationship alters only when the text to be rewritten comes from a dominated language or culture.

The endurance of this dichotomy is linked to a traditional and pervasive valorisation of production in Western culture. As Lori Chamberlain points out[54], the difference between production and reproduction is essential to the establishment of power. Rewritings threaten to erode this difference and thus undermine certain power structures. Lefevere's description of the images created by rewriting processes demonstrates the ability of reproduction to masquerade as production; copies can usurp the texts upon which they are based thus becoming the original for many people. Reproduction threatens 'authentic creation'and thus must be maintained in a secondary position:

> ...[reproduction] invokes all of the modern and sterile resonances of mechanism and technicism, it speaks of a crafted or rather fashioned re-production. At its strongest we have a copy or repeat, at its most dilute an imitation or a likeness; within this limited sense of the term we are presented with reproduction as replication; this is a metaphor of constraint. In relation to the experience of social life, such reproduction must be an affirmation of the ancien régime, a system which extols a symbolic violence through its containment of choice in the present.[55]

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[53]Chamberlain, Lori: 'Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation' in Venuti, Lawrence (ed.): *Rethinking Translation* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.57-74 (p.58).

[54]Chamberlain (1992), p.67.

[55]Jenks, Chris: *Culture* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.121-122.

A reading of this type has perhaps been most vociferously expressed by the cultural critique of the Frankfurt School, in particular that of Theodor Adorno. Adorno's work on mass culture involves a call for the continuation of the artistic modernist project in the face of what he perceives as the utterly reified products of the culture industry, 'The assembly-line character of the culture industry, the synthetic, planned method of turning out its products...'[56]. Through technology this assembly-line reproduces and its products are thus debased. Adorno valorises production, the work of high modernist art, over reproduction, the work of mass culture, claiming that only 'original' production can be truly authentic:

> It [mass culture] consists of repetition. That its characteristic innovations are never anything more than improvements of mass reproduction is not external to the system. It is with good reason that the interest of innumerable consumers is directed to the technique, and not to the contents - which are stubbornly repeated, outworn, and by now half-discredited.[57]

In Adorno's opinion, original production alone can create truly authentic work. Reproduction is inauthentic and standardised, differentiated only through pseudo-individuality. A similar critique of mass cultural reproduction can be traced in the work of Herbert Marcuse. In *One-Dimensional Man*[58] Marcuse describes the development of

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[56]Adorno, Theodor:'The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception', in Adorno, Theodor & Horkheimer, Max, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Cumming, John, 2nd. edn. (London: Verso, 1986), p.163.

[57]Adorno (1986), p.136.

[58]Marcuse, Herbert, *One-Dimensional Man*, rev. edn. (London: Routledge, 1991).

technology and capitalism which, he claims, has led to an advanced industrial society demanding submission to its methods of social and economic administration. He deplores the 'mechanics of conformity' generated by these developments, advocating, like Adorno, the values of individuality and personal freedom.

The work of Adorno and Marcuse has been extremely influential in the development of cultural theory. Clearly it reposes upon a valorisation of production and an ensuing critique of debased reproduction. For Adorno, only truly original work (and here we should understand high modernist art) can be perceived as authentic and as able to escape the standardisation of the mass culture industry. The reproduction of works of art leads to routine and conformity which in turn generate the enslavement of the receptor and the destruction of possibilities for change. This dialectic evidently underwrites the opposition established between 'original' works and 'copies'(remakes and their sources), situating the so called 'original' in a position of dominance.

The distinct oppositions established between production and reproduction repose upon the notion that an identifiable 'original', a whole, unique referent existing prior to all 'copies', can indeed be perceived. It is significant that the rewriting which frequently takes place in the theatre is rarely subjected to criticism as virulently negative as that surrounding remakes. This is perhaps explained by the possibilities for increased cultural capital outlined above and by the fact that theatrical productions are generally not perceived as whole and unchanging; in the words of Antoine

Vitez they are 'made to be destroyed by the rising tide'[59].
The remake however is perceived as divesting the source film
of cultural capital (its status as French art). Moreover,
cinematic works tend to be perceived as unchanging monuments,
entire unto themselves, and it is this perception which
enables the dichotomy described above. A binary divide,
particularly one as Manichean as that surrounding cultural
reproduction, can only be established if two clear entities
are posited. If these entities were to be broken down and
disseminated then surely the opposition between them would
inevitably be deconstructed?

The cinematic work is an open and diffuse signifying
system. Unlike the production of a novel or a set of poems
which may at least begin as the work of one person produced at
a specific time in a specific space, film making is a
collective and indeed a dispersed activity[60]. The creation of
a film involves a group of people engaged in various tasks.
The film itself is rarely shot in sequence and it will be
edited and sound will be added in different places at
different times. This phenomenon is remarked upon by Walter
Benjamin in his discussion of early film making procedures:

> The stage actor identifies himself with the
> character of his role. The film actor very often is
> denied this opportunity. His creation is by no means
> all of a piece; it is composed of many separate
> performances. Besides certain fortuitous
> considerations, such as cost of studio, availability
> of fellow players, décor, etc., there are elementary

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[59]Vitez, Antoine: 'Antoine Vitez, le signifiant et l'histoire,'
Ça Cinéma, 17, 1980 in Pavis, Patrice: *Theatre at the
Crossroads of Culture*, trans. Kruger, Lauren (London:
Routledge, 1992), p.131.

[60]However, it is clear that the discourses of *auteurism* will
impose unity upon this process, casting film-making as the
work of an individual.

> necessities of equipment that split the actor's work
> into a series of mountable episodes. In particular,
> lighting and its installation require the
> presentation of an event that, on the screen,
> unfolds as a rapid and unified scene, in a sequence
> of separate shootings which may take hours at the
> studio; not to mention more obvious montage.[61]

Once produced, a film is marketed in a way that reflects the

dissemination described in the film making process. The film

is sold to potential spectators through a variety of images

developed around it. These include critical pieces, posters

and other publicity, and focus on the identity of the director

or the film's stars. This variety of marketing techniques

means that the audience for a particular film may well be

quite disparate; for example the recent adaptation of Jane

Austen's *Emma* (Douglas McGrath, USA, 1996) may attract

spectators who have enjoyed other recent Austen adaptations,

both cinematic (*Sense and Sensibility*, Ang Lee, USA, 1995) and

televisual (the BBC's popular and much acclaimed *Pride and*

Prejudice of 1995), readers of Austen's novels, and those

anxious to see Gwyneth Paltrow, currently being proclaimed by

much of the American press as a rising female 'star'.

Similarly active in the creation of a film's image is the

process of film distribution and exhibition. A film shown at

an art-house cinema will tend to be perceived in a quite

different way from one shown in a mainstream theatre. However,

move the film from one venue to another and perceptions will

change. As described above, this fact becomes especially

pertinent when considering the distribution and exhibition of

'foreign' cinematic works. Claude Berri's film of 1986, *Jean*

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[61]Benjamin, Walter: 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical
Reproduction', in Arendt, Hannah (ed.& trans.): *Illuminations*
(London: Harcourt Brace, 1968), pp.219-253 (p.232).

de Florette, was a great commercial success in France and was perceived as part of a popular cinematic tradition. However when the same film was exported to Britain and the United States it was subtitled and shown in small art-house cinemas thus conferring upon it increased cultural capital and ensuring a rather different audience[62]. All these aspects of the film making process are central to an attempt to break down any sense that a cinematic work may possess a whole, unbroken identity. Any one film can mean many different things to different people. The way a film is understood will depend on how it is sold, where it is exhibited and the cultural capital possessed by the individual spectator. It is important to remember that films are made with the intention that they should be reproduced. This has been the case since the earliest days of cinematic production and it is a phenomenon which has been extended through the development of television and video. A film is not an untouchable monument but part of an ongoing process of reproduction. Anne Friedberg claims that this is not part of a postmodern condition of referentiality but rather an integral feature of the cinematic apparatus:

> The cinematic apparatus is unique in its facility to replay and repeat its own exact form - the identical replication made possible by its photographic base allows the same film to be reprojected at a variety of points in time. Hence one cannot say that only postmodern cinema (as distinct from modern cinema) takes its own history, its own form, as a subject. [...] Film production has always teetered on this precipice between originality and repetition. The cinema has repeated and remade the same stories, from myths and fables to plays and novels that are endlessly returned to for source material. But more than this form of repetition, where the textual reference is reencoded in a new text, the cinema has

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[62]This practice serves to exemplify the different viewing practices established through distribution and exhibition which will be discussed in Chapter Four.

> a metonymic capacity of repeating the same film over
> time: reissuing it, redistributing it, reseeing it.
> At its very base, then, the cinematic apparatus has
> the capacity to replay itself [...]. The
> repeatability of cinema products means that the
> apparatus can exactly quote itself, repeat its
> earlier form, if not its earlier context.[63]

She describes the very act of cinema viewing in terms of a mobilised, virtual gaze; film represents both the spatial 'elsewhere' (other spaces reproduced by the cinema effect) and the temporal 'elsewhen' (other moments reproduced by the cinema effect). This mobile gaze, this drift between the here and now, the there and then, further undermines descriptions of the film as a complete artefact. Through the repetition of production, exhibition and reception it is disseminated and rendered plural, 'in Benjaminian terms, the "aura" of the event has already disappeared in the mechanical reproduction itself, but the aura of the original moment of exhibition has also disappeared'[64].

So it would seem that any attempt to perceive a cinematic work as unique and entire unto itself must be problematised partly because of the very nature of film making itself and partly because of the numerous ways in which we view films. Walter Benjamin points out the extremely interactive way in which films are understood, 'the film where the meaning of each single picture appears to be prescribed by the sequence of all preceding ones'[65]. It is possible to go further than Benjamin and to claim that no one film can be understood

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[63]Friedberg, Anne: *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp.175-177.

[64]Friedberg (1993), p.177.

[65]Benjamin (1968), p.228.

without reference to those films which precede it and to the culture upon which it draws and to that in which both film and spectator are situated. As such a film should not be perceived as an entire, hermetic structure but rather as a diffuse and open-ended signifying system.

This perception can be developed through the tropes of intertextuality and their suggestion that no text can exist as a self-sufficient whole; firstly because any producer of texts is also a consumer, situated within a particular socio-historical space, and thus his/her work will inevitably contain influences, references and quotations of all kinds. Secondly, all texts become available through the act of consumption, be it reading, viewing or listening. The text becomes what the consumer produces (or re-produces), a blend of the specific moment of consumption and other texts previously consumed. Texts are not produced in a neutral way, their identity is determined by the position of the producer and indeed that of the consumer:

> Kristevan intertextuality suggests, in line with
> Marxist sociology, that meaning is not 'given' nor
> produced by a transcendental ego. Indeed the
> transcendental ego is itself an effect 'produced' in
> a social context.[66]

This notion clearly echoes André Lefevere's discussion of the influences and discourses at work in the process of rewriting. Theories of intertextuality render impossible any attempt to perceive texts as hermetic entities. Instead they are shown to be open, hybrid systems shot through with numerous influences emanating from both the existent culture and that anterior to

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[66]Still, Judith & Worton, Michael (eds.): *Intertextuality: Theories and Practices* (Manchester: M.U.P., 1990), p.17.

the act of production/consumption. In his work *Palimpsestes;
la littérature au second degré*, Gérard Genette describes all
literary production as hypertextual:

> Et l'hypertextualité? Elle aussi est évidemment un
> aspect universel (au degré près) de la littérarité:
> il n'est pas d'oeuvre littéraire qui, à quelque
> degré et selon les lectures, n'en évoque quelque
> autre et, en ce sens, toutes les oeuvres sont
> hypertextuelles.[67]

This theory leads to a perception of texts as supplements,
attempts to dislodge the 'original' from its primordial
position, 'Every literary imitation is a supplement which
seeks to complete and supplant the original and which
functions at times for later readers as the pre-text of the
original'[68]. It is possible to move beyond literary production
and to view all forms of textual production as hyper- or
inter-textual. This theory can clearly not be abstracted from
the production/reproduction duopoly under discussion. Somewhat
paradoxically, theories of intertextuality describe the
producer of texts as motivated by what Harold Bloom termed
'the anxiety of influence'[69]; anxious to produce a text which
will supplant those which precede it, the producer
demonstrates cultural valorisation of originality. As Judith
Still points out, recalling the arguments of Lori Chamberlain,
influence is often feared by producers of texts who see it
leading to uncontrollable polysemy, a state typically gendered
as feminine:

> On the one hand there is phallic monologism or the

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[67]Genette, Gérard: *Palimpsestes; la littérature au second degré*
(Paris: Seuil, 1982), p.18.

[68]Still & Worton (1990), p.7.

[69]Bloom, Harold: *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: OUP, 1973).

> illusion of unity and self-sufficiency. On the other
> hand there is liquefaction, the vehicle of passion-
> even madness, polyphony, the receptive object
> penetrated by other voices and so on. The latter
> pole has been admired but, more particularly, feared
> for many centuries. We would argue that it can be
> read as a figure of 'femininity', of that particular
> 'other' to the same.[70]

Yet intertextuality also stresses the impossibility of escaping influence, thus undermining any portrayal of texts as self-sufficient wholes and hence deconstructing oppositions between original and copy. If indeed a text is able to become a pre-text for one which precedes it how is it possible to establish an original? If texts are (re)produced through the act of consumption how can they be attributed the stable identity which enables clear differentiation between the moment of production and ensuing reproduction?

It would then seem that the theories of intertextuality can aid an attempt to deconstruct the opposition established between production and reproduction, original and copy. Certainly they reinforce an understanding of texts as open-ended signifying systems, a fact which can perhaps be clarified by a brief description of the way in which cinematic works are understood. Films are 'read' in a thoroughly intertextual fashion. This is not to suggest that the spectator spends his or her time seeking specific influences (although some film directors, for example Woody Allen in *Manhattan Murder Mystery* (1993), by deliberately quoting from previous films have invited audiences to search for this type of linear trace), rather the film is understood in terms of genre, ideology, stars, cultural codes and discursive

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[70]Still & Worton (1990), p.30.

formations. This practice of cinematic reading clearly necessitates a constant interplay between signifying systems; without reference to other texts, other systems, the film can not be understood. An intertextual reading then is not an attempt to establish a linear causality but a reconstruction of the many cultural codes present in the text. Evidently this means that readings will differ according to the position and the cultural capital of the particular spectator; in other words, that which is understood to be anterior or exterior to the text will be relative rather than given:

> If on the one hand, it [intertextuality] has transformed the unity and self-presence of the text into a structure marked by otherness and repetition, on the other hand it has suggested that the exterior of the text is not a monolithic real but a system (or an infinity) of other such textual structures.[71]

This notion clearly draws upon Derrida's discussion of the difficulty he perceives in establishing textual borders. In 'Living On: Border lines'[72], Derrida describes a text as no longer a finished corpus of writing but an open structure, 'a differential network', 'a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself'. This links to Derrida's notion of 'iterability', the sense that any communication which is not quotable must be meaningless. Thus it would seem that a Derridean understanding of texts would perceive them as inevitably open, necessarily both quoting and quotable.

Postmodernism: what happens to the 'original'?

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[71]Frow, John: 'Intertextuality and Ontology', in Still & Worton (1990), pp.45-55 (pp.46-7).

[72]Derrida, Jacques: 'Living On: Border Lines' in Kamuf, Peggy (ed.): *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp.256-268.

Reference to the work of Derrida brings us to the preoccupations of postmodernism, perhaps the crux of any attempt to deconstruct the binary opposition established between production and reproduction. Much of the work of postmodernism has been an endeavour to reassess duopolies of this kind. It has entered into a vigorous debate with the work of the Frankfurt School, seeing its establishment of clear hierarchies between the authentic production of high modernist art and the debased reproduction of mass culture as a negative construct against which it posits a cultural transformation which pulls apart value relations of this kind. Like the theories of intertextuality outlined above, the work of many postmodernists has problematised traditional perceptions of texts as hermetic entities whilst at the same time eschewing any search for unilinear causality. Fredric Jameson describes intertextuality as a state in which texts no longer quote but incorporate. This he claims is part of a postmodern condition which leads to a depthlessness, a multiplicity of images which repudiates traditional depth models of essence and appearance, latent and manifest content, authenticity and inauthenticity, and the semiotic opposition between signified and signifier[73]. Jameson claims that the past as a referent is gradually being bracketed and then effaced, leaving us with nothing but images and texts:

> ...the word remake is, however, anachronistic to the degree to which our awareness of the preexistence of other versions (previous films of the novel as well as the novel itself) is now a constitutive and essential part of the film's structure: we are now, in other words, in 'intertextuality' as a deliberate, built-in feature of the aesthetic effect

[73]Jameson, Fredric: *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

and as the operator of a new connotation of 'pastness' and pseudohistorical depth, in which the history of aesthetic styles displaces 'real' history'.[74]

This description of a culture without depth clearly undermines traditional valorisation of authenticity. If everything is a copy, an image, a reference to other images, then how can it be possible to affirm an understanding of authenticity which posits an 'original' text, existing prior to other texts? Jameson evidently draws upon the work of Jean Baudrillard, particularly his notion of 'simulacra'. Baudrillard describes late capitalist society as dominated by simulations, objects and discourses that have no origin, no referent. In other words, any cultural act can be seen as a quotation or restructuring of already known elements, thus effacing any sense of a point of departure, a history upon which texts can be perceived to be based. Baudrillard uses the term 'hyperreality' to describe the new linguistic condition of society which undermines theories based on materialist reductionism or rationalist referentiality; signs are now completely separated from their referent[75]. He posits seduction as a model to replace that of production; a continuous surface play rather than a search for latent meanings and discernible moments of origin. Objects 'seduce' through appeareance and their signs challenge claims to truth and power. However this process is a double play in which power is not subverted but rather the object 'seduces' and displaces the desires of the subject:

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[74]Jameson (1991), p.20.

[75]Baudrillard, Jean: *Selected Writings*, Poster, Mark (ed.) (Oxford: Polity Press, 1988).

> We must not wish to destroy appearances (the
> seduction of images). This project must fail if we
> are to prevent the absence of truth from exploding
> in our faces, or the absence of God, or of the
> Revolution.[76]

This perceived 'hyperculture' is made up of simulacra, copies possessing no original. They are enabled by the technical advances of late capitalism, the age of mechanical reproduction described in Walter Benjamin's essay of the same title. They are characteristic of commodity (re)production in which the referent (raw materials, nature, history, the originals of traditional artistic production) has disappeared:

> Abstraction today is no longer that of the map, the
> double, the mirror or the concept. Simulation is no
> longer that of a territory, a referential being or
> a substance. It is the generation by models of a
> real without original or reality: a hyperreal.[77]

Evidently such major cultural transformations do not occur without certain repercussions. Baudrillard perceives simulacra as causing the so-called 'original' to vacillate, thus undermining traditional systems of opposition and evaluation. Baudrillard sees the over-production of modern society as a constant and futile search for a real which always escapes it. It seems in some ways that Baudrillard finds himself in the double bind central to Benjamin's essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. Both theorists, albeit in different ways, describe new cultural formations able to overturn older, exclusive hierarchies. Yet there is a negative side to these developments. For Benjamin this is the commodification of the work of art, the

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[76]Baudrillard (1988), p.154.

[77]Baudrillard (1988), p.166.

disintegration of its 'aura', the essence of its creation; consider millions of posters of the 'Mona Lisa' and the effect they will have on perceptions of the painting upon which they are based. For Baudrillard it is the multiplication of copies making any search for 'truth' impossible and indeed dangerous; illusion is no longer possible because the real is no longer possible. If culture is now composed entirely of simulacra without a referent then clearly it becomes impossible to talk about an 'original' work or forms of 'authentic' production. Everything is either original or copy, production or reproduction but opposition can no longer be established, one set of terms must give way to the other.

The work of postmodernism has then set out to undermine finite textual boundaries and the binary logic which has underwritten so much traditional cultural debate. Yet the critical discourse surrounding remakes outlined earlier in this chapter is still founded on a clear opposition between 'original' and 'copy' and an ensuing evaluation. Postmodern thinking, which itself has become an orthodoxy in many academic institutions, does not then seem to have toppled this particular mind-set.

The endurance of this dichotomy perhaps lies in Baudrillard's claim that reproduction is seen to make something fundamental 'vacillate':

> Reproduction is diabolical in its very essence; it makes something fundamental vacillate. This has hardly changed for us: simulation [...] is still and always the place of a gigantic enterprise of manipulation, of control and of death, just like the imitative object (primitive statuette, image of photo) always had as objective an operation of black image.[78]

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[78]Baudrillard (1988), p.182.

If we consider textual reproduction, this fear clearly has serious implications. In Western societies texts have traditionally been perceived as unchanging monuments, testaments to the power of national cultures. As such any attempt to tamper with aspects of a nation's culture could be perceived as a threat to the nation and its identity. Translations have frequently been condemned as an attack upon the identity of the target culture, an attitude clearly expressed by Victor Hugo in his introduction to the Shakespeare translations made by his son, François-Victor:

> ...to translate a foreign poet is to add to one's own poetry; yet this addition does not please those who profit from it. At least not in the beginning; the first reaction is one of revolt. A language into which another idiom is transfused does what it can to resist.[79]

Similarly, condemnation of cinematic remakes such as that described earlier in this paper is bound up with the notion that French culture is devalued by Hollywood's 'pilfering'. This linkage between national cultures and national identities is well illustrated by the formation of canons[80]. Cultural canons are developed and transformed according to the powers at play within a particular society at a given moment. They provide a society with a secure sense of its own value; embodied in the canon are unarguably authentic examples of cultural production which through the very act of canonisation are in some way protected from the threats of reproduction. It is perhaps not insignificant that in this age of postmodernist

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[79]Hugo, Victor: Preface to the Shakespeare translations published by his son, François-Victor, in 1865, in Lefevere (1992), p.18.

[80]See Chapter Four for discussion of the 'national'.

deconstruction, Harold Bloom has seen fit to develop a new literary canon thus attempting to reinstate many of the hierarchies over-turned by his contempories[81]. Bloom's work seems to exemplify many of the concerns which underwrite the endurance of the opposition between production and reproduction, 'original' and 'copy'; reproduction of all kinds destabilises the perceived 'original', showing texts to be open-ended, polysemic structures. This vacillation of hierarchies is central to a postmodern condition in which long-standing truths and systems of evaluation are deconstructed leaving Baudrillard's play of depthless simulacra. This condition is feared and it is perhaps in the face of this fear that attempts are made to conserve the traditional hierarchies and Manichean oppositions described in this chapter.

Rewriting and reproduction destabilise texts by revealing their fundamental lack; if a text can be reproduced then surely it is not complete, it calls for reproduction. By thus dismantling the 'wholeness' of the text, these processes can be seen to both symptomatic and emblematic of the postmodern 'condition' described above. As such, it is perhaps not surprising that both Jacques Derrida and Paul de Man have produced essays on translation. In his discussion of Benjamin's essay, 'The Task of the Translator', De Man posits translation as a form of rewriting or cultural reproduction along with other activities such as adaptation, critical

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[81]Bloom, Harold: *The Western Canon* (London: Harcourt Brace, 1994).

philosophy, and literary theory and history[82]. Following Benjamin he claims that the very fact that a text can be translated proves that it is not definitive or purely canonical. The act of reproduction demantles the text's status as 'original':

> They [forms of rewriting] disarticulate, they undo the original, they reveal that the original was always already disarticulated. They reveal that their failure, which seems to be due to the fact that they are secondary in relation to the original, reveals an essential failure, an essential disarticulation which was already there in the original. They kill the original by discovering that the original was already dead.[83]

The very act of translation, of cultural reproduction, is inherently paradoxical. Reproduction, by revealing the gaps and instabilities in a text, brings about the death of the 'original', it takes away its sacred, untouchable character. Yet at the same time it is effective in ensuring the continued life of a text, what Benjamin terms its 'afterlife':

> ...a translation issues from the original – not so much from its life as from its afterlife. For a translation comes later than the original, and since the important works of world literature never find their chosen translators at the time of their origin, their translation marks their stage of continued life.[84]

It seems that what Benjamin is suggesting here is that translation occurs because a text has an afterlife, because it is not canonical and unchanging, and it is the act of translating that ensures the continuation of this afterlife.

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[82]De Man, Paul: 'Conclusions: Walter Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator"', in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986),pp.73-105.

[83]De Man (1986), p.84.

[84]Benjamin, Walter,'The Task of the Translator' in Arendt (1968), p.71.

De Man claims that a translation brings out all that is idiomatic and culturally specific in a text thus revealing it as a piece of ordinary discourse that demands translation in order to survive. Consider for example Hollywood remakes of early French cinema; certainly this process can be seen to de-canonise the French films yet it is important to reflect upon the fact that these are works of a past culture which may now need some form of rewriting in order to discover a contemporary resonance. Thus cultural reproduction can be seen to bring about both the destruction of the 'original' text and its survival; reproduction, it would seem, is a double bind.

The very notion of an 'original' only exists within a binary division posited by the act of reproduction. Yet it is this same process of reproduction that undermines the status of the 'original', revealing its fragmentation and instability. Like de Man, Derrida discusses this paradox in his work on translation:

> L'original n'est pas un plein qui en viendrait par accident à être traduit. La situation de l'original est la situation d'une demande, c'est-à-dire d'un manque, d'un exil, et l'original est *a priori* endetté à l'égard de la traduction. Sa survie est une demande de traduction, un désir de traduction, un peu comme Babel demande: traduisez-moi.[85]

However, despite this instability, both Derrida and de Man claim that the original/copy duality must remain. They assert, again following Benjamin, that only an 'original' can be rewritten. In other words, although the act of translation undermines the perceived wholeness of a text, taking away its sacred character, once a text is re-translated it rediscovers

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[85]Lévesque, Claude & McDonald, Christie (eds.): *L'oreille de l'autre: textes et débats avec Jacques Derrida* (Montreal: V.L.B. éditeur, 1982), p.201.

this aura and can once again claim status as an 'original':

> ...quand on traduit par exemple la traduction de
> Sophocle par Hölderlin, celle-ci, si elle a la force
> d'un événement devient un original; il y a toujours
> une structure 'original - traduction' même si les
> traductions sont retraduites...[86]

Both Derrida and de Man, in their suggestion of the need to maintain original/copy duopolies, are harking back to Benjamin's suggestion that only certain texts possess 'translatability'. He states that 'translatability' is an essential quality of some texts, by which he does not mean that it is essential they be translated but that a significance inherent to the 'original' becomes apparent through translation, emanating from the text's 'afterlife'. This notion clearly posits a distinction between 'original' texts (those possessing translatability) and 'copies' (those texts deemed to be non-translatable). Derrida and de Man use this distinction to underwrite their insistence upon the inescapability of some form of original/copy opposition; certainly texts may be reproduced ad infinitum yet once a text is retranslated it manifests its translatability and thus takes on the status of an 'original'. This is somewhat problematic because of the way in which it seems to reconfer a sacred character upon texts. It suggests Benjamin's notion of 'aura', some indefinable thing which distinguishes authentic cultural production from that which is inauthentic. This then undermines deconstruction of traditional discursive formations, leading us right back to essentialism and hierarchical evaluative systems. It is also rather worrying because by retaining binary oppositions it risks denying the

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[86]Lévesque & McDonald (1982), p.195.

extremely complex relations between a text and its reproductions. Rather than a simple trajectory between two distinct works, cultural reproduction must be perceived as an intricate and dynamic process involving both two signifying systems and the numerous discourses which surround and penetrate them. This clearly necessitates a perception of the socio-historical context of these systems and discourses thus ensuring a refusal of any sense of a cultural artefact as sacred object, enduring and immune to external pressures.

Towards a Study of the Remake: A Genealogical Approach

The rhetoric around remakes is manifestly bound up with the wider issues of production and reproduction in twentieth century Western cultures. In late capitalist societies, the endurance of binary oppositions between authentic 'originals' and inauthentic 'copies' does seem in some way to be a reaction to a postmodern condition in which stable referents and master narratives give way to repetition and surface play. It is then imperative to posit a new approach to the remake, an approach which will avoid the sterile binaries and reductive value judgements described above, allowing for the complexities of this particular form of rewriting and of the relations between source and target text. Such a methodology could in turn be applied to other forms of rewriting (cinematic adaptation for example) thus extending the rather limited body of work produced on this prolific practice.

■ This approach will examine the relationships of power and influence between the source and target cultures, and the source and target cinema industries. Thus for a study of the

remake it will be necessary to analyse Franco-American political and cultural relations as well as the dynamics of exchange and influence between Hollywood and the French cinema industry. These relationships will be perceived in terms of change and mobility rather than being fixed in a particular relationship of dominance.

■ The specific socio-cultural context of both source and target texts will be analysed. This will entail a description of the material, historical, and political conditions which surround and penetrate the moment of production and subsequent moment(s) of reception. Such description will involve a study of 'national' contexts: what is the particular construction of the 'nation', how is the cinematic text located within this context, and moreover, in what ways is it mobilised to invoke or interrogate constructions of the nation or of national culture? This will necessitate an analysis of spectatorship and reception, of the ways in which a text attempts to construct (or deconstruct) a 'national' audience and the extent to which specific texts are received as invocations (or interrogations) of a concept of the nation.

■ This approach to the remake will involve close textual study of the cinematic work and thus the actual process of transposition. In what ways are the signifying structures of the source text replaced by target culture signifying structures? This transformation will be approached via specific comparators; these include *mise en scène*, genre, stars, gender, and history (although this is clearly not an exhaustive list). An analysis of these comparators and the ways in which they alter as they move between the source and target cultures will enable revelation of the filmic text's

particular relationship to ideological formations. How are the values and the belief systems of the source text reinscribed within the target culture? How does the production and reproduction of both films work upon these systems?

This approach will permit a study of the remake which avoids the sterile certainties of much critique of the process and its insistence upon the immanent superiority of the source text. Rather the plurality and the contigency of meaning and of textual possibilities will be constantly invoked; both source and remake will be seen as the site for multiple interpretations which can only ever be momentarily fixed in a particular reception situated in a specific temporal, spatial, and social context. Thus rather than a search for origins (the linear causality of the relationship between the 'original' and the 'copy') this study will involve a description of exchange and difference; the unbroken vertical axis which leads from the 'original' text to the remake as 'copy' will be replaced by the circles of intertextuality and hybridity. Following Foucault, this can be described as a 'genealogical' approach to the remake. Foucault claims that a genealogical account of history opposes itself to a search for origins, 'Ce qu'on trouve, au commencement historique des choses, ce n'est pas l'identité encore préservée de leur origine – c'est la discorde des autres choses, c'est le disparate'[87]. Thus history is divested of any claims to continuous progression and is revealed as the locus of division and shifting relationships:

L'histoire, généalogiquement dirigée, n'a pas pour

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[87]Foucault, Michel: 'Nietzsche, la généalogie, l'histoire', in Defert, Daniel & Ewald, François (eds.): *Dits et écrits par Michel Foucault, 1970-1975*, 4 vols. (Paris: NRF/Gallimard, 1994), pp.136-156 (p.138).

> fin de retrouver les racines de notre identité, mais
> de s'acharner au contraire à la dissiper; elle
> n'entreprend pas de repérer le foyer unique d'où
> nous venons, cette première partie où les
> métaphysiciens nous promettent que nous ferons
> retour; elle entreprend de faire apparaître toutes
> les discontinuités qui nous traversent.[88]

Similarly this account of the remake will replace attempts to establish linear causality between the French film as 'origin' and the American film as 'copy' with a genealogical description of the plural discourses which surround and penetrate the practice. Like Lawrence Venuti's advocation of a 'foreignizing' translation method which would resist fluent strategies through translations which reveal the plurality, the difference, the very 'otherness' of the source text[89], this approach will show the remake to be a site of difference (of the numerous codes and discourses of which it is composed) rather than a site of the same (a straightforward copy). Such a study will permit an understanding of why films are remade, why they tend to be so badly received by the critical establishment (despite possible commercial success), as well as the formal and ideological work which takes place in the actual process of transposition and in ensuing moments of consumption.

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[88]Foucault (1994), p.154.

[89]Venuti (1995), p.310.

Chapter Two

The Remake in History: 1930-1980

Introduction

No form of cultural production takes place within a vacuum; rather all are situated within a specific set of social, political, and historical discourses. It is evident that no particular cultural practice can be abstracted from these discourses or indeed from those cultural practices which are exterior and anterior to itself. Thus in order to attempt any sustained analysis of the remakes of the 1980s and 1990s it is clearly vital to locate both the films and the discourses to which they gave rise within their particular context of production. However, it is also appropriate to consider the history of the practice; to ignore this history implies a denial of the endurance of the remake and moreover, an implicit underwriting of the critical accounts outlined in Chapter One which condemn the practice as a *new* manifestation of American 'imperialism'. As the following chapter will demonstrate, the remake has long played an important role in Hollywood, yet the significance of this role at any given moment (revealed by the number of films remade and the ways in which they are received) is inextricably bound up with the

material and cultural circumstances of the specific moment of production.

Franco-American Relations, 1930-1980

The remake, as a process of exchange between France and the United States, is bound up with the cultural practices of both countries, particularly cinematic practices, both material and aesthetic. This system of exchange is in turn located within the social and political relations between the two nations. The political and cultural relations between the United States and France have always been extremely complex. There is a tendency in much comment upon the two countries to reduce attitudes towards the other nation to the purely political; North America's desire to influence French national life is solely related to the spread of Communism, French attitudes are polarised into pro- and anti-Americanism and pro- and anti-Communism. Such assessments are manifestly simplistic and do not begin to perceive the complexity of this relationship. Different constructions of the other within each nation are bound up with politics, cultural and moral issues, and the debate about modernity. These perceptions cannot be neatly divided into political oppositions; at any one time, in either country, numerous positions can be discerned. During the 1950s and 1960s for example, French anti-Americanism can be seen to emanate from the Communists, the neutralists, the colonialist right, and the Gaullists, indeed from across the political spectrum. North America has always offered a challenge to France both as a positive model, a way towards the future, and as an imperialist threat. Largely due to its political and

economic strength, particularly since World War Two, the United States has tended to serve as a foil against which France defines itself. Thus the ways in which the United States is perceived in France at a given moment can tell us a great deal about French self-perception. As Denis Lacorne and Jacques Rupnik point out, North America can be seen as a construct, produced and reproduced in France, which acts as a political and social barometer, revealing the different moods, passions, and delusions of the French people[1]. Although France does not serve as a model for the United States in the same way (although French cultural artefacts can be seen to fulfil this role at certain junctures), it is fair to say that American constructions of France are closely linked to the way in which this nation perceives its position and influence within a global economy. Certainly, during the Cold War, as American influence came under threat from Communism, Europe, and hence France, were central to North American foreign policy. From 1948 to 1951 France received $2.4 billion in Marshall Plan aid, a determined effort to steer the French economy towards modernisation and capitalism and thus away from the temptation of Communism. In 1948 the United States launched a propaganda campaign in France in order to establish a positive image of itself and hence counter burgeoning anti-Americanism. It is significant that cinema especially was seen as the ideal medium for the promotion of the 'American way of life'. Barney Balaban, president of Paramount Pictures, claimed that Hollywood should, '...[inform] people in foreign

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[1]Lacorne, Denis, Rupnik, Jacques & Toinet, Marie-France, (eds.): *The Rise and Fall of Anti-Americanism: A Century of French Perception*, trans. Turner, Gerald (London: Macmillan, 1990), p.26.

lands about the things that have made America a great country...'[2]. As France appeared in American eyes to vacillate between Communism and the American way, as it voiced anti-American sentiments, so American critics perceived it as a nation of emotionalism and indecision. As Frank Costigliola points out:

> ... Americans, particularly from 1940 to 1958, referred to the French in ways that suggested a flighty, not-so-capable female: emotional, hypersensitive, frivolous, impractical, unrestrained, too concerned with food, drink, fashion, art, and love.[3]

Conversely, the same critics tended to describe the American nation as masculine, serious, and puritanical. It is evident that these perceptions were intrinsically bound up with the political relations between the two countries and clearly it is not insignificant that these perceptions began to alter as the Cold War started to thaw and as North America's apparent strengths were undermined by the debacle of the Vietnam conflict. It is worth noting that the particular complexity of Franco-American relations during the post-war period and up to the 1970s was exacerbated by France's process of decolonisation. France resented the United States' interference in this process and its belief that France should relinquish its colonies. As described in Chapter One, France's fear of the United States as an imperialist threat, a political and cultural coloniser, was aggravated by France's own identity as a coloniser, an identity which was itself

[2]*New York Times*, 24 March 1946.

[3]Costigliola, Frank: *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance Since World War Two* (New York: Twayne, 1992), p.4.

being threatened by the United States[4].

Although these perceptions of the other nation do demonstrate the important role of politics in the construction of Franco-American relations, it is vital to reiterate that these relations can not be reduced to politics alone. French anti- and pro-Americanism is often equated with anti- and pro-Sovietism, yet even the most cursory overview of French history since the *Second World War* will show this appraisal to be highly schematic. De Gaulle, whose presidency is often cited as an unequivocal example of French anti-Americanism, centred his project on nationalism and the assertion of French grandeur. So de Gaulle was not so much anti-American as he was pro-French and although he did make certain overtures to the Soviet Union, he and his administration could certainly not be described as pro-Soviet. Similarly, many of those on the left of the political spectrum who were openly critical of American politics and value systems, were also heard to voice criticism of the Soviet Union. As *Témoignage chrétien* declared during the dispute over the implantation of the Coca-Cola company in France in the early 1950s, 'Good wine is sufficient. We want neither Coca-Cola nor Vodka'[5]. Nevertheless, the USSR did offer an alternative model to the French nation as it struggled to reconstruct its identity after the humiliation of German occupation. Indeed, the collapse of the Soviet model played an important role in changing French perceptions of the United States during the 1970s, as did the political

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[4]Ross, Kristin: *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T Press, 1995).

[5]Costigliola (1992), p.78.

relativisation of America due to the Vietnam war and France's discovery of an American counter-culture.

Modernisation and tradition

Yet Franco-American relations can not be reduced to this binary polarisation. In his work *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanisation*[6], Richard Kuisel describes these relations since the Second World War as part of a wider narrative about modernity. For France, faced with the prospect of economic and industrial modernisation, the United States symbolised the results of this process. In order to fulfil its political and economic ambitions France had to modernise, yet there were anxieties about what this would mean for French national identity. As early as 1930 Georges Duhamel's highly successful work, *Scènes de la vie future*, had given voice to France's growing concerns about the implications of modernisation; the expansion of the machine, utilitarianism, vulgarity, and industry, and the concomitant disappearance of 'French' values such as humanity, idealism, and art. Duhamel made no explicit reference to the United States in his work, however his concerns fed directly into the ongoing debate about Americanisation. This debate over modernisation, commonly equated with Americanisation, and the preservation of French identity did not really abate even as France engaged in the modernisation of its material infra-structure. As Denis Lacorne points out, during the 1970s debate between the

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[6] Kuisel, Richard: *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanisation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

'modernists' and the 'protectionists' was still fierce[7]. Although this was ostensibly about economic policies it was clearly coloured by the fear of the loss of French traditional identity outlined above.

This fear of modernisation is intrinsically bound up with the discourses surrounding the opposition between high and mass culture. French anxieties about Americanisation and the loss of a discrete national identity were fostered by the perception of the United States as the producer of a mass, undifferentiated culture. The productivity missions, sent to North America during the 1950s in order to assess American business practices and their applicability in France, were disenchanted by what they perceived to be an overly standardised society:

> Americans were conformists, who as a price for their comforts accepted mass-produced, aggressively advertised articles. They sought only superficial variety in order to sustain mass output and were content to buy the latest model of a product rather than, like Europeans, seek an exclusive or unique one.[8]

Not surprisingly Hollywood films were perceived as part of this debased mass production. Indeed, in many ways, the Hollywood studio system, where cultural artefacts were produced within a complex industrial structure, was seen to epitomise American 'art'. Against the mass culture of the United States, France posited the indigenous tradition of authentic, unique, 'high' culture. This debate, which, as has been demonstrated, lies at the root of much discussion of Hollywood remakes, is clearly central to French constructions

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[7]Lacorne et.al.(1990), p.143.

[8]Kuisel (1993), p.101.

of the United States.

'Cultural imperialism' and the Blum-Byrnes agreements

It is within the cultural field that France has frequently been most likely to display anxieties about America and an attendant nationalism. France has had some form of centralised cultural politics since the Renaissance. Its sense of cultural identity tends to be defined in opposition to the cultures of other nations, and America, as a dominant alternative model, has played a central role in this process of construction. It is possible to discern in France various attitudes towards culture, ranging from the Jacobin notion of a strong, centralised cultural policy to a liberal rejection of such a framework. During the 1980s a move towards liberalism and fragmentation can be perceived, yet the Jacobin tradition has always been strong in France, as is manifested by the role of the Minister of Culture and numerous state projects and sources of aid[9]. Thus the Americanisation of France was often perceived in terms of 'cultural imperialism'; this was especially true of Hollywood films whose success was seen to threaten the national industry. It is significant that the United States in turn have accused the French of cultural imperialism, largely due to the French insistence upon quotas and other forms of protection for the indigenous cinema industry. These attitudes have been shaped by the fact that both France and North America make claims to political and cultural universalism. Both countries want to impose a democratic and a cultural model (based upon their own

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[9]See Chapters Three and Four.

'founding' political moments, the Civil War and the French Revolution) thus exacerbating the fear of 'invasion' by the other. As will be shown in later chapters, these discourses were to a certain extent subverted by the growth of multi-culturalism in France during the 1980s. However they did not disappear, and prior to this time they were extremely prevalent.

The Blum-Byrnes agreements of 1946 provide an interesting example of the interplay between these discourses. Typically, this set of agreements, signed in Washington on 28 May 1946 by James Byrnes, American Secretary of State, and Léon Blum, special envoy of the French government, have been invoked in France as an example of North American cultural imperialism. The agreements involved a whole set of economic measures; the French war debt was erased and France was given a thirty year $318 million loan along with $650 million in credits from the Export-Import bank. Nevertheless, within France the Blum-Byrnes agreements are almost systematically reduced to the measure which, it was claimed, very nearly brought about the end of the indigenous cinema industry. This is clearly a gross simplification of a complex and diverse set of policies, but it is also a somewhat reductive assessment of the agreement pertaining to the cinema.

At the end of World War Two the French cinema industry was in dire need of modernisation. Although French production had actually proved profitable in the occupied territory during the early years of the war as the Germans imposed a ban upon American films, it suffered after 1942 as Allied bombing in France damaged 322 theatres and destroyed five studios. A shortage of material at this time also made production

difficult and by July 1944 all cinematic production ceased. Things were equally difficult in the Vichy zone as facilities and funding were hard to come by. This situation was aggravated by the fact that, prior to May 1942, films made in the southern territory were not allowed to enter occupied France. Once this decision was overruled, films made in Vichy were able to share in the profits achieved in the northern zone. It is also worth noting that the Vichy regime created, in late 1940, the first centralised organisation responsible for cinematic production, the *Comité d'organisation de l'industrie cinématographique (COIC)*, a body which was effectively transformed into the *Centre national de la cinématographie* in 1946 and which can thus be seen to play a vital role in the creation of a French 'national' cinema. However, despite these developments the end of the war found the French cinema industry in disarray, in need of protection which would enable it to modernise its material infrastructure without being submerged by imported films, and also in need of films with which to satisfy its public, including those American films banned during the years of occupation. The French industry wanted the reestablishment of a quota system, a demand which was categorically refused by the American negotiators who wanted to see France move towards freer trade regulations. Negotiations for the Blum-Byrnes agreements began in 1945 and on 19 April 1946 the United States agreed to a system whereby for four weeks out of every thirteen, French exhibitors would be permitted to show only French films. This clearly differed from the pre-war agreement of 1936 which fixed the number of dubbed American imports at 150. However it seemed to satisfy both the American desire for fair

competition and the French need for protection, allowing the French industry time to regroup and modernise.

Nevertheless, almost immediately an emotive response to this agreement began to be voiced in France. The failure to impose a quota system and the apparent influx of Hollywood films were decried as manifestations of American cultural imperialism and a transparent threat to the French national cultural identity. The role of cinema in the creation of this identity and the consequent need to protect the industry were vehemently stressed. Reporting to those debating the Blum-Byrnes agreements in the *Assemblée nationale* on 1 August 1946, on behalf of the Press, Radio, and Cinema Commission, René Naegelen described the cinema in the following manner:

> Est-il besoin d'ajouter que le cinéma est aujourd'hui la grande expression d'un art populaire qui touche, émeut, distrait, instruit des milliers d'individus, franchit largement les frontières de la patrie et que, par conséquent, sur le plan de notre influence et de notre prestige dans le monde, il joue un rôle prépondérant?[10]

In an article in *Le Monde* in June 1946, Louis Jouvet also expressed the widespread fear that this agreement would undermine the very survival of 'national' art forms, 'Faits au vin de Bordeaux, nos estomacs devront s'accoutumer au Coca-Cola. Cela revient en somme à proprement abdiquer sa qualité de Français'[11].

The dispute over that part of the Blum-Byrnes agreements relating to the cinema became polarised around a need for modernisation through fair competition and a demand for

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[10]Naegelen, René: 'Compte rendu in-extenso des débats sur les accords Blum-Byrnes (Séance du 1er août 1946)', *Le Film français*, no.88, 9 August 1946, p.5.

[11]Jouvet, Louis: *Le Monde*, 16-17 June 1946.

economic and, perhaps more vitally, cultural protection. Paradoxically, French producers actually needed Hollywood products at this time. French cinematic production, damaged by the war years, was not sufficient to satisfy the needs of exhibitors. Moreover, audiences demanded to see those films banned by the occupying forces, particularly 'classic' movies such as *Gone With the Wind* (1939) and *Citizen Kane* (1941). Yet these very real needs were matched by anxieties about the effect of Hollywood imports on the indigenous industry. It was believed that American films, having already recouped their costs in the domestic market, would undercut the prices of French distributors. The limits imposed upon American export of cinema profits did seem to offer some protection to the French industry yet this too was questioned as French producers feared that surplus profit would be invested in France thus allowing Hollywood to take control of the national industry.

These concerns reached a head in 1947 when the French cinema industry did indeed experience a crisis. Unemployment within the industry reached seventy-five percent; the number of workers employed dropped from 2,132 in 1946 to 898 in 1947. Another round of redundancies in 1948 reduced the remaining workforce by sixty percent. There are various explanations for this crisis. Immediately after the Liberation, France was indeed inundated with American films as Hollywood distributed a vast back catalogue of works produced throughout the war years and not yet exhibited in France. However by 1947 these films were more or less exhausted and the influx of American products was beginning to slow down, a fact manifested by the reduction in the number of certificates issued to American

films during this year. As Jacques Portes points out in an article on the Blum-Byrnes agreements, French cinema had weathered the worst of the American competition without collapsing[12]. The suppression of the double bill in 1941 significantly reduced the capacity of French exhibitors to absorb imported products. Prior to this decision exhibitors were able to show between 300 and 310 films per year. Clearly this reduction in exhibition capacity meant that the presence of Hollywood products was felt more keenly. Above all the French industry suffered because of its need to modernise. As René Naegelen explained, 'Le sort du cinéma français dépend avant tout des conditions d'existence que nous lui ferons nous-mêmes, des moyens que nous lui donnerons'[13]. He claimed that the French industry needed to build more theatres; in 1946 French cinemas could only accommodate 400 million spectators as opposed to 1,200 million in Great Britain. It needed to improve and upgrade its production methods, developing its own colour film for example. Through this process of modernisation the French cinema industry would be able to expand its markets, both at home and overseas, and thus compete more efficiently with Hollywood imports. It is significant that French films during this period attracted larger audiences than did the products of Hollywood. In a useful assessment of the reception of American films in France during the Cold War, Patricia Hubert-Lacombe points out that although the number of American films exhibited in France

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[12]Portes, Jacques:'Les Origines de la légende noire des accords Blum-Byrnes sur le cinéma', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, vol.33, April-June 1986, pp.314-329.

[13]Naegelen (1946), p.5.

between 1946 and 1947 increased by ten percent, the number of spectators for these films only increased by three and a half percent[14]. A survey of first screenings during this period shows that a French film would on average be seen by 1,951,400 spectators whilst an American work would have an audience of 1,091,460. What these figures reveal is that French cinema was not rejected by the national audience in favour of Hollywood products. Taken as a whole, American films were more successful because of their large numbers, yet individual French films tended to attract wider audiences. This surely indicates that in order to achieve greater profitability the French industry needed to increase its production; the crisis it was experiencing could not be attributed solely to the influx of Hollywood products and the ensuing taste of the French public for all things American.

Despite these figures, this crisis in the French cinematic industry was, and frequently still is, blamed exclusively upon the Blum-Byrnes agreements. How to defend French cinema in the face of this onslaught became a debate about French national cultural identity and its preservation from the threat of American cultural imperialism. *L'Humanité* of 1 October 1947 decried the Blum-Byrnes agreements which it claimed were 'smothering' the intrinsic values of French cinema:

> Qu'on voie moins de revolvers et de matraques entre
> la Madeleine et la République! Broadway et Chicago
> peuvent garder leurs boulevards du crime. Grand bien
> leur fasse et puissent-ils comprendre un jour de
> quelle société déliquescente ils sont le symbole.

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[14]Hubert-Lacombe, Patricia:'L'Accueil des films américains en France pendant la guerre froide (1946-1953)', *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, vol.33, April-June 1986, pp.301-313.

Paris s'en passera volontiers.[15]

This type of discourse was not voiced by the Communist press alone, rather it emanated from across the political spectrum. On 19 December 1947, the *Comité de défense du cinéma français* was established by Jacques Becker and Marcel Carné. This organisation demanded the revision of the Blum-Byrnes agreements and on 4 January 1948 a march was held from the *Opéra* to the *Madeleine*. Many members of the profession took part, including stars such as Jean Marais and Simone Signoret. Their slogans denounced both the agreements and the United States and demanded increased protection for the national industry. As Jacques Portes points out, this passionate demonstration on the part of many of the most famous members of the French cinema industry surely played an important role in the continuing perception of the agreements as a supreme example of French refusal to remain silent when faced with the threat of American hegemony. The demands expressed became increasingly simplistic, ignoring France's manifest need for the American product. Finally, on 20 January 1948, the agreements were revised. The film import quota was reinstituted limiting dubbed imports from America to 120 films per year and increasing the screen quota for French films to five weeks out of every thirteen. The French government also established the *Fonds spécial d'aide temporaire*, a fund designed to offer financial support to the French industry. By 1950, the crisis had passed and French receipts once again represented over fifty percent of the market. Clearly the revision of the agreements was instrumental in changing the

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[15]*L'Humanité*, 1 October 1947.

fortunes of French production yet, as previously stated, these changes were also due to the exhaustion of Hollywood's production of the war years and the ongoing modernisation of the French cinematic infrastructure.

The Blum-Byrnes agreements and the debates they provoked are a shaping moment in the creation of a 'national' cinema. They also merit discussion within the context of an overview of Franco-American relations prior to the 1980s in that they can be seen to embody many of the central concerns of the dialogue between these two countries. The United States' desire for free trade and easier access to French markets, and exasperation at perceived French recalcitrance were matched by a French desire to protect the national industry. The reduction within France of a complex set of issues into a vision of American cultural imperialism feeds directly into anxieties about how to maintain French identity in the face of modernisation and Americanisation, a dilemma at the very heart of French feelings about its powerful ally during the post-war period. As previously stated, Franco-American relations underwent significant changes during the 1980s as France's traditional class and political structures gave way to plural identities often patterned by consumerism. Nevertheless, many of the discourses mobilised around the Blum-Byrnes agreements were remobilised as the GATT agreements were discussed in the late 1980s and early 1990s[16]. Thus this account of perceptions of the 1946 agreements provides both an interesting crystallisation of Franco-American political and cultural exchange prior to 1980 as well as suggesting some of

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[16]See Chapter Three.

the discourses of the 1980s and 1990s.

To conclude this historical overview, it is vital to restress the complexity of political, cultural, and material relations between France and the United States during the period under discussion. These feelings and perceptions can not be reduced to any single narrative but rather involve the interplay of discourses located within concerns about high and mass culture, modernity and tradition, progress, domination, and invasion and identity. Both France and the United States posit world views in terms of culture and political democracy; as such, the two nations are almost inevitably prone to conflict. As a new global economy led by the United States took shape after the war, the French nation engaged in a struggle to assert its own power as a political and cultural force.

Popular French perceptions of the United States

Yet despite these overarching models it is also vital at this point to underline the impossibility of seeing either nation as a single, homogenous entity. Whenever 'France' or the 'United States' are invoked one should be aware of the heterogeneity of each social and political formation, a fact exemplified by earlier mention of the varying perceptions of America in France at any given historical moment. At certain junctures these views may become more unified, during moments of crisis for example, such as that perceived in the cinema industry in 1947. However, a single, straightforward vision of the other nation can never be posited. There is a tendency in discussions of French feelings towards the United States to focus on an elite, those in possession of political,

financial, and cultural capital. However, France did not consist solely of this elite and the perceptions of the wider population are always likely to differ from those of the nation's rulers. The 'American way of life' which disgusted so many artists and intellectuals held great attraction for less well-off members of society who aspired to an improved standard of living. These people provided a ready audience for Hollywood films as they sought pleasure and amusement rather than the anxieties and threats to their national identity felt by the bourgeois elite. As Hervé Hamon points out, this tendency to ignore France's 'popular' culture is exemplified by much discussion of the events of May 1968[17]. He claims that a large proportion of young people at this time were not part of a politicised youth culture. Rather they formed the 150,000 strong audience who attended a pop concert organised by *Europe 1* at *Place de la Nation* in 1963, part of the *'yéyé'* generation, not interested in political ideology. This group of young people, so frequently ignored in narratives of May 1968, were also avid consumers of popular culture, much of it imported from the United States. Clearly distinctions must be made between popular and elite perceptions of the other in France and North America. This is particularly true of the remake which, despite critical condemnation, may well find a popular audience in France.

A Survey of Remakes, 1930-1980

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[17]Hamon, Hervé:'68: The Rise and Fall of a Generation', in Hanley, D.L & Kerr, A.P (eds.): *May 68: Coming of Age* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp.10-22.

This description of the political and cultural relations between France and the United States prior to 1980 does begin to suggest the source of many of the anxieties displayed in contemporary French critique of the remake. Despite attempts to depict the practice as a recent phenomenon (and thus a new, and particularly dangerous, form of attack), these discourses are clearly rooted in the very history which they set out to conceal. Nevertheless, such a description can not alone indicate the specific factors influencing the production of remakes during the period under discussion, or indeed the various ways in which these films were received. For this it is necessary to turn to the films themselves. Between 1950 and 1980 six French films were remade by Hollywood. However between 1930 and 1950 nineteen French cinematic works underwent this process, over three times as many[18]. The explanations for this proliferation of remakes prior to 1950 and the subsequent period of inactivity in this domain are situated within those political and cultural discourses outlined above and within specific cinematic practices. Let us now then examine this group of films, locating them within industrial and aesthetic structures before going on to discuss a specific remake and its source and their relations to the various contextualisations outlined in this chapter.

The studio system

Until 1948 Hollywood was dominated by the studio system. Eight studios controlled this system; the vertically integrated 'Majors' (Paramount, Loews/MGM, Twentieth Century Fox, Warner

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[18]See Appendix.

Brothers, and RKO) and the three 'Minors' (Universal, Columbia, and United Artists). Indeed the productions of the 'Big Five' represented about fifty percent of the industry's annual output and about seventy-five percent of class A features (those which received top billing in the best theatres)[19]. Of the nineteen remakes produced between 1930 and 1950, ten were produced and/or distributed by the Majors (Twentieth Century Fox, RKO, MGM, and Paramount), seven by the three Minors, and two by independent companies, thus the remake process was manifestly part of the dominant studio system. The *Motion Picture Herald* of 10 July 1948 gives a company by company breakdown of projected remakes:

> ...Twentieth Century Fox has six on its schedule; MGM has four, Columbia, four; Warners, three; Paramount, two; RKO, two, and United Artists, Universal International, Selznick Releasing, Goldwyn Productions, Eagle Lion and Korda-Goldwyn, one each.[20]

The planned remakes were not all based upon French films yet these figures do show the important role of the remake in the production of the studio era.

The studio system was firmly established by 1930, adopting a structure that would change very little for the next twenty years. The infrastructure of this vast oligopoly concentrated access to money and distribution in the hands of producers and financiers. As Hollywood felt the effects of the Depression, producers attempted to restrict output. At the same time the studios sold some of their exhibition venues thus creating a tension between the new exhibitors' desire for

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[19]Balio, Tino: *The American Film Industry* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), p.213.

[20]*Motion Picture Herald*, vol.172, no.2, 10 July 1948, p.13.

films with which to satisfy their audiences and the producers'
wish to curb spending and thus production. This tension was
manifested in a struggle between uniformity (or security) and
novelty (with which to attract spectators). This negotiation
led to the standardisation of plots into generic conventions
which facilitated the development of variety within the
familiar[21]. Remakes also provided a solution to this tension;
they were not entirely new and untested yet at the same time
they permitted a reworking which enabled novelty. Hollywood's
genre conventions were consolidated throughout the 1930s and
1940s as the studio system became more firmly entrenched.
Although independent producers grew in number during the
1940s, the Majors controlled distribution and exhibition, the
key to control of the industry. This enabled the studios to
define a dominant aesthetics, notably the aforementioned genre
conventions. Other aesthetics, such as those developed in
Europe, would be borrowed, appropriated, or assimilated. The
curbs on production brought about by the Depression were
reduced as the economy improved. The growth of the double bill
from 1931 meant a demand for increased production, not
necessarily of great quality. This demand then diminished
during the 1950s as the double bill was suppressed. This
growth in production can be seen to explain the proliferation
of remakes during the 1930s and 1940s; exhibitors demanded a
vast number of films and the remake provided a ready source.
Yet somewhat paradoxically, they can also be attributed to the
reduction in production and the subsequent need to develop

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[21]As Stephen Neale demonstrates, the development of variety
within the familiar is a key feature of cinematic genre
conventions. See Neale, Stephen: *Genre* (London: BFI, 1980).

variation within the familiar. In both cases, the phenomenon can be seen to be closely linked to the aesthetic and material practices at work in Hollywood at that time.

French cinema of the 1930s and 1940s

French cinematic structures of the 1930s and 1940s were very different from those established in Hollywood. The two major vertically integrated companies had collapsed, Pathé-Nathan in 1936 and Gaumont in 1934. This resulted in great diversification in access to capital and distribution with about seventy independent producers each making one or two films a year. In economic terms this clearly made the French industry extremely vulnerable, particularly to competition from Hollywood productions. However, in terms of aesthetics this situation enabled diversity and experimentation. The standardisation taking root in the American industry was not encountered in France. This diversity was reinforced by the fact that, in contrast to the Hollywood Production Code which favoured financiers and producers, French laws gave primacy to directors and secondary protection to other artistic workers. Directors were often able to work alone and were involved in many phases of production, thus avoiding the dictates of the producers and financiers experienced by directors at work in Hollywood. This diversity surely made France a fruitful hunting ground for American producers in search of novelty and originality which could then be remade and familiarised within the Hollywood system.

The financial implications of the remake

Establishing the financial implications of the remake process

is complicated by the penury of reliable statistics. Certainly claims were made that the remake offered a 'safe bet' to the Hollywood studios, a less risky enterprise than the production of an original screenplay. According to the *American Film Institute Catalog*, RKO producer Pandro S. Berman bought the rights to *Michel Strogoff* from its producer, Joseph Ermolieff, for $75,000[22]. The production cost a 'modest' $400,000 yet failed to break even at the box office. Thus the rights to the French film cost 18.75 percent of the remake's overall budget. The same source claims that Fox purchased the rights to *Les Croix de bois* for $140,000 in 1932, a few years before RKO bought the rights to *Michel Strogoff* which was released in 1935. This was a vast sum, almost twice that paid for *Michel Strogoff*. MGM purchased the rights to *Pépé le Moko* for $38,000, a sum much closer to that paid by RKO. Having sold the rights to a film, the French distributors would usually be expected to sign a contract agreeing to release the film only outside the United States. Walter Wanger, who acquired the rights to *Pépé le Moko* from MGM, also purchased all prints of the film in order to prevent its release in the USA before that of the remake. However, he later considered the two films sufficiently different to merit the release of Duvivier's film in North America, and in 1941, three years after the release of *Algiers*, *Pépé le Moko* was exhibited, an unusual decision according to the *New York Times* of 2 March 1941[23]. This suppression of the French film in favour of the remake is

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[22]Gevinson, Alan & King Hanson, Patricia: *American Film Institute Catalogue, Feature Films 1931-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

[23]Brown, Gene & Geduld, Harry, M.: *The New York Times Encyclopedia of Film 1941-46* (New York: Times Books, 1984).

significant in that it has given rise to much comment since the 1980s by critics who describe it as a recent, and perfidious, practice. These examples suggest instead that this was an accepted feature of the remake process during the 1930s and 1940s.

These figures demonstrate, albeit somewhat tentatively, the disparity in the sums paid for rights to French screenplays and the inability to guarantee the success of remakes at the American box-office. Nevertheless, although without more detailed statistical information it is impossible to draw firm conclusions, it does seem likely that despite figures such as these the remake was perceived as involving less risk than the production of an original screenplay. These films had already been tested on French audiences and thus had proved their potential popularity. In the words of Olin H. Clark, Eastern story editor for MGM in 1948, '...a picture which was a success ten, fifteen, or twenty-five years ago must have something fundamentally good about it, and thus is still a good screen story today'[24]. The films could also be viewed in a way that was impossible with a screenplay; producers could actually 'see' what they were buying. Both these factors would surely have been seen to offer a certain degree of security yet, as the career of *The Soldier and the Lady* reveals, in the unpredictable world of audience tastes no formula, however well tested, could guarantee success.

The Paramount Decrees, 1948: changes in the industry
The vertical integration and horizontal cooperation of

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[24]*Motion Picture Herald*, 10 July 1948, p.13.

Hollywood during the 1930s and 1940s meant that French films were very unlikely to break into the American market. The control of distribution and exhibition by the five Majors created a domestic market almost entirely inaccessible to non-Hollywood products. This fact can be seen to underscore the remake process. French films were rarely distributed in the United States and even those exceptions to this norm would tend to receive an extremely limited release. French films could thus be remade and presented to American audiences as 'new' or 'original'; to an audience entirely unfamiliar with the French source there would be no concern over oppositions between 'original' and 'copy'. It is possible that some remakes were actively marketed as such, drawing on the French source as a means of attracting audiences. Nevertheless, the deliberate prevention of the release of the French source in the United States, at least before that of the remake, tends to suggest that the former scenario was more frequent.

This situation changed after 1948. In 1938 the American Justice Department launched a suit entitled 'The United States v. Paramount Pictures, Inc. et al'. The government accused the eight studios of monopolising the film industry and thus violating antitrust laws. The five Majors controlled exhibition and distribution as well as practising block booking and unfair pricing schemes in order to keep independent and non-Hollywood productions out of the first-run theatres. The three Minors did not own exhibition venues but they were accused of colluding with the Majors to prevent other films from penetrating the market. In 1948 the Supreme Court handed down a decision, declaring the eight studios guilty of monopolistic business practices. The Majors were

obliged to divorce their theatre circuits from their production and distribution branches, thus splitting the existing companies into separate exhibition and production-distribution organisations. Unfair distribution practices were prohibited so that each film would be rented on an individual basis, regardless of other films or affiliation between exhibitors. Voting trusts were also established in order to prevent shareholders of the former integrated companies from taking control of both of the newly formed separate companies.

Despite the fact that the Majors and Minors continued to dominate distribution and thus to earn the majority of box-office receipts, the Paramount Decrees did have a significant impact on Hollywood. The divestiture of the theatre circuits meant that the Majors no longer had guaranteed exhibition venues for their products and consequently their output decreased. Studios and distribution chains were underused so the Majors provided finance, studio space, and distribution for independent production and foreign films. For the first time in over a decade foreign films had equal access to the American market and by 1958 over sixty-five percent of Hollywood's films were made by independent producers.

Because the five major studios no longer owned the first run theatres the Production Code was seriously undermined. The Code of 1934 was in effect a self-censorship mechanism. The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) had obliged distributors to submit their films for approval by stating that no cinema belonging to the association would exhibit a film without this prior approval. However, many exhibition venues were now no longer part of the MPAA thus enforcement of the Code became almost impossible. The Code was further

weakened in 1952 when films were read into the First Amendment thus assuring them the freedom of speech guaranteed to other art forms. This recognition of the status of film as art and an ensuing freedom was one of the factors leading to the development of an 'art' cinema in the United States throughout the 1950s and 1960s. The revisions to the Blum-Byrnes agreements in 1948 limited Hollywood's profit withdrawal from France to $3.6 million per year. This left about $10 million, part of which was spent on distribution rights to films which were then released in North America. Some of this money was also invested in French productions thus leaving Hollywood producers with a vested interest in the success of the French product. Indeed, as Tino Balio points out, the domestic production shortage and declining audiences led to an urgent need to find products elsewhere:

> ...an executive of United Paramount Theatres told exhibitors that "it might be wise for [them] to consider ways and means of popularizing the foreign film" and "to establish an audience where there has been none before" (*Variety*, September 29, 1954)[25].

By the early 1960s the American art theatre circuit consisted of over five hundred cinemas devoted almost exclusively to foreign films. At the same time, a domestic 'art' cinema continued to develop; for example, many directors were influenced by the work of the *Nouvelle Vague* in France. Changes in political culture as Cold War certainties came to an end and American identity was severely shaken by the events of the Vietnam conflict encouraged an interest in countercultural artefacts. Hollywood attempted to appeal to an expanding youth culture with such countercultural films. Both

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[25]Balio (1976), p.399.

these influences can be seen to penetrate mainstream Hollywood production during the 1970s as well as encouraging experimentation and innovation on the part of independent producers.

These changes in Hollywood's industrial and aesthetic structures were accompanied by changes in the construction of audiences. During the 1930s and 1940s as cinema production was standardised into genre conventions and the development of the 'classical Hollywood narrative', so there was a tendency to perceive audiences as an undifferentiated mass[26]. Most Hollywood products were designed for this homogeneous audience; the 'family' film, produced to appeal to all age groups, was a central part of Hollywood's output and such films frequently reaped vast profits at the box-office. Throughout this period there existed no real concept of choice for the American cinema-going public. As the industry underwent change after 1948 so the concept of audience began to alter. It was now believed that there existed several audiences in the United States; audiences for the growing 'art' cinema and a burgeoning 'youth' audience for example. Indeed by the late 1960s nearly fifty percent of the American cinema audience was composed of sixteen to twenty-four year olds[27]. Studios began to produce large numbers of films aimed specifically at this audience, many of them dealing with the previously mentioned countercultural concerns. The advent of television also led to the differentiation of the Hollywood

[26]There were of course exceptions to this homogenisation such as the 'woman's' films produced during World War Two.

[27]Bordwell, David & Thompson, Kristin: *Film History: an Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), p.698.

product in an attempt to woo audiences back into the cinema.
These new products would display technology (cinemascope and
widescreen pictures for example) not available on television.
Many films, such as the aforementioned youth films, would deal
with subject matter deemed unsuitable for television
transmission and as such these films would be directed towards
specific audience groups. In 1968 the MPAA gave official
recognition of the differentiation in audiences by setting up
a Code and Rating Office which subsequently devised a complete
rating system used to define a film's suitability for
audiences of differing age groups. A Supreme Court decision of
1973 deemed that a state could decide that:

> ..."public exhibition of obscene material, or
> commerce in such material, has a tendency to injure
> the community as a whole, to endanger the public
> safety, or to jeopardize [...] the state's right to
> maintain a decent society"...[28]

This ruling meant that individual states could now reach
different decisions on particular films, a further
reinforcement of the growing differentiation within the
industry.

It seems certain that these changes in the industry
subsequent to 1948 were behind the decline in remakes during
the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. The disappearance of the double
bill during the early 1950s meant a diminished demand for
production. The various changes and problems in the domestic
market brought about by the Paramount Decrees and the
development of television caused a significant decrease in the
number of films produced by the Hollywood studios. This led to
the opening up of the American market to independent and

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[28]Balio (1976), p.440.

foreign productions thus encouraging a new diversification and the development of an 'art' cinema. This in turn led to the breaking up of audiences into various, diverse groups. Within this context the remake seemed less attractive as producers were no longer on the lookout for easily available sources. More importantly, French films could now find an audience in the United States and the former assimilation of different aesthetics into the hegemonic Hollywood system diminished as the industry diversified.

Censorship

Beyond economic and material concerns lie issues bound up with the ideologies and the value systems of the film industry and indeed of the nation in which it is situated. Hollywood's remakes can be perceived as an implicit form of censorship, an example of Venuti's 'fluent translation strategy' described in Chapter One, in that they frequently incorporate and appropriate the products of another culture into the morals, values and standards of the receptor culture. Moreover, French films could, and probably did, fall foul of Hollywood's Production Code. Censorship laws in France during the period under discussion were not identical to those enforced in the United States; for example, they concerned themselves less with representations of sexuality than with political issues. The protection accorded to directors in France allowed them a degree of freedom not available in Hollywood where the Hays Code placed power in the hands of producers and financiers. The Code was very much part of the industry rather than being external to it and producers accepted its dictates as it enabled the production of the highly successful 'family' film.

Edward Benson attributes the principal differences between *La Chienne* (1931) and its remake of 1945, *Scarlet Street*, to differences in censorship codes, both implicit and explicit[29]. Indeed, *Scarlet Street* was initially banned by the Motion Picture Division of the State Education Department of New York, inviting speculation that by remaining close to its French source it had flouted the Production Code. Walter Wanger, producer of the film, agreed to cuts in order to achieve the lifting of this ban. The first script of *Algiers* (1938) submitted to the Hays Office was deemed unacceptable for the following reasons:

> ... because of the suggestion that the "two leading female characters are both kept women". [...] A memo from Production Code Administration Director, Joseph I. Breen to Wanger, dated 18 February 1938, requested changes pertaining to references to, 'sex appeal', Pépé's promiscuity and Pépé's suicide at the end to escape punishment. Other memos in the file indicate that Wanger and screenwriter John Howard Lawson were instructed to change the ending so that "Slimane's men would shoot Pépé, rather than having him actually commit suicide".[30]

Clearly both *Algiers* and *Pépé le Moko* transgressed numerous aspects of the Production Code; references to sexuality, depictions of 'loose' women, suicide, and the law's failure to triumph. In order to achieve wide release in the United States, the producers of *Algiers* were obliged to modify their screenplay. When *Pépé le Moko* was eventually released in the American market it was publicised as the 'full', 'unexpurgated' version. The distributors played on its

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[29]Benson, Edward: 'Decor and Decorum, from *La Chienne* to *Scarlet Street*: Franco-U.S. Trade in Film During the Thirties', *Film and History*, vol.12, no.3, September 1982, pp.57-65.

[30]Gevinson & King Hanson (1993).

Frenchness, the fact that it was not subject to the Production Code and was thus likely to be somewhat more explicit than the products of Hollywood. Indeed, this has proved to be an enduring popular perception of French films in the Anglo-Saxon markets.

Two different forms of censorship were practised in Hollywood during the period under discussion; ideological censorship, which could be sexual, political, or religious in nature, and aesthetic censorship. Either form could be explicit, as in the dictates of the Production Code, or implicit or unacknowledged, as in the case of aesthetic appropriation. Both forms can serve to explain the proliferation of remakes during the 1930s and 1940s. Aesthetic censorship was practised as French films were assimilated into the dominant Hollywood genres and styles; in many respects *Scarlet Street* bears more resemblance to *The Woman in the Window*, an earlier film also directed by Fritz Lang and starring Joan Bennett, than it does to *La Chienne*. *The Road to Glory* (1936), Howard Hawks' remake of *Les Croix de bois* (1931), was a clear attempt to imitate and profit from the success of Lewis Milestone's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930). Explicit ideological and moral censorship was also carried out as the case of *Pépé le Moko* demonstrates. Many French productions failed to comply with the rulings of the Hays Code and, deemed unsuitable for the undiversified American audience, the most they could achieve was a very limited release. They were thus remade according to the values and dictates of the receptor industry and nation. American censorship of the cinematic product began to alter after 1948 when the Supreme Court invalidated every censorship criterion

except that of obscenity, at the same time subjecting censorship boards to a set of strict requirements. It is significant that this ruling was handed down in 1948, the same year as the Paramount decrees which also undermined the Hays Code. Thus the relaxation of censorship, which surely played a part in the reduced interest in remakes on the part of the studios, can be seen to be located within the wider changes which took place throughout the industry after 1948.

Remakes as a solution to a lack of 'original' material

Many commentators ascribe the proliferation of remakes to a lack of good, original screenplays. Although there appears to have been little comment on the process during the 1930s and 1940s, this sentiment was certainly expressed. In the words of the *Motion Picture Herald* of 10 July 1948, 'The trend towards more remakes is attributed by story editors to the lack of original stories, stage plays and novels good enough for the screen...'[31]. Whilst not wanting to entirely deny the possibility of this perceived shortage as a factor in the production of remakes, it does seem to be a part of the negative discourses about remakes so prevalent in the 1980s and which were voiced by some critics as early as the 1930s. In *Cinématographie française* of September 1938, P.A. Harlé warned of the dangers of the remake:

> Le remake est un danger. On ne doit pas vendre le
> sujet d'un film pour être re-tourné en 'remake' à
> Hollywood ou ailleurs avant deux ans au moins depuis
> sa date de sortie publique.[32]

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[31]*Motion Picture Herald*, 10 July 1948, p.13.

[32]Harlé, P.A.: 'Attention aux remakes', *Cinématographie française*, no.1038, 23 September 1938, p.11.

Comments about a lack of original material are also seriously undermined by the fact that there seems to be no reasonable explanation as to why there should have been such a shortage during the 1930s and 1940s. The very date of the article cited from the *Motion Picture Herald*, 1948, also invites scepticism, as from this time the number of French films remade in Hollywood dropped drastically. Even if this theory can be mobilised to explain other forms of the remake, it certainly seems a rather tenuous means by which to justify Hollywood's remakes of French cinematic works.

France and Hollywood: interaction and exchange

Condemnation of the remake process has been frequently and vociferously expressed by many French critics since the early 1980s. Yet despite the presence of the negative discourse outlined above, the remakes of the 1930s and 1940s did seem to be a generally accepted practice and such criticism was marginal. As previously mentioned, it is significant that much of the apocalyptic debate of the 1980s, decrying the detrimental effects of the remake, makes no reference to these numerous early examples of the process thus casting it as a recent manifestation of American cultural imperialism. This paradigm ignores both the history of the remake and the history of exchange and interpenetration between the two cinema industries.

Prior to the development of sound cinema, 'national' cinemas as we understand them today did not exist[33]. The absence of spoken dialogue meant that films could be

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[33]See Chapter Four.

transferred with ease from one country to another and the origins of a particular work were of little importance. Indeed, it was during the early years of sound cinema that French cinema had its major impact on American markets. The crossover between industries inherent to the days of silent production continued even as sound was developed. By 1929 many producers had decided that the only way in which to continue to penetrate valuable foreign markets was to shoot multi-lingual versions of each film. MGM imported actors and directors to make Spanish, German, and French versions of its films whilst Paramount produced multi-lingual films in its Joinville studio near Paris[34]. By 1931 sound-track mixing technology had been improved and original sound effects could be added to new voices. In 1932 dubbing and subtitling were introduced and the expensive process of shooting multiple versions was gradually abandoned. Nevertheless, between 1929 and 1932 this process was a common feature of the cinematic landscape. Hollywood companies would shoot films in European languages and French producers would produce English language versions of their work. The fact that this practice coincided with the development of 'national' cinemas meant that it did not escape criticism. In the words of a French critic of the 1930s:

> Puisque les grosses compagnies attirent à grands frais des vedettes européennes, Paramount va s'installer en Europe et y fabriquer à la chaîne des films en multiples versions [...] le producteur délégué Robert Kane se réjouit de voir se succéder à toute vitesse des troupes allemandes, suédoises, argentines, espagnoles, ou italiennes qui rabâchent inlassablement dans les mêmes décors et avec les mêmes intonations ce que les diregeants américains supposent être des succès internationaux. Les sujets

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[34]Bordwell & Thompson (1994), p.229.

> sont choisis en fonction de l'intérêt que leur a
> déjà manifesté le public américain en lisant le
> livre américain ou en applaudissant la pièce
> américaine.[35]

These comments are of interest in that they share many of the negative attitudes voiced about the remake process and about the impact of American cinema in general: Hollywood's penetration of the French market and the subsequent production of an undifferentiated mass culture geared towards the standards and tastes of the American public. At the same time this practice and the concerns it engendered situate the remake within a wider process of transfer and exchange between Hollywood and France. The remake can to a certain extent be perceived as a continuation of the multi-lingual production, an acceptable part of the development of cinema rather than a shocking example of American pilfering.

Another manifestation of this process of exchange was the employment of emigré personnel in Hollywood. This phenomenon is frequently depicted as an exodus caused by Hitler's rise to power in Germany. However, many European directors and actors emigrated to the United States long before the Nazi threat, attracted by the advanced facilities available. Although obliged to work within the conventions of Hollywood, many directors used styles developed in Europe, such as Expressionism, to expand and enhance the dominant aesthetics. Of the twenty-three remakes produced between 1930 and 1960, eight had European directors; they included Anatole Litvak (*The Woman I Love*, 1937 and *The Long Night*, 1947), Julien Duvivier (*Lydia*, 1941), Fritz Lang (*Scarlet Street*, 1945 and

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[35]Chirat, Raymond: *Le Cinéma français des années 30* (Paris: Bibliothèque du cinéma, 1983), p.15.

Human Desire, 1954), and Otto Preminger (*The Thirteenth Letter*, 1951). Fifteen films, over half those made between 1930 and 1980 had some emigré personnel, be they actors, producers, or scriptwriters. Many of these people were either of French origin or had come to Hollywood via a period spent working in France. Such figures include the aforementioned Julien Duvivier and Anatole Litvak as well as Charles Boyer, Maurice Chevalier, Jean-Pierre Aumont, and Adolphe Menjou.

This system of exchange surely complicates the perception of the remake as a straightforward American product. Both Anatole Litvak and Julien Duvivier remade their own films in Hollywood thus problematising attempts to describe these works as 'American'. The input of European personnel undermines binary oppositions between French and Hollywood cinemas, a process which is continued in the 1980s by French financing of American remakes. At the same time, this exchange can be seen to reinforce the acceptance of remakes and their proliferation during the 1930s and 1940s; rather than seeing Hollywood as stealing French products, French cinematic personnel can be seen to have penetrated Hollywood with their art.

Gradual polarisation: 'art' and the 'popular'

One of the central concerns of the criticism of remakes emanating from the 1980s and 1990s is the perceived distinction between French cinema's status as 'art' and Hollywood's production of mass cultural artefacts. As previously stated, cinema was not read into the First Amendment until 1952 and until this time it was not perceived in the United States as having the same status as other art forms. Thus the incorporation of scenes from *Les Croix de bois*

(1931) into *The Road to Glory* (1936) was unlikely to be seen as problematic; indeed, 651 feet of footage from the French film was also incorporated into *The World Moves On* (Fox, 1934)[36]. The film did not yet have an original status that could be threatened, a fact borne out by the multi-lingual versions of the early 1930s and the numerous remakes of silent films. The development of 'art' cinemas and 'national' cinemas as the century progressed, both in the United States and in Europe, led to the polarisation between the products of Hollywood and France. It is significant that until *Scarlet Street* in 1945, the longest time gap between a French film and its remake was five years. The remaking of older 'classic' films only began to develop from the late 1940s and can thus be seen to coincide with the growth of 'art' cinema. As this opposition became firmly established so remakes became a cause for disquiet; French films had a status which must be protected. The fact that this opposition was yet to take hold during the 1930s and 1940s helps to explain the far wider acceptance of the process at this time.

Le Salaire de la peur and *The Sorcerer*

The remake is then an enduring practice which emerges from specific material, aesthetic, and cultural circumstances. To dismiss the remakes of the 1980s as simple proof of contemporary American cultural imperialism is clearly to ignore both the complexities of the process and its role within the history of cinematic production and discourses about cinema. To better illustrate these affirmations let us

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[36]Gevinson & King Hanson (1993), p.1807.

now turn to a particular pair of films and examine the various ways in which they can be seen to emerge from, and interrogate, their respective contexts of production and reception. The films in question are *Le Salaire de la peur*, released in 1953, directed by Henri-Georges Clouzot and starring Yves Montand and Charles Vanel, and its remake, *The Sorcerer*, directed by William Friedkin, released in 1977, and starring Roy Scheider. Even the most cursory examination of the films demonstrates that they provide an interesting case study. *Le Salaire de la peur* has become a 'classic' of French cinema thus positioning the pair of films in the art/popular culture duopoly central to much discussion of remakes. Moreover, the two films emerge from moments of change both in terms of the global economy and America's position within that structure, and, perhaps more interestingly for the present argument, in terms of the cinema industry.

This discussion will of necessity be based upon the version of *The Sorcerer* released in Britain. Friedkin's film was neither a critical nor a commercial success in the United States and as a result the producers demanded that the film should be cut by approximately one hour for its release in Britain. The film's title was also changed to *Wages of Fear*. Despite these rather drastic modifications the film had no more success in this country and it was restored to its full length for release in France. This uncut version is not available in Britain hence the focus here on the shorter version of the film. It should be stressed that this is not the version distributed in either the United States or France so any conclusions as to the reception of the film are necessarily rather tentative. Nevertheless, this process is

significant in itself. Clearly we are dealing with two remakes here; that of Friedkin and that of his producers. This reveals to what extent the film is a product of the Hollywood cinema industry and demonstrates the power of producers and financiers and the pressure they can bring to bear if a film does not prove successful at the box-office. The change in title seems to be an attempt to make a more explicit reference to Clouzot's film (and hence to acknowledge the film's status as remake) and thus to attract a wider audience made up of those who generally choose to view Hollywood productions along with a smaller group, perhaps less likely to view a Hollywood film but familiar with the French source (which had proved extremely successful at the British box-office) and interested in seeing the relations between the two works. A similar process can be seen at work as the film was released in France as *Le Convoi de la peur*, a title which both recalls the source and yet differentiates the films. Both the American and the British titles will be used in this discussion as it refers to the two versions of the film.

Friedkin himself did not acknowledge his film as a remake of *Le Salaire de la peur*. Instead he claimed to have based his work directly upon the novel of the same title by Georges Arnaud, also the source of Clouzot's film:

> The only thing I wanted from the original *Wages of Fear* was the premise. Four men sitting on a load of dynamite which I thought was a marvellous premise that could be updated, and I thought people would want to see such a film [...] But I love the film, and I don't think of it as a re-make at all and I don't really compare it to Clouzot's film which I also happen to love.[37]

[37]Friedkin, William: 'Tense Situations - William Friedkin in an interview with Ralph Applebaum', *Films and Filming*, vol.25, no.6, March 1979, pp.12-21.

Indeed the film's opening credits describe the work as being based upon Arnaud's novel. There are various possible explanations for this denial. The director and producers may have cited the novel as a source in order to bypass copyright laws. In his account of the making of *Heaven's Gate* (1980), Stephen Bach refers to the production of a musical based upon the successful French film *La Cage aux folles* (1978)[38]. Although the producers of the musical would have become familiar with this source through the film, and indeed the success of the film would have been perceived as a key factor in the potential success of the musical, Bach points out that producer Allan Carr had bought the English language rights to the French play upon which the film was based and his subsequent Broadway hit was claimed to be based upon this play rather than the film 'for legal reasons'[39]. It seems that the bypassing of a cinematic work in favour of its primary source was a common means of avoiding legal complications in the United States at this juncture. Nevertheless, the film's final credits dedicate the work to Henri-Georges Clouzot thus stressing Friedkin's debt to Clouzot's film. The American director claims to be interested in the 'premise' of both novel and film yet it is surely likely that he would have become familiar with this premise through the 'classic' film with which he admits to being familiar rather than through a little known and long since out-of-print novel. Friedkin's denial of his work's identity as a remake smacks of what Harold Bloom termed 'the anxiety of influence', an Oedipal

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[38]Recently remade as *The Birdcage*.

[39]Bach, Stephen: *Final Cut: Dreams and Disaster in the Making of Heaven's Gate* (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p.204.

struggle to overthrow the 'original' and to adopt this status for the reproduction. It also reveals the director's attempts to define his film as the work of an individual *auteur*, to differentiate it from 'mass' production and mark it as something other, a unique 'work of art'. Indeed Friedkin stressed the location of the film within the artistic trajectory of his previous work thus attempting to posit an individual cinematic 'oeuvre':

> ...[*The Exorcist* (1973), *The Brinks Job* (1978), and *The Sorcerer*] are claustrophobic films and I think claustrophobia is an important element in the films I've made. And irrational fear - the fear of the unknown, what might happen; and generally something terrible does happen. A group of people in a tense situation, each deeply obsessed by something - that I guess is what I've been drawn to as a filmmaker. The characters that interest me are obsessed by one thing or another, be it religious fervour, the pursuit of a criminal, money, fame, recognition, freedom.[40]

This is a gesture which, as will be demonstrated, was highly significant at this juncture.

Friedkin's anxiety was perhaps reinforced by the differing critical and commercial trajectories of the two films. *Le Salaire de la peur* was both a critical and a financial success. In 1953 it won the *Grand prix* at the Cannes film festival and Charles Vanel was designated best male actor of the year for his role in the film. It took first place in a public referendum at the third Berlin festival also in 1953, and in 1954 the British Academy of Film judged it the best film of the year. As well as gaining prizes and highly positive reviews, Clouzot's film attracted large audiences both in France and other European countries. In 1953 it was

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[40]Friedkin (1979), p.18.

one of the most successful films released in France, gaining
497,209 entries in Paris alone and significantly outstripping
the success of the current Hollywood technicolour
'superproduction', *Quo Vadis*, which achieved 335,940
entries[41]. In contrast *The Sorcerer* achieved neither critical
nor box-office success, hence the cuts and title change
described above. Friedkin's film was variously described as
being too long, excessive, and simplistic, yet the subsequent
cuts did little to change either critical or public opinion.
Indeed many critics vilified the film as a pale imitation of
Clouzot's work:

> As is the case with all remakes -there seems to be
> not a single exception to contradict the rule - it
> is merely a pale ghost of its former self, perhaps
> partially because it has received an all-out
> Hollywood production.[42]

These films are clearly perceived to be of very different
cultural status. Despite his denial of the influence of *Le
Salaire de la peur*, Friedkin's film tended to be assessed by
critics as a remake and was thus subject to the oppositions
and negativity typical of this discourse.

Undermining oppositions between 'art' and 'mass production'
However, despite the critical positioning of *The Sorcerer*
within these oppositions, the commercial trajectories of the
two films can be seen to undermine the binaries constructed
around French 'art' cinema and Hollywood 'mass' production.
The highly successful box-office figures of *Le Salaire de la
peur* prohibit straightforward perceptions of the work as an

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[41]Hubert-Lacombe (1986), p.307.

[42]*International Herald Tribune*, 11 November 1978.

'art' film despite its current cultural status. It was a popular work attracting a wide European audience (although this identity would of course have been complicated by the film's reception in the United States where the very fact that it was 'foreign' and subtitled would have meant that it was perceived as an art film). *The Sorcerer* (and *Wages of Fear*) did not attract large audiences thus problematising attempts to view the film as a Hollywood 'blockbuster' despite the large budget invested in the production of the work. It is significant that many French critics saw Clouzot's film as being more akin to Hollywood production, particularly action films, than to the literary cinema dominant in France at that time. In 1964, as *Le Salaire de la peur* was re-released in France, a critic in *Les Lettres françaises* claimed that Clouzot's film owed very little to the traditions of French cinema and a great deal to the conventions of Hollywood:

> Durant vingt ou vingt-cinq ans, des débuts du parlant à 1955, Hollywood rendit florissant un genre où le contenu social (mis à la mode par le New Deal de Roosevelt) assez fermement décrit, servait de toile de fond à une "dramaturgie" classique. [...] Donc, en 1953, Clouzot puisait à une source particulièrement vivante [...] *Le Salaire de la peur* a des qualités "américaines": des situations essentiellement physiques, des caractères bien dessinés, un scénario construit pour l'efficacité, où rien n'est laissé au hasard.[43]

As his invoking of the discourses of *auteurism* suggests, Friedkin did not perceive his film as a 'typical' Hollywood production, describing it instead as 'the most expensive art film ever made'. Evidently neither film can be located unproblematically within the oppositions established between French and Hollywood cinemas. This undermines any attempt to

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[43]*Lettres françaises*, 30 July 1964.

define a straightforward trajectory between the two films.

The deconstruction of the typical oppositions established between French 'art' and Hollywood 'mass production' is reinforced by the specific material practices within which each film is located. *Le Salaire de la peur* was a French-Italian co-production. As France was the majority partner the film is described as French yet evidently the Italian input problematises any attempt to see it solely as part of a uniquely French tradition. The film's wide success in Europe was bound up with the film's status as co-production and the multilingual aspects of its dialogue; characters speak in Italian, English, German, and Spanish as well as in the dominant language, French. As a result the film could be viewed in these countries as a product that was not exclusively 'foreign'. Thus it was able to overcome the pitfalls encountered by more specifically 'national' products, rejected because of their entirely 'foreign' identity and dialogue. As a co-production *Le Salaire de la peur* is part of a postwar attempt to construct a European cinema and a European audience as a means of retaliating against the threat of Hollywood. Co-productions enabled big budget production whilst spreading the risks involved across various national industries. The project was central to European production of the 1950s and Clouzot's film should be perceived as part of this process, as an attempt to appeal to a pan-European audience, rather than as a specifically French product.

The status of *Wages of Fear* as a Hollywood production is also somewhat more complicated than it at first appears. During the late 1960s Hollywood experienced a recession. In the years that followed, two main cinematic tendencies

emerged, reviving the industry and leading to an expansion in production during the 1980s[44]. A succession of relatively modestly budgeted films experienced phenomenal success at the box-office; these films included Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather* (1972) and Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* (1975). The success of these films led the industry to focus on the 'blockbuster', indeed the Majors reduced their production to no more than 150 films per year so as to minimise the risks involved. At the same time a counter-tendency could be perceived in a group of directors who tried to create a new cinema which incorporated the techniques of art cinema within the conventions of mainstream production. This borrowing from the production of art cinema can be linked to the development of plural cinemas and audiences in the United States since the 1950s and the wooing of diverse groups through the production of 'different' cinemas during the 1970s. It is significant that Friedkin is often described as a central figure in this 'new' Hollywood yet he also directed one of the aforementioned 'blockbusters', *The French Connection* (1971). Certainly *Wages of Fear* does seem to be situated at the cusp of these two currents. Friedkin himself saw the work as an 'art'(or *auteur*) film yet it is an unusual hybrid of the conventional Hollywood action movie (witness the depiction of the riot scenes for which he uses rapid editing, travelling shots, and close-ups, his camera entering the crowd to stress the movement and the urgency of the situation thus creating a sharp contrast with Clouzot's brief aerial shot of the troubles) and art cinema techniques (the lack of closure and the non-heroic, ambivalent

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[44]See Chapter Three.

character construction for example). It seems apparent that neither *Wages of Fear* nor *Le Salaire de la peur* can be attributed unproblematically the status of 'art' or 'popular' production or indeed a straightforward national identity. Both films seem to have shifting identities, largely due to the specific material contexts from which they emerge and the ways in which they were received.

This instability in terms of 'art' and the 'popular' is revealed by the films very different depictions of character and relationships. Homosocial bonding, heterosexual masculine relationships, is a theme central to Clouzot's film with particular focus upon the relationship between Mario (Montand) and Jo (Vanel). The initial meeting between these characters depicts the gaze of Jo as he watches Mario who moves slowly around him, clearly aware that he is being watched. This display and the gaze to which it gives rise suggest an attraction between the two men, rooted in shared nationality and mutual nostalgia. Clouzot extends this homo-erotic relationship throughout the film. Mario and Jo are seen to be constantly together, a couple reinforced by Mario's rejection of Linda (Vera Clouzot). Mario has been living with Luigi (Folco Lulli), who is feminised by his acceptance of the household tasks. Indeed the first time we encounter Luigi he is preparing a meal for Mario. However, Mario enters the home and claims to have met a 'real man'. Jo eventually usurps Luigi, taking his trousers and Mario's friendship. The feminisation of Luigi and the close relationship between Mario and Jo suggests a 'threesome', with Luigi as the wronged wife and Jo as the 'other woman'. Nevertheless, Jo's masculinity is stressed in the film's early scenes; for example he dominates

Luigi in a struggle in the bar. This stressing of gender becomes embodied in the transport of nitro-glycerine. Through this journey true male identities can be fully achieved or indeed lost entirely. Clouzot demonstrates the shifting power dynamic between Mario and Jo; as Jo shows fear so he loses Mario's respect and thus his dominance. As the journey progresses Mario makes frequent references to the feminisation of Jo, calling him 'une fille' and 'une gonzesse'. This culminates after the explosion of the boulder when Mario spurns Jo, reestablishing his relationship with Luigi. Yet none of the characters succeeds in this struggle for a full male identity. Luigi and Bimba (Peter Van Eyck) perish as their lorry explodes; Jo lies dying, his head on Mario's shoulder, his power and masculinity finally forfeited. Even Mario fails in this endeavour as his excessive behaviour, evidence of a refusal to assume the responsibilities of the patriarch, leads him to his death.

Clouzot's clearly delineated characters and his depiction of homosocial relations suggest parallels between *Le Salaire de la peur* and films of the 1930s such as *Pépé le Moko* and *La Belle équipe* (1936) as well as the 'classical' Hollywood productions of the 1930s and 1940s[45]. Friedkin's characterisation is however rather different. In *Wages of Fear* relationships between the protagonists are never developed[46]. Each man is shown to have an individual history and in many ways this reinforces the isolation of the characters. It is

[45]See Bordwell, David, Staiger, Janet & Thompson, Kristin: *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985).

[46]It should of course be stressed that this lack of development may well be partly due to the cuts in the film.

significant that a single protagonist, Scanlon (Scheider), is at the centre of Friedkin's film in contrast to the relationship which forms the heart of Clouzot's work. There are no important women characters in *Wages of Fear*, thus in many ways the film can be seen to be a 'man's' film. Yet somewhat paradoxically this 'man's' film does not show any bonding between the male characters. The sense of isolation is reinforced by the film's lack of dialogue. The men rarely speak and thus we learn little about them and their relationships. The difference between the two films' treatment of character development is exemplified by the 'washboard' sequence. Clouzot uses this event to demonstrate Jo's growing fear and the shifting power dynamics in his relation with Mario. Even as the lorry crosses the uneven terrain we hear the two men speak and thus learn of their changing relationship. In contrast, Friedkin's depiction of this sequence is pure action. We see that Nilo (Francisco Rabal) is afraid as Scanlon puts his foot on the accelerator yet any dialogue between them is inaudible and thus their relationship remains unexplained and undeveloped. Indeed Scanlon is shown to be in control from the start of the journey, there is no sense of shifting dynamics in this film. As Nilo crosses the pool of water during the journey Scanlon remarks upon his 'nice legs'. Yet this feminisation of the character seems somewhat incongruous as we know so little about him and his relationship with Scanlon. There is a sense of a certain bonding between Nilo and Scanlon as the former lies dying towards the end of the journey. Scanlon talks to him in an attempt to keep him alive, asking him what he will do with the money from the oil company. Nilo replies 'get laid', an answer

which provokes the laughter of the two men and a sense of closeness. Yet this moment forms a strong contrast with the death of Jo in *Le Salaire de la peur*. Nilo makes an individualistic affirmation of desire for another (a woman) whilst Mario and Jo share a mutual nostalgia and desire for the Paris they once knew.

Once again these features of Friedkin's film can be explained by its location on the cusp of two aesthetic tendencies in Hollywood. The lack of character development and the absence of fully formed relationships can be seen to locate the film in a tradition of action cinema in which characterisation and individual psychology give way to physical feats and special effects. However, by choosing not to develop fully drawn characters Friedkin prevents the audience from identifying with the protagonists thus differentiating his film from the 'classical' Hollywood narrative.

The historical and political context of the films

Having located *Le Salaire de la peur* and its American remake within specifically material and aesthetic contexts it is now vital to situate the films in terms of the historical and political discourses which surround and penetrate them. Clouzot's film, released in 1953, emerges from the events and discourses of the Cold War and the film works upon the anti-American ideologies prevalent in France at this time. Indeed, the film was censored when first released in the United States in order to remove references to the oil company which were deemed anti-American. Clouzot depicts a nameless South American country which is shown to be a place of poverty and

despair both for the indigenous peoples and for the European emigrés. The only work available is at the American-run oil company and this work is shown to be highly exploitative and dangerous. When discussing the need for drivers to transport the supply of nitro-glycerine, an American worker suggests that the Union would never agree to such a risk. O'Brien, the head of the company's plant at Las Piedras, dismisses such concerns, pointing out that none of the workers are unionised. O'Brien is a key figure in this depiction of the oil company. His relationship with Jo suggests an ambiguous past, reinforcing an image of the company as being beyond the law, in control of the fate of its workers because of its financial power and thus able to set its own terms. The dangers of *Le Salaire de la peur* emanate from the oil company itself. The explosion at the oil well which kills many indigenous workers and provokes the hazardous lorry journey is not caused by any external factor. The only winner in Clouzot's narrative is the oil company, as the fire is extinguished and the well continues to pump out oil. Thus the film depicts capitalism and wage labour as a source of danger. By locating these dangers within an American-run oil company Clouzot also seems to be suggesting the dangers of American imperialism.

The early 1950s also saw the expansion of a new global economy led by the United States. Clouzot sets his narrative in a colonial location inhabited by Blacks, Indians, and displaced Europeans. The poverty and the squalor of the location demonstrate that this country is firmly on the periphery of the new world order, exploited by capitalist America yet unable to fully participate in the developing global economy: its role is both active (it provides the oil)

and passive (the oil wells are managed by an external body). This globalisation is suggested by the different nationalities of the emigrés; French, Italian, German, Dutch, Spanish, and British, all have come to this location, to the edge, in order to escape. The four protagonists can be seen as liminal, poised on the threshold between this periphery and the emergent capitalist order. Their remaining in this periphery means death and this process is symbolised visually by the gradual blackening of Mario and Jo in the pool of oil. They are shown to be impotent, all their endeavours lead to absorption or death and Clouzot here seems to suggest the futility of individual struggles within the new world order. The director does not offer us a 'happy' ending, neither Mario, Jo, nor Luigi achieve their wish to return to their native country. It would seem that this is not a possible solution for Clouzot; to return would mean to enter the American dominated, capitalist order and thus an acceptance of impotence and mediocrity.

The Sorcerer/Wages of Fear emerges from a period of political uncertainties as the hegemonic discourses of the Cold War came to an end. From the mid-1960s a questioning of America's role in the global economy was undertaken by diverse groups within the United States. The protracted debacle in Vietnam undermined America's international dominance and led to deep divisions within American society which were not healed by the eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces in 1973. These political upheavals spawned the development of various counter-cultural groups in North America which gradually began to influence the mainstream media. Political debate was now positioned around diverse issues rather than fixed upon the

Communism/Capitalism polarity of the Cold War. It is not insignificant that the powerful American Right of the 1990s attributes the 'ills' of contemporary American culture to the growth of counter-cultural identities during this period. These uncertainties and divisions can be seen to be played out in Friedkin's film as it seems to work upon ideology in a rather ambivalent manner.

The film apparently offers a critique of big business. As in Clouzot's film the American-run oil company is shown to be exploitative, employing workers on a casual basis and offering no security or protection. The manager of the plant states in an early scene that he will employ any man from anywhere, 'no questions asked'. The opening scenes of the film show an aerial tracking shot as a helicopter flies over the South American forest. The helicopter arrives at the oil well which is positioned in the middle of this lush greenery, its industrial structures forming a stark contrast with the surrounding landscape. This image suggests an ecological condemnation of the oil company's implantation, a theme which is reinforced by the depiction of the pipeline as it encroaches upon virgin forest, endangering the lives of the indigenous workers involved in its construction.

However Friedkin's film also gives a somewhat stereotypical portrait of the unnamed South American country in which the narrative is situated. The police are shown to be corrupt, walls are covered with pictures of a military leader, and the people are shown to be volatile, reacting extremely violently to news of the explosion. This portrait coincides with much North American imagery of South America; it is perceived as a place 'below' from which emerges the dark and

the uncontrollable. In contrast to *Le Salaire de la peur*, the explosion in *Wages of Fear* is caused by terrorists, thus danger does not come from the American oil company but from the violent political circumstances of the country in which it is situated. However, even this interpretation of the film's treatment of contemporary ideology is far from straightforward. The 'corrupt' police officers are seen to drink Coca-Cola, the great American beverage, and an outdated publicity poster in the bar depicting a blonde woman drinking Coca-Cola is an object of fascination to Scanlon, leading him to memories of his past. It is possible to interpret these images as an exposure of the United States' influence in certain Latin American countries. What is clear about *Wages of Fear* is the impossibility of attributing to it any clear-cut political position. Just as *Le Salaire de la peur* works upon the hegemonic discourses of the Cold War so Friedkin's film, emerging as it does from a time of uncertainty, seems to shift between various political and ideological positions.

In Conclusion

This examination of *Le Salaire de la Peur* and *The Sorcerer/Wages of Fear* demonstrates the impossibility of positing a straightforward, vertical trajectory from the French 'original' to its American 'copy'. Despite a common narrative premise the two films are clearly very different, and in order to understand the process of transformation the films must be situated within their particular aesthetic and historical contexts. Indeed, through its contextualisation of remakes between 1930 and 1980, the preceding chapter has

demonstrated both the endurance of the practice of remaking and its complexity. The act of transposing a film from one culture to another, and the discourses which surround this process, are embedded in the aesthetic, material, and ideological discourses of specific social formations. In order to establish why a film was remade, and what took place in the process of transposition, it is vital to locate both films in the discourses described, indeed to determine how the cinematic works 'remake' these discourses. The films discussed provide clear evidence of the necessity of this type of contextualisation. Both source film and remake defy attempts to categorise them unproblematically as the products of France or Hollywood, as 'art' or 'popular culture'. Moreover, the position of Friedkin's film on the cusp of both the remake boom of the 1980s and the changes in the cinema industry which began to take place at this time, provides illustration of why films are remade at particular times. The absence of remakes during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and the proliferation of the practice during the 1930s and 1940s, can not be attributed to transcendental notions of 'quality' and 'creation' (Hollywood's lack of 'original' material, the inherent superiority of French production) but must rather be seen to emerge from very specific material and aesthetic circumstances.

Let us then turn in the following chapters to just such a study of the remakes of the 1980s and 1990s. As has already been intimated, the 1980s can be seen as a period of change in the United States and in France, both in terms of political ideology and cinematic practices. Through an examination of these changes, the processes behind the increase in remakes

during this period will be revealed, just as the historical and cinematic formations of earlier decades can be seen to penetrate the remakes of those years.

Chapter Three

The Remake in Context: 1980-1996

Introduction

The 1980s and the early 1990s have proved to be a fruitful period for the cinematic remake. Between 1980 and 1990 fifteen French films were remade by Hollywood and between 1990 and 1996 another thirteen have undergone the same process. Thus it can be seen that the last sixteen years have been the most productive period in terms of the remake in the history of cinema. The figures outstrip those of the 1930s (seven remakes) and the 1940s (twelve remakes) and provide a striking contrast to the fallow period of the 1960s and 1970s (three remakes in total). The large number of remakes during this period are frequently attributed to the commercial success of *Three Men and a Baby* (1987), Leonard Nimoy's remake of Coline Serreau's *Trois hommes et un couffin* of 1985[1]. Nimoy's film grossed $168 million at the American box office and $250

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[1] *The Economist*, 27 February 1993, *Empire*, no.49, July 1993, *Studio* (French version), no.73, May 1993. This perhaps also helps to explain the fact that this is one of the few remakes to achieve a certain amount of scholarly attention, albeit largely in terms of gender (see bibliography for details).

million worldwide, thus surpassing in a significant measure receipts for previous remakes (for example *The Toy* (1982) which earned $57 million at the United States box office and *The Woman in Red* (1984) which earned $24 million)[2]. Certainly the success of Nimoy's film was not insignificant, indeed the producers, Touchstone and Silver Screen Partners, went on to produce four further remakes between 1987 and 1994, encouraged by the reception of *Three Men and a Baby*. However it is clearly false to see this film as the beginning of the remake boom of the 1980s. It was preceded by twelve remakes, including Paul Mazursky's *Down and Out in Beverly Hills* (1986), also a commercial success produced by Touchstone and Silver Screen Partners.

The significance of this attribution of the increase in remakes to the box office success of a single film perhaps lies in the tendency to perceive the remake as a purely commercial practice. The critical discourses outlined in Chapter One exemplify the overriding attitude towards the Hollywood remake in the French press during the period under discussion. The remake was described as 'une affaire de gros sous'[3]; American studios, in need of new ideas, were said to use their economic power to purchase the rights to successful French films and thus undermine their career in the American market. Such critique is located in wider discourses about American cultural imperialism, particularly via the mass media, and a concomitant threat to French culture. As described in the preceding chapter, earlier remakes are rarely

[2]Figures from *Video à la une*, no.91, June 1993.

[3]*Studio* (French version), no.73, May 1993, pp.110-113.

mentioned by those who condemn the films of the 1980s, despite their high numbers during the 1930s and 1940s. By ignoring the pre-history of the practice in this manner, French critics seem to suggest that it is a new phenomenon, a fresh onslaught upon French culture on the part of Hollywood. Thus it is inscribed in a general history of 'American cultural invasion' whilst abstracted from its particular past in order to lend it increased significance.

Clearly such condemnation of the remake does little to further an understanding of why the practice increased to such an extent after 1980. The question needs to be posed as to what was the particular conjuncture - the political, economic and cultural circumstances - which enabled both the growing number of remakes in Hollywood and the vociferous censure of the practice in France. Any answer to these questions necessitates an examination of both the Hollywood and the French cinematic industries during the 1980s and early 1990s and a study of French culture, specifically in terms of its relations with, and attitudes to, the United States.

This is not an attempt to reduce the remake and the discourses it engenders to a straightforward reflection of a particular industrial or cultural base. Following Terry Eagleton, a 'cinematic mode of production' can be posited which will vary according to the social formation within which it is situated but which is constituted by structures of production, distribution, exchange, and consumption[4]. Every cinematic text will in some way internalise its social relations of production and these in turn will in some way be

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[4]Eagleton, Terry: *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory*, 2nd. edn. (London: Verso, 1978).

determined by the 'general mode of production', the wider culture and society. However this should be seen as a dialectical process; texts are both determined by, and determine, their modes of production. Texts (films) are a vital means of inserting the consumer into the perceptual and symbolic forms of the dominant ideological formations yet this is not a one-way journey. The filmic text does not 'express' ideology rather it is a certain 'production' of ideology which is then actively re-produced through consumption. Eagleton clarifies this relationship through the analogy of a dramatic text; the text does not contain the theatrical production nor is the production the 'text in action' but each will determine the character of the other, a dialectical relation of labour takes place[5]. Thus texts do not simply reflect the modes of production and the ideology from which they emerge. A transformative relationship is set up between the two which both naturalises ideology and by making it visible, exposes it as artifice. In other words, a film is both worked upon by the conjuncture within which it is produced and at the same time works upon it. Hence in describing the particular socio-cultural circumstances which surround the remake practice and the discourses which emanate from it, this thesis will not be positing a reflection of the former by the latter but instead a dialectical relationship between the two.

France in the 1980s

French society underwent great changes throughout the 1980s.

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[5]Eagleton (1978), pp.65-66.

The certainties which had stabilised French national identity in the years following the Second World War no longer prevailed. The process of modernisation, the Gaullist vision of French grandeur and independence and the correlative left-wing belief in the revolutionary model as an alternative, had all ceased to be effective belief systems by the end of the 1970s[6]. The polarities of the Cold War had also come to an end; neither the United States nor the Soviet Union were able to continue to provide total models for identification and/or rejection. This decline in overarching East/West, capitalist/communist models was carried through to a similar decline in other belief systems, witness the shrinking of the French Communist Party (PCF) and the dwindling numbers of church-goers in France:

> [The decline of the Catholic Church] as a total universe is indicative of longer-term trends in French society towards the weakening of traditionally powerful institutions, and the control they exercise over members of society.[7]

Thus long established ideological certainties had faltered by the 1980s. This is not to suggest that ideology itself had disappeared but that the straightforward polarities and discrete systems of belief of the Cold War period were no longer able to function.

These changes are exemplified by the early years of the

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[6]Pinto, Diana: 'The Atlantic Influence and the Mellowing of French Identity', in Howorth, J. & Ross, G.(eds.): *Contemporary France: A Review of Interdisciplinary Studies*, vol.2 (London: Pinter, 1988), pp.116-133.

[7]Mendras, Henri with Cole, Alistair: *Social Change in Modern France: Towards a Cultural Anthropology of the Fifth Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.71. Originally published as *La Seconde Révolution française* (Paris: Gallimard, 1988).

Socialist administration. Mitterrand, and subsequently the Socialist Party, came to power in 1981 on a platform of protectionism, advocating a break with capitalism, re-industrialisation, nationalisation, and the re-appropriation of the domestic market. Indeed the avowed aim of the Socialists at this juncture was to demonstrate that modernism was not synonymous with the free market and that it could in fact be achieved through protectionism[8]. However, international constraints proved this programme to be unworkable and policy changes announced in 1982, 1983 and 1984 resulted in a return to deflationary economic policy and a commitment to the market economy. Belief in the communal ownership of the economy was replaced by advocation of the decentralisation of power and individual responsibility. Christian Stoffaës suggests that these changes were both a result of France's position in the international market and the experience of 'Reaganomics' in the United States. During the 1980s, in an attempt to reverse the economic decline begun in the 1970s, the Reagan administration renounced traditional Keynesianism[9] and welfare in favour of free market capitalism:

> This was incidentally far more than a revolution in economic thinking: it was a veritable ideological and cultural revolution. The Reagan experience has altered the debate in France, because Reaganism now has wide support, even on the Left. In particular, there is the wave of 'neo-liberalism' which the Left now espouses, with the rehabilitation of the market, the profit-motive, enterprise, deregulation...in

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[8]Stoffaës, Christian: 'The Limits of the American Model' in Lacorne, D., Rupnik, J., & Toinet, M.F.(eds.): *The Rise and Fall of Anti-Americanism: A Century of French Perception* (London: Macmillan, 1990), trans. Turner, Gerald, pp.160-165.

[9]Although it should be noted that Reagan's economic policy could be seen as a form of Keynesianism as huge amounts of public money were pumped into defence thus creating employment through government spending.

short, all the ideas that currently dominate the agenda.[10]

It should be pointed out that left-wing attitudes towards Reaganism were not entirely approving nor undifferentiated: many on the Left admired the technological innovations of the Reagan administration whilst rejecting its economic and social agenda. Nevertheless, these policy shifts clearly demonstrate the break-down in a long-standing Socialist identity. As the Soviet model ceased to provide a stable referent for the French Left, so the Socialist Party moved towards new policies, perceived as necessary for the growth of a modern nation. The establishment of a non-revolutionary Socialism, coupled with the decline of communism, undermined traditional right-wing/left-wing identities, moving French society towards a paradoxical homogenisation (the break-down in former political divisions) through diversity (plural political identities expressed through 'issues' such as the ecological movement and feminism)[11].

The end of revolution: consensus at last?

French society thus began to achieve a new consensus. The expansion of the educational system since the end of the nineteenth century and the more recent growth of the mass media meant that a sense of national unification could be clearly established. The social classes which had traditionally divided France (the bourgeoisie, the peasantry,

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[10]Stoffaës (1990), p.164.

[11]Mendras & Cole (1991), p.203. Despite the voicing of these 'issues' at this juncture, it should be stressed that an identity politics, akin to the Anglo-Saxon model, was not developed in France.

the industrial working class, and the middle class) had, by 1980, given way to smaller social groups dominated by a diverse middle class[12]. As earned income and education became the chief markers of class, so social mobility became more fluid. Traditional class and political identities gave way to a plurality of identities, frequently patterned by consumerism. Individualism, as opposed to collective identities, became a dominant ethos. Pascal Ory perceives this individualism in reactions to the recession of the 1980s:

> [...] la différence avec la crise de 1929 a tenu dans le choix idéologique dominant: dans les années 30, fascisme ou communisme, New Deal ou Front Populaire, toutes les solutions en vogue ont du moins en commun un appel aux valeurs du collectif et du public, alors que cette fois la mode va en sens opposé.[13]

Mendras sees these new more mobile social identities as being typified by the 1980s' vogue for the barbecue. The barbecue replaced the bourgeois dinner party as a dominant class marker. Whereas the bourgeois dinner created a firm hierarchy in which the divisions between those present were ritualised and clearly defined, the barbecue discarded such rigid hierarchies in favour of a more mobile process whereby participants were able to shift positions. The barbecue represented controlled disorder, presided over by the host; distinctions between producers and consumers were broken down as each guest participated in the preparation and the eating of the meal (guests would frequently bring, and even cook, a contribution to the meal). Mendras concludes:

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[12]Mendras & Cole (1991), p.12.

[13]Ory, Pascal: *L'Aventure culturelle française 1945-1989* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), p.224.

> The barbecue is in fact a model for the functioning
> of the new French society: behaviour-patterns and
> opinions emerge from within the middle classes and
> are then diffused more widely throughout society.
> This means that French society is far more difficult
> to analyse than when traditional simplistic
> pyramidical or Marxist classifications of the class
> system prevailed.[14]

It should be noted that these changes in French society - a dominant but diverse middle class, plural identities figured through consumerism and the growth of individualism - moved France closer to North American society and thus had profound implications for French attitudes towards the United States.

Linked towards this disintegration of traditional class identities[15] and to the breakdown in Left/Right political cleavages was the rejection or renegotiation of the revolutionary model in France during the 1980s. The revolutionary tradition in France has long permeated the national sense of democracy; if the government is unjust or ineffective then the citizens have the right to take to the streets and to overturn it. Such a tradition was clearly manifested in the events of May 1968. However, this tradition began to shift and fragment during the 1980s. The Socialist Party itself renounced the revolutionary model, moving towards negotiation and consensus. The very politics which had emanated from the events of May 1968 (ecology, women's rights) were absorbed by the existing political institutions (for example the creation of a Ministry of Women's Rights in 1981, subsequently disbanded). French citizens continue to take to

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[14]Mendras & Cole (1991), p.42.

[15]It must be stressed that despite the transformation of *traditional* class identities, class itself did not disappear, remaining a significant social marker.

the streets but such action now tends to be about concessions within the existing situation rather than the overthrow of the prevailing system of government[16]. What appears to be the end of the revolutionary tradition and a new age of consensus was expressed in the celebrations of the bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1989. State discourses emphasised the events of 1789 and the Declaration of the Rights of Man, disavowed subsequent turmoil and 'terror' and rewrote the Revolution as 'finished' and 'complete' with these founding events. Predicting such discourses Diana Pinto states:

> In an age of human rights which has come to see the Terror as the conceptual precursor of the revolutionary totalitarianisms of the twentieth century, and Napoleon's egalitarian but authoritarian synthesis as the founding stone of modern France's overcentralized State and atrophied society, the Revolution's turn after 1792 is perceived more as a degradation than a climax.[17]

Plurality and difference: identity in crisis?

Thus French society moved towards a new pluralism during the 1980s. This was hastened by the political and social transformations described above and by the growing presence of a new immigrant population. In response to these changes the Socialist Government pledged commitment to a pluralism which stood in direct opposition to France's Jacobin heritage. Whereas France's 'others' had previously been assimilated through French culture and education, creating the enduring model of the individual citizen located within the overarching

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[16]Mendras & Cole (1991), p.113. Consider the strikes of December 1995 over the government's proposed changes to the social security system.

[17]Pinto (1988), p.122.

state, now there was an acceptance of difference, of non-assimilation. The rewriting of the national past involved a recognition of France's history as a land of both external and internal immigration and new identities were articulated around groups and associations[18]. Clearly these changes were not unproblematic nor indeed as far-reaching as may at first have been expected. The *foulard* affair[19] demonstrates the enduring dispute over pluralism/national identity in France, particularly in the domains of education and laicity, founding ideologies of the French state. Somewhat paradoxically, the debate over the proposed changes to the nationality code throughout 1987 underscores both the endurance of the Jacobin tradition in France (through hostility to change) and the emergence of this new pluralist ideology (through advocation of the *jus soli* law). The committee appointed by the then Prime Minister, Jacques Chirac, to draw up recommendations for these changes handed down its conclusions in 1988:

> The amendments they suggested were actually more favourable to the children of immigrants than the older code of 1973, which the Right had hoped to change in a more restrictive sense. That some human rights organizations should prepare a major protest against the committee's recommendations, because it failed to recommend a total *jus soli* (like America), preferring a simplified declaration of adherence to French nationality, is a sign of just how far down the pluralist road the debate over citizenship has gone.[20]

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[18]A key measure in this sea-change was the legal change which enabled foreigners to form their own associations. In the past, associations could only be formed under the aegis of French citizens.

[19]The debate over the right of Muslim girls to wear headscarves or veils (signs of their religious faith) in French state (and hence secular) schools.

[20]Pinto (1988), p.116.

It would seem that a centralised French national identity is still in place but that a space has been created within it for multiple identities and plural cultures.

This calling into question and diffusing of the national tradition left French social and political commentators with a severe identity crisis. Questions as to what constituted national identity became recurrent motifs in the press and amongst politicians and intellectuals during the 1980s[21]. As post-war certainties gave way to plurality and difference so France's enduring sense of a universal and universalising national identity came under fire. Difference within the nation appeared to threaten France's difference from other nations, particularly the United States:

> This implicit 'pluralist' reference or specter represents a formidable threat to the classical French identity anchored around the nation-state, and the Republic whose legitimacy lies in the French Revolution, and the universalism of French culture and civilization. It is a direct emanation from the 'other' child of the Enlightenment, the 'other' democratic experience, that of the United States, with its conflictual *and* consensual political system, and with its multiple ethnic and cultural identities.[22]

Thus it seems clear that the changes which have taken place in France during the last fifteen years have had profound implications, both for national identity and for international relations. As French society has become less static so alternative models have become more or less appealing. Particularly relevant to the remake practice and the discourses in which it is embedded are French relations

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[21]Witness for example the rise of Le Pen's *Front National*, whose ideology is based upon an affirmation of a 'pure' French identity.

[22]Pinto (1988), p.119.

with, and attitudes to, the United States.

France and the United States: Changing Perspectives

The end of Cold War polarities signalled a transformation of attitudes towards the United States. North America could no longer be perceived as either the great alternative to the Soviet threat nor as the indicator of a need for the (now discredited) revolutionary model. Just as the Soviet Union had been discredited by revelations about the Gulag and other Stalinist atrocities, so the United States were relativised in French opinion by the debacle of the Vietnam conflict. Moreover, when on 16 September 1985, the American Commerce Department announced that the United States was now a debtor nation, it became apparent that it had ceased to be such a formidable economic and political threat. The weakening of the American threat was coupled with the increasing economic power of Japan hence a relocation of French fears: witness Edith Cresson's notorious description of the Japanese as *'fourmis'*. Thus the widespread French anti-Americanism of the post-war years[23] declined and was replaced by a growing admiration for, and appreciation of, the American model. Indeed Pascal Ory suggests that the 1980s were the most 'americanophile' period in French history[24]. This 'americanophilia' was apparent in the admiration for Reaganism described above which emanated, in varying guises, from both the Right and the Left of the political spectrum. The Left's esteem for the American political administration was centred in entrepreneurship and

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[23]Described in Chapter Two.

[24]Ory (1989), p.209.

technology, an esteem made visible by Mitterrand's visit to Silicon Valley in 1984. Comments made by Mitterrand at the time of this visit underline this admiration whilst censuring Reagan's social and economic policies. Asked whether or not the American example was applicable to France, the President replied:

> Yes, in the sense that the American people are a tremendous reservoir of energy and initiative. For instance, the way they have managed to link enterprise and the university is a masterpiece of intelligence and practical thinking. No, in the sense that America's recovery has resulted in all sorts of casualties and is based on a number of illusions...[25]

Clearly pro-Reaganism cannot be said to represent pro-Americanism as such: rather it is a certain body of attitudes towards an individual set of political ideologies. Moreover, it is vital to restress the necessity of recognising the fact that the 'French' are not an homogenous bloc but a heterogeneous nation made up of many different identities and attitudes. Thus claims as to 'French' pro- or anti-Americanism should always be qualified. Nevertheless, this widespread approval of different aspects of Reagan's administration does indicate a willingness to embrace an American political model; rather than fear the United States as a threat, many believed that France could achieve political stability and economic prosperity through emulation.

As the political and economic threat posed by the United States appeared to decline in the early 1980s, so French narratives about America discarded the straightforward

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[25]'Mitterrand parle', an interview with Jean Boissonnat, *L'Expansion*, no,16, 16 November 1984. Cited in Lacorne et.al. (1990), p.6.

oppositions of the post-war years. Criticism and condemnation of the United States was still voiced; for example, Alain de Benoist declared in 1981:

> The fact is that there exist two distinct forms of totalitarianism, very different in their effects, but equally fearsome. The Eastern variety imprisons, persecutes and mortifies the body, but at least does not destroy hope. Its Western counterpart ends up creating happy robots. It is an air-conditioned hell. It kills the soul.[26]

Unproblematised praise for the United States was also expressed, particularly in the guise of somewhat hagiographic accounts of the Reagan administration[27]. Nevertheless, alongside such discourses could be found far more complex investigations of the 'American experience' and its impact upon France. For example, in *Amérique* (1986), Jean Baudrillard describes America in terms of the hyperreal; its authenticity lies in simulacra, in Disneyland, in freeways, in film and television. That which appears unacceptable in Europe (the 'vulgarity' and the 'banality' of these simulacra) becomes not only acceptable in the United States, but also fascinating[28]:

> Oui, la Californie (et l'Amérique avec elle) est le miroir de *notre* décadence, mais *elle* n'est pas décadente du tout, elle est d'une vitalité hyperréelle, elle a toute l'enérgie du simulacre. "C'est le lieu mondial de l'inauthentique" - bien sûr: c'est ça qui fait son originalité et sa puissance.[29]

In Baudrillard's terms America represents both the primitive

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[26]De Benoist, Alain: *Le Monde*, 20 May 1981, cited in Rupnik et. al. (1990), p.21.

[27]e.g. Sorman, Guy: *La Révolution conservatrice américaine* (Paris: Fayard, 1983).

[28]Baudrillard, Jean: *L'Amérique* (Paris:Grasset, 1986), p.99. Italics author's own.

[29]Baudrillard (1986), p.101.

and the future, thus its relationship with Europe can neither be reduced to one of inferiority nor by the same token, one of superiority. Moreover, Baudrillard complicates fears of American hegemony, claiming that France and Europe can never become America because they are not, and never will be, modern:

> Plutôt qu'un rapprochement, la confrontation entre l'Amérique et l'Europe fait apparaître une distorsion, une coupure infranchissable. Ce n'est pas seulement un décalage, c'est un abîme de modernité qui nous sépare. On naît moderne, on ne le devient pas. Et nous ne le sommes jamais devenus.[30]

Baudrillard undermines fears and condemnation of the American threat to French identity by affirming what he sees to be an intrinsic difference between the two. However, such renegotiation of the grand narratives about the United States should be situated within a conjuncture which saw the erosion of this difference. The changes in French society described above, moved France far closer to its American 'other'. France and the United States had long been perceived as incommensurable. This derived from differing concepts of revolution, both of which were posited as universal models; whereas the French Revolution destroyed consensus and made revolution itself the foundation of French democracy, the American Revolution established consensus and marginalised revolutionary politics. However, the reconception of the revolutionary tradition in France during the 1980s coupled with the creation of a more plural society meant that American democracy ceased to be an incommensurable other and instead became a mirror. Rather than a competing universalism, the

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[30]Baudrillard (1986), p.73.

American Revolution became the 'sister' of the French experience[31]. Thus, in the 1980s, critiques of American political and economic threat gave way to a reassessment of the American model and its use as a mirror to evaluate French society.

French Cultural Policy After 1980

These changes in French society and the concomitant renegotiation and relativisation of a specifically French democratic tradition, led to a widespread questioning of French identity. As the universality of French civilisation appeared to falter so the Socialist government embarked upon a reaffirmation of French culture. François Mitterrand described Socialism itself as a 'cultural project'[32] and cultural policy became a central tenet of his administration. Indeed culture became an integral part of a new concept of government in France, not merely Socialist government, a fact exemplified by the continuing importance of cultural policy during the years of *cohabitation* and subsequently, right-wing presidency[33].

The Socialist government stressed their commitment to cultural policy through a significant increase in the budget accorded to the Ministry of Culture. This sum stood at 0.47 percent of the overall state budget in 1980, it increased to

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[31]Pinto (1988), p.128.

[32]eg. Mitterrand, François: *Politique 2* (Paris: Fayard, 1981), p.286.

[33]The Right reduced state spending on culture, encouraging increased private investment, yet affirmed the centrality of culture to their agenda.

0.76 percent in 1982, 0.83 percent in 1989, 0.86 percent in 1990 and by 1991 it had reached the symbolic figure of one percent. Pascal Ory posits three internal processes which can transform cultural formations:

> [...]la mise en avant de catégories de créateurs jusque-là infériorisées; la mise en valeur, au sein du panthéon artistique en question, de créateurs et de créations empruntant clairement leur inspiration, en tout ou partie, aux sources populaires; enfin la franche substitution à la forme légitimée d'un art de sa forme illégitimée, pour lui faire remplir les mêmes fonctions.[34]

These transformations were intrinsic to the Socialists' cultural project. In a statement to parliament on 25 October 1984, Jack Lang, the Minister of Culture, outlined his wish to revivify French culture through support for new and popular art forms, 'L'Etat doit plus que jamais encourager les expériences, les innovations, les recherches [...], favoriser les projets novateurs plus encore que les institutions établies'[35]. Coupled with this support for non-established and popular art forms was an aim to popularise previously elite cultural practices (for example, the opera) and to increase individual participation in cultural activities. The government acknowledged that cultural preferences were socially determined and that financial aid alone would not facilitate cultural mobility. Instead, the necessity of transforming conditions of access to different activities was underlined, a transformation which would take place through a multiplication and a relocation of the sites of culture.

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[34]Ory (1989), p.66.

[35]Cited in Ronflé-Nadaud, Marianne: '10 ans de politique culturelle Mitterrandienne', *Modern And Contemporary France*, no.47, October, 1991, pp.30-35 (p.31).

Intrinsic to this opening up of the cultural domain was a perceived need to rectify geographic inequalities in cultural access. In the *'Plan intérimaire'* of November 1981, the government announced that such inequalities would be rectified through a process of cultural decentralisation:

> L'action culturelle dans la vie régionale et locale doit permettre aux communautés et aux groupes sociaux de retrouver leurs racines, de se réapproprier leur histoire et leur patrimoine pour leur rendre, avec leur identité, la maîtrise d'un avenir autonome.[36]

These changes in cultural policy clearly echo the growing pluralism of French identity experienced during the 1980s. Indeed a lasting legacy of Lang's years as *ministre de la Culture* has been the increased diversity and plurality of French culture; witness the support for 'non-establishment' cultural forms such as rock music, culinary arts, and the circus, and the cultural *animation* of the *fête du cinéma*. However, it should be stressed that Socialist policy for the arts did not constitute a cultural revolution. A certain continuity can be discerned in enduring state intervention, a centralism located in Paris[37], and an emphasis on prestige projects (Mitterrand's *'grands chantiers'*)[38]. Jill Forbes locates the incomplete nature of the Socialist cultural

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[36]Cited in *Programme européen d'évaluation: La Politique culturelle de la France* (Conseil de l'Europe/La Documentation française: 1988), p.43.

[37]Despite movements towards cultural decentralisation, Paris remains the principal recipient of the cultural budget, obtaining 44.3% of overall spending in 1981 and 58.6% in 1986. Figures cited in Ronflé-Nadaud (1991), p.31.

[38]This rather paradoxical combination of pluralism and statism can be seen as a microcosm of the discourses of nationalism and globalism so central to French cultural identity during the period under discussion. See Chapter Four for an examination of these discourses.

transformation in the three different strands of their project[39]. She associates the first strand with Mitterrand's own cultural tastes and *belle-lettriste* tendencies; for him culture should endow prestige and ensure reputation but should not be mobilised in the service of a specific political cause. The second strand is embodied in Jack Lang; the legacy of 1968 meant a rejection of old-style populism, an embracing of new cultural forms, and a belief both in the power of culture to advance social change and the relative autonomy of the cultural domain. Finally, a third strand, which Forbes terms *'auto-gestionnaire'*, emphasised the role of culture in an individual's ability to take control of his/her life[40]. Each of these three strands is in some way incompatible with the other and this does to a certain extent explain both the innovation and the continuity of the Socialist cultural project.

One aspect of cultural policy crucial to the remake debate is the international role envisioned for French culture. As previously stated, the shifts in French society during the 1980s led to a questioning of identity and of the universal role of French civilisation. Perhaps in response to these uncertainties, early Socialist cultural policy placed a firm emphasis on national culture, its international role and

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[39]Forbes, Jill:'Cultural Policy: The Soul of Man Under Socialism' in Mazey, S. & Newman, M. (eds.): *Mitterrand's France* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp.131-165.

[40]Forbes (1987), p.136. Forbes' categories can be seen to correspond roughly to Ory's account of cultural policy as monarchic, liberal, and democratic (Ory (1989), p.52). Similarly an article in *Télérama*, published shortly after Mitterrand's death, describes Mitterrand as a *démiurge* and Lang as a *trublion* (Pascaud, Fabienne:'Aux arts, citoyens!', *Télérama*, no.2401, 17 January 1996).

its protection from external (read Anglo-Saxon) threat, 'La troisième priorité [de la politique culturelle] est de *renforcer la place culturelle de la France dans le monde*, face à une anglophonie jugée envahissante'[41]. These priorities were made apparent by Jack Lang's infamous speech in Mexico in July 1982 when he decried 'une certaine invasion, une certaine submersion d'images fabriquées à l'extérieur..' calling for '...une véritable résistance culturelle. A une véritable croisade contre - appelons les choses par leur nom - cet impérialisme financier et culturel...'[42]. Central to this cultural crusade were the audiovisual media, particularly television and cinema. France aimed to lead Europe in a cultural order which would provide a counterbalance to the economic might of the dominant culture industries. These aims are exemplified in Lang's proposal in June of the same year for an *espace audiovisuel européen*:

> [...] pour que, dans la perspective des satellites de communication, une coopération s'établisse entre les industries du film et de l'audiovisuel de tous les pays d'Europe, afin d'endiguer de la manière la plus active l'envahissement nord-américain par une coopération internationale visant à affirmer les identités de chacun des pays et une *identité européenne*.[43]

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[41]*La politique culturelle de la France* (1988), p.43. Italics author's own.

[42]*Conférence mondiale des ministres de la culture*, organised by UNESCO, Mexico, July, 1982. His invocation of cultural imperialism did not meet with great popular support in France; indeed it has always been a paradox of French condemnations of American culture that they tend to contradict the tastes of the wider public. As Pascal Ory points out, 'La véritable culture 'établie' n'est jamais celle des académiciens, mais celle du Top 50: intellectuellement dominée, économiquement dominante' (Ory (1989), p.105).

[43]*La politique culturelle de la France* (1988), p.45. Italics author's own.

Thus Socialist cultural policy involved both a revivification of national culture and an affirmation of its international role, particularly through the audiovisual media. As Pascal Ory states, the Franco-centrism of the post-war years (notably apparent in De Gaulle's invocations of French grandeur) had, by the 1980s, given way to a cultural-centrism[44]. In other words, as political certainties faltered, culture became an increasingly important means of shoring up France's identity and its role in the world. Ory goes on to claim that 'plus qu'à une politisation du culturel on a donc eu affaire à une culturalisation de la politique'[45]; cultural policy became central to national and international political debate. *L'aventure culturelle française* described by Ory sees two major changes over the last fifty years; the significantly increased importance of culture and an equivalent decline in France's international cultural role[46]. Thus, somewhat paradoxically, culture was seen as a vital tool for the affirmation of French identity whilst at the same time its enduring universality was undermined.

Clearly the increased importance of culture in political discourse during the 1980s and the re-affirmation of the international role of French cultural production go some way to explain the negative critical reception of the remake process in France. The decline in anxieties over North America's political and economic threat may seem to suggest that a more positive reaction should have been dominant during

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[44]Ory (1989), p.9.

[45]Ory (1989), p.62.

[46]Ory (1989), p.232.

this period. However, Socialist (and subsequently right-wing) cultural policy underlines an insistence upon the need both to protect and disseminate a French national culture; a new plurality within France must still be projected externally as intrinsically 'French'. Each of these acts can be seen to be curtailed by the Hollywood remake and so the discourses which surround and penetrate the practice both emanate from and reinforce this particular political and discursive conjuncture.

Persistent Anti-Americanism: Globalisation and the GATT

If anti-American sentiment in the domain of politics and economics had decreased by the 1980s, it continued to be voiced in the realm of culture. Indeed, perhaps somewhat paradoxically, accusations of American 'cultural imperialism' began to increase during this decade just as the United States' economic and political prestige declined[47], witness Lang's tirade in Mexico. A significant mobilisation of these discourses took place around the opening of the 'Euro-Disney' theme park in the spring of 1992. Long before its opening the park caused great controversy; the government insisted that it should be run by a separate holding company registered in Europe (meaning that the Disney company only held forty-nine percent of shares) and trades unions protested that Disney's strict employer dress codes and an internal tribunal system

[47]Bertrand, C.J & Bordat, F.(eds.): *Les Médias américains en France: influence et pénétration* (Paris: Belin, 1989).

were an attack on French individual and civil rights[48]. Above

all, Euro-Disney was condemned as a cultural threat. The

cultural conservative Alain Finkielkraut perceived American

culture as disrupting national cultural hierarchies,

describing Euro-Disney as 'a terrifying giant step towards

world homogenization'. The Socialist *député* Max Gallo feared

that Disney would 'bombard France with uprooted creations that

are to culture what fast food is to gastronomy' (thus opposing

a main-stay of French cultural heritage to the insidious

American product). Perhaps most memorably, Ariane Mnouchkine

termed the park 'a cultural Chernobyl' thus drawing upon

similar alignments of the negative consequences of Soviet

political, and American cultural, totalitarianism[49]. Euro-

Disney was thus experienced by many French commentators as

very real, and very present, evidence of the American cultural

threat:

> Behind these reactions and giving them special force
> is the sense that this is a material invasion, a
> violation of France, of Europe, on its own native
> grounds. It's one thing to have American mass
> culture safely in America - you go there if you want
> to, it's *there*, safely outside one's own native
> country. It's another thing to have it here,
> capturing the mentalities of millions, seducing them
> through the endless tuneful repetition of "When You
> Wish Upon a Star".[50]

These discourses clearly demonstrate continuing fears of

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[48]Kuisel, Richard F.: *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p.227.

[49]All quotes cited in Kuisel (1993), p.228.

[50]Orvell, Miles: 'Understanding Disneyland: American Mass Culture and the European Gaze' in Bosscher, D.F.J, Kroes, R. & Rydell, R.W.(eds.): *Cultural Transmissions and Receptions: American Mass Culture in Europe* (Amsterdam: V.U. University Press, 1993), pp.240-253. Italics author's own.

American cultural invasion. However, their significance is perhaps slightly more far-reaching. The park was called Euro-Disney, not French-Disney[51]. For various economic and geographical reasons it was built outside Paris although it could equally well have been located outside any other major Western European city. Moreover, it opened in 1992, the year of the French referendum on the Maastricht treaty, and increased European integration. Thus Euro-Disney can be seen to represent not only America's presence within France but also France's presence within the European Union, so hostile reactions to the theme park are perhaps not only indicative of concerns about an American cultural threat but also France's role in the international arena. In other words, French critiques of American hegemony can be seen to signify fears of French marginalisation within a global culture. Critics continue to focus on the perceived threat of American culture as American multinationals (such as the Disney company) appear to dominate this new global space[52], yet discussions of Americanisation should perhaps be reconstrued as a debate about a more general process of transnational transformation or globalisation.

In a discussion of the reception of American mass culture

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[51]This name has since been changed to Disneyland Paris, perhaps in an attempt to boost the low attendance rates, often attributed to French resistance to an American theme-park located in France, by stressing the specifically *French* (or Parisian) identity of this Disney venture.

[52]This is particularly true in the case of Hollywood; by 1994 Hollywood's share of the European cinema market stood at seventy-five percent whereas the non-American share of the United States box-office is only two percent. Figures cited in Morley, D. & Robins, K.: *Spaces of Identity: Global Media, Electronic Landscapes and Cultural Boundaries* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.18.

in Europe between 1920 and 1960, Victoria de Grazia states
that the widespread infiltration of these non-indigenous
images challenged European notions of sovereignty[53].
Similarly, economic and cultural globalisation undermine
traditional identities and systems of belief:

> We seem to succumb, in other words, to a new global
> political economy of culture in which we are
> relegated to the position of more or less alienated
> consumers of symbolic goods, over the production of
> which, we feel, we have little control.[54]

Attempts to define nations unproblematically through physical
boundaries are undermined[55]; the globalisation of industry,
transnational organisations and agreements (for example the EU
and the GATT), and developments in mass media, all further the
disintegration of clearly defined national frontiers. The
audiovisual media have long been a vital means of constructing
national identities and indeed they have been central to the
European venture. In his address to the founding conference of
the Eureka audiovisual project, François Mitterrand claimed
that culture formed 'the very cement of Europe'[56]. However,
this means of reinforcing and creating collective identities
is increasingly threatened by new audiovisual technology: home
video, satellite and cable television, and information super-

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[53]De Grazia, Victoria: 'Mass Culture and Sovereignty: The
American Challenge to European Cinemas, 1929-1960', *The
Journal of Modern History*, vol.61, no.1, March 1989, pp.53-87.

[54]Palmié, Stephan: 'Conceptualising Cultural Flow: Perspectives
on Globalisation', in Bosscher et. al. (1993), pp.271-301
(p.272).

[55]The 'nation' is clearly a highly complex concept. See Chapter
Four for an analysis of its significance and its mobilisation
in France.

[56]Cited in Schroder, K.C. & Skovmand, M. (eds.): *Media
Cultures: Reappraising Transnational Media* (London: Routledge,
1992), p.6.

highways fragment the viewing experience and extend it beyond the national frontiers. These new forms of cultural transmission thus appear to threaten established audiences/communities whilst at the same time both creating new transnational collectivities and encouraging individualism. The viewer, long held to be a citizen, becomes a consumer:

> While the exercise of citizenship presupposes collective action in pursuit of equality and fraternity as well as of individual liberty, the ideology of consumerism encourages people to seek private solutions to public problems by purchasing a commodity.[57]

By breaking down communal identities, a globalised culture also threatens to smother national specificities, leading to standardisation and uniformity. Thus an opposition to globalisation becomes a defence of authenticity and difference, clearly a significant concern for an understanding of the discourses surrounding the remake where these terms play a key role[58]. Within a global culture, national autonomy becomes a myth; national cultural identities can no longer be abstracted from the transnational context:

> [...] in the increasingly integrated world-system there is no such thing possible as an independent cultural identity: every identity must define and position itself in relation to the cultural frames affirmed by the world-system. Ignoring this, which is the case when national identity is treated as a sacrosanct given, not only can lead to undesirable unintended consequences, but is itself an act of symbolic power, both by defining an abstracted, unified identity for diverse social and cultural groups within a nation, and by fixing, in a rigid fashion, relationships between distinct national

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[57]Murdock, Graham: 'Citizens, Consumers and Public Culture', in Schroder & Skovmand (1992), pp.17-41 (p.19).

[58]See Chapter One.

'imagined communities'[59]

French reactions to the GATT

The reactions to the negotiations of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1993 exemplify the articulation of these concerns in France. GATT was part of the international framework set up at the end of the Second World War in order to prevent a return to the totalitarianism and the economic disorder of the 1930s. Unlike the United Nations which have, to an extent, been influenced by the developing countries, the eight GATT rounds subsequent to 1948 were almost entirely dominated by the major first-world powers. Various factors led to the Uruguay Round of September 1986; the collapse of a world economic system based on Keynesian demand management and the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate system, the growth of deregulation in Western economies, and the decline of captive markets for the multinationals of the 1950s and 1960s as former colonies now provided competition.

The 107 nation negotiations in Punta del Este (evidence of the West's commitment to its own rhetoric about the emergent 'global village') were crucial as the world economy hovered between a unified global system and several antagonistic divisions between the Western Hemisphere, Europe, and East Asia[60]. It was hoped that the round would be completed within four years, however these aims were seriously

[59]Ang, Ien: *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.145.

[60]Costigliola, Frank: *France and the United States. The Cold Alliance since World War Two* (New York: Twayne, 1992), p.238.

undermined by the intransigency of the Americans and the EU over farm subsidies. The negotiations continued without a deal being secured until the Tokyo summit of 1993 and the final talks in the autumn of that year. Here a conclusion was reached through 'an agreement to disagree'[61] on financial services, civil aircraft, maritime, and, most significantly for the present argument, the audiovisual industry.

Thus GATT was principally a means of extending a globalised economy based upon deregulation and free-trade. However, attempts to deregulate the audiovisual market threw up deep divisions between European (specifically French) and North American conceptions of commerce and culture. American executives proposed that any trade agreement they entered into must provide equal opportunities for American intellectual services (including the audiovisual industry). They sought curbs on public funding for audiovisual production through EU subsidies and objected to levies imposed on foreign films shown in France, claiming that this disadvantaged American production as almost sixty percent of French box-office taxes (the *compte de soutien*) came from Hollywood films. They also insisted that American artists should share the proceeds from European levies on recording tapes although they would commit to invest the funds raised in Europe's film and television industries. Moreover, they argued that European quota systems inhibited equal access to markets and thus contravened the ethos of GATT. They proposed that the EU continue to reserve fifty-one percent of local television programming for European productions (legislation established in the European Broadcast

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[61]Sir Leon Brittan, the EU's trade commissioner, *The Guardian*, 15 December 1993, p.12.

Directive of 1991) but that this figure should now apply to the twenty-four hour day: France, for example, barred non-European programmes from all prime-time television. The US was willing for the EU to reserve fifty to seventy percent of all satellite and cable channels but was opposed to European demands that each should carry fifty-one percent European content. It was claimed that this would effectively bar existing channels such as the Disney Channel and create programming difficulties for Sky One and Sky Movies Plus. Negotiators demanded that pay-per-view and video-on-demand channels should be entirely unrestricted as they involved individual choice of one film over another on the part of the viewer and thus should be free of any form of regulation[62].

The European reaction to these demands was not positive. The French government called for *'l'exception culturelle'*, the exclusion of the audiovisual industries from the GATT agreement. They claimed that the loss of a form of protection for indigenous cinema and television industries would signal the end of European production and mean total dominance of the European markets by the United States. The audiovisual industry represents North America's second biggest export to the European Union; indeed in 1992 Europe imported $3.7 billion worth of American films, video and television programmes whilst exporting back audiovisual products worth only $300 million[63]. European Union figures showed that in 1991 American production captured eighty-one percent of

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[62]Dodwell, David:'US Opts to Bide Time on Audiovisual Battle', *The Financial Times*, 15 December 1993, p.6.

[63]'Taking Cultural Exception: Europe's Entertainment Gap', *The Economist*, 25 September 1993.

Community cinema screenings and fifty-four percent of all drama and comedies broadcast on television[64]. The negotiations thus became a clash of ideologies, between a specifically French tradition of State cultural policy and aid for the audiovisual industries and an American rejection of any form of public regulation of culture and a total commitment to free-trade.

As previously stated, the European position was largely due to French governmental pressure. Indeed, it is significant that in many European states, particularly Britain, the debate was perceived as being between the United States and France alone. French commentators in turn cited the British cinema industry, where lack of government protection meant that Hollywood products represented over eighty percent of all screenings, as clear proof of the need for some form of protectionism. The outcome of the negotiations in the form of a decision to exclude the audiovisual industries from GATT, was hailed as a great victory by the French government. However, the incommensurable nature of French and American positions on the culture industry was emphasised by American reactions to this decision. Jack Valenti, head of the Motion Picture Association of America claimed:

> The real losers are the people of Europe. They will
> have much less choice [...] If you equate Europe's
> game shows and talk shows with Molière and Racine,
> then that's about culture. But the culture issue is
> a transparent cloak, and I want to disrobe Europe on
> this.[65]

Responding to the EU's rejection of American proposals, the US

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[64]'Cola v Zola: Europe's Creative Projectionists', *The Economist*, 16 October 1993.

[65]*The Financial Times*, 15 December 1993, p.6.

trade representative, Mickey Kantor, stated:

> Because of the inadequacy of the EC's proposals, and
> their unwillingness to accept ours, we decided that
> we would withdraw our offer on audiovisual services
> [...] We have decided not to accept a meaningless
> fig leaf. Instead, we think we can best advance the
> interests of our artists, performers and producers -
> and the free flow of information around the world -
> by reserving all our legal rights to respond to
> policies that discriminate in these areas.[66]

The Wall Street Journal decried cultural exception, protesting

that state protection led to cinematic production which did

not correspond to public tastes, and claiming that it was a

form of censorship equivalent to that practised during the

Vichy regime[67].

These reactions clearly demonstrate the rift which

separates French and American conceptions of the audiovisual

industries. For the United States negotiators, audiovisual

production was no more than an industry and should be treated

in the same way as any other form of material production. It

was distinct from a European 'high' cultural heritage -

'Molière and Racine' - and thus did not demand protection in

order to preserve specific cultural identities[68]. As an

industry, film and television should be entirely deregulated

and, following hegemonic American free-market ideologies, this

would lead to diversity and consumer choice. Attitudes in

France were quite different. There existed a wide consensus

that deregulation of the audiovisual industries would lead to

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[66]*European Wireless File*, 15 December 1993.

[67]*The Wall Street Journal*, cited in *Courrier International*, 21
October 1993, p.11.

[68]Their attitude was somewhat disingenuous as audiovisual
production has long been used as an important means of
propaganda by successive American governments.

a standardisation led by Hollywood; protection of indigenous production in fact meant liberalism as it prevented uniformity and encouraged plurality:

> Ce sont les vrais libéraux qui doivent être favorables à la protection: sans elle, on aboutit au régime du monopole américain. Sur le marché de augmenter encore la liberté commerciale,'image, c'est réduire le pluralisme culturel.[69]

Moreover, it was claimed that the United States' industries themselves exercised a form of protectionism as they refused to dub foreign cinematic imports, distributing them subtitled in a small circuit of art-house theatres and thus effectively limiting their potential audience.

Above all attitudes were differentiated through a widespread insistence in France upon the cultural importance of audiovisual production and the necessity of abstracting this practice from other forms of industrial production. In line with state cultural policy, cultural production was proclaimed as being central to national identities; to forego protection of the film and television industries would mean an end to French *différence* and an attendant American hegemony. Such convictions emanated from politicians, journalists, intellectuals, and members of the industry from across the political spectrum. In December 1993, Jacques Toubon, the Minister of Culture, declared to the Senate, '[...] nous devons avoir une politique culturelle internationale plus offensive contre l'agressivité américaine et les menaces d'uniformisation culturelle [...] Une impulsion sera donnée à la promotion des industries culturelles françaises à

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[69]Joffrin, Laurent: 'Cinéma, télévision: les raisons de dire non au GATT', *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 28 October 1993, p.76.

l'étranger'[70]. Jack Lang hailed the outcome of the GATT negotiations as a 'victory for art and artists over the commercialization of culture'[71]. In a speech delivered in Poland on September 21, President Mitterrand declared support for *l'exception culturelle*, arguing that it involved '[...] l'identité de nos nations, le droit pour chaque peuple à sa propre culture, la liberté de créer et de choisir nos images'. He went on to state that a society which abandoned its own means of representation became 'une société asservie'[72].

Political statements such as these were supported by those who worked in the audiovisual industry. Claude Berri likened European film-makers to 'redskins' thus situating the debate within a wider history of American 'imperialism' and the narrative framework of the very Hollywood production which threatened Europe[73]. Over 150 artists and intellectuals formed *Les États généraux de la culture* in defense of cultural exception. A delegation of this group went to Brussels on 19 October 1993 and declared:

> [...] la richesse culturelle du monde, gardienne du pluralisme, est une valeur de civilisation. Il n'est pas admissible qu'elle soit fragilisée, voire supprimée. C'est ce que le GATT veut faire en faisant de la culture une marchandise [...] Respecter la culture c'est la laisser hors du champ

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[70]Cited in *Le Quotidien de Paris*, 12 December 1993. As described in Chapter One, Toubon went on to finance 90 supplementary copies of Claude Berri's *Germinal* in order to prevent Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* from dominating French cinemas as it had dominated those of other European countries.

[71]Cited in Cohen, Roger: 'A Realignment Made Reluctantly', *The New York Times*, 15 December 1993.

[72]Cited in Buob, Jacques: 'Culture: l'assaut américain', *L'Express*, 7 October 1993, pp.70-74.

[73]Cited in Jacobsen, Kurt: 'Trading Places at the Box Office', *The Guardian*, 19 October 1993, p.5.

de compétition du GATT.[74]

This group clearly demonstrates a new French conception of the democratic tradition, calling upon the legacy of the revolution (*Les États généraux*) in order to demand concessions from an administrative body external to the French state (Brussels). However it also suggests the continuity of widespread French mobilisation against the perceived hegemony of Hollywood; consider the reactions to the Blum-Byrnes agreements described in Chapter Two. Certainly the threat posed by GATT was broadly figured in France as an American threat, an influx of debased mass culture, and thus reactions to it can be written into a history of French cultural anti-Americanism:

> Maintenant que jeans et McDo ont conquis le Vieux Continent, les séries et superproductions made in USA vont-elles régner sans partage sur nos écrans? Si l'Oncle Sam cherche à tout prix à obtenir la libéralisation des échanges audiovisuels, la France, isolée, invoque l'exception culturelle.[75]

However, GATT was not about trade with the United States alone. Rather it was about the advancement of a deregulated global economy. Thus French invocations of cultural exception should be perceived as expressing both an enduring resistance to the hegemony of American culture (Hollywood films are acceptable but there must be an indigenous alternative) and more general fears about France's national identity in the face of a globalised culture. 'Le vieux continent' was not only endangered by an influx of American mass cultural artefacts but by a process which threatened to erode the very

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[74]Cited in *L'Humanité*, 25 November 1993, p.20.

[75]Buob, *L'Express*, 7 October 1993, p.70.

borders of that continent, subsuming it into an undifferentiated transnational mass, dominated by those able to wield economic power.

The global and the local: a problematisation of cultural imperialism

French reactions to the GATT negotiations clearly echo the discourses surrounding the remake process. Just as the deregulation of the audiovisual industries was claimed to threaten the preservation of French culture through an influx of American mass culture, so the remake was seen to undermine French cinema through the transformation of 'quality' French productions within the 'debased' context of Hollywood. In both sets of discourse, American audiovisual dominance was reduced to economic might. These similarities do seem to suggest that reactions to the remake process during the 1980s and 1990s are also not merely about 'Americanisation' but should be located within the wider concerns about French identity in the emergent global arena.

Conceptions of globalisation in France tend to reduce it to 'Americanisation' or 'cultural imperialism'. This in turn is often described as the result of the growing impact of the mass media:

> En fait, quand on utilise l'expression "l'impérialisme culturel" on ne songe pas (d'ordinaire) à la "haute culture" qui, elle, provoque un *rayonnement* culturel. On ne songe pas non plus aux transferts de science et de technologie. On songe à la "culture de masse", que certains considèrent comme le meilleur injecteur d'idéologie.[76]

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[76]Bertrand & Bordat (1989), p.12. Italics author's own.

So the remaking of a French film within the context of Hollywood is seen as an example of cultural imperialism whilst the adaptation of a French work within a 'high cultural' American context is seen as proof of the universality and the florescence of French culture[77]. 'Cultural imperialism' itself is clearly a highly problematic term. It posits a linear process from one (dominant) culture to another (dominated), ignoring both the heterogeneity of individual cultural formations and the dialectical nature of struggles over power described in Chapter One. Jack Lang's tirade against cultural imperialism in Mexico provides evidence of this first lacuna. As previously mentioned, Lang's speech did not receive popular support in France. Indeed much of the French press condemned Lang's jingoism and isolationism[78]. Both the press and Lang claim to represent French public opinion and their disagreement suggests that this opinion is far from undifferentiated. Moreover, as John Tomlinson demonstrates, neither is really able to 'speak for France', they can only express a particular version of national opinion[79]. The very concept of cultural imperialism rests upon a univocal national culture yet this is clearly highly problematic. Indeed the very opposition between dominant and dominated which underwrites cultural imperialism is reproduced within the

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[77]Clearly this opposition echoes the differing attitudes towards adaptation described in Chapter One; prestigious adaptations of 'classic' works are generally accepted as they enable increased cultural capital whilst adaptations which are seen to 'popularise' a work are condemned.

[78]Tomlinson, John: *Cultural Imperialism* (London: Pinter, 1991), p.17.

[79]Tomlinson (1991), p.18.

national context[80].

As discussed in Chapter One, this opposition also demands problematisation. To posit either the United States or France as dominant or dominated cultures begs various questions. North America may now be economically dominant but France has an enduring sense of its own cultural importance which undermines any attempt to see this nation as subservient to the United States[81]. Moreover, such a binary division suggests a highly simplistic concept of power as an uncontested process of transferral. Clearly Gramsci's concept of hegemony (further discussed in Chapter Four) problematises such a definition, replacing it with a dialectical struggle between coercion and consent which creates a space for individual agency. Such a reconsideration of power and relations of dominance underlines the questionable assumptions posed by invocations of cultural imperialism:

> Finally any practice is also complexly articulated into relations of power; it may have multiple and contradictory effects within even a single circuit. One cannot know its effects in advance. [...] ...the exportation of U.S. cultural products certainly contributes to the continued redistribution of international wealth and to the exploitation of third world labour, and it may have real consequences on the production of traditional cultural forms, but it may also give its audiences a common language, or a new vision of social and political possibilities.[82]

In reducing globalisation to cultural imperialism, French

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[80]See Chapter Four.

[81]See Chapter One for a discussion of this opposition and its applicability to translation theory.

[82]Grossberg, Lawrence: *We Gotta Get Out of this Place: Popular Conservatism and Postmodern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.100. Similarly the effects of the remake can not be reduced to sheer endangerment of the French cinema industry (See Chapter One).

commentators ignore the complexity of this process. Clearly the concept of cultural imperialism is overly crude as it ignores forms of accommodation within receptor cultures. As David Morley and Kevin Robins point out, the crucial terms in this debate are the 'global' and the 'local'[83]. In other words, a dual tendency in the process of globalisation is the development towards local and regional identities and cultures. Thus economies of scale can be seen to interact with economies of scope, enabling a pluralism ignored by the critics of the 'global village'. The linear homogenisation of cultural imperialism is a reductive thesis; global culture will affect local meanings but not control them[84]. These local identities should not be reduced to specifically territorial configurations:

> The global-local nexus is about the relation between globalising and particularising dynamics in the strategy of the global corporation, and the 'local' should be seen as a fluid and relational space, constituted only in and through its relation to the global. For the global corporation, the local might, in fact, correspond to a regional, national, or even pan-regional sphere of activity.[85]

Nevertheless, although the local is defined by and through the global, this intertwining of the two undermines visions of the global arena as evidence of standardisation through domination. Rather it suggests that globalisation should be understood as an ongoing process through which previously autonomous cultures move towards interdependence and

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[83]Morley & Robins (1995).

[84]Ang (1996), p.151.

[85]Morley & Robins (1995), p.117.

interaction[86].

Thus it seems clear that rather than condemning the effects of globalisation as a form of cultural imperialism, it is vital to examine *local* processes of reception and mediation. Just as French films are remade in Hollywood, so American mass cultural artefacts are in some way 'remade' through consumption in France. If we turn our attention once more to Euro-Disneyland, proof positive of the menace of a globalisation led by Hollywood in the opinion of many French commentators, we can see a clear example of interaction between global aims and local differences as Disney decided to drop its strict no-alcohol policy in the French theme park and substituted 'Discoveryland' for 'Tomorrowland', featuring Jules Verne, H.G. Wells and Leonardo da Vinci[87]. Similarly, Hollywood films are consumed in France within the framework of French exhibition and viewing practices and discourses about the cinema (film magazines, television shows and so on). Moreover, the products of global culture do not lead to uniformity as national audiences continue to consume the indigenous product (witness the success in France of *Trois hommes et un couffin* - 10,251 million admissions in France and the twelfth most popular French film since 1956[88] -and other 'sources of remakes').

Globalisation is clearly not a form of cultural imperialism. Indeed it discards such linear models of transnational relationships in favour of a circular model of

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[86]Ang (1996), p.153.

[87]Wooldridge, Adrian:'Insider Trading', *The Economist*, 24 June 1995.

[88]Source: *CNC*.

centres and peripheries which echoes the circles of intertextuality described in Chapter One. Evidently, within such a model power is not evenly distributed; those at the periphery will be both less powerful and in some ways more implicated in the process of globalisation as transformation is imposed upon them and they become 'creolised'[89]. Nevertheless, this model does suggest the problematic nature of attempts to define the global arena as a straightforward opposition between dominant and dominated. Rather it should be seen as a shifting configuration founded upon an ongoing process of interaction and infiltration. Power is not evenly distributed; who gets to define the 'local' and the articulation of difference, who gets to speak for whom, are clearly important issues and sites of struggle. However, the straightforward accounts of autonomous national identities which underwrite much critique of the remake have clearly lost their resonance; rather it is vital to reconfigure cultural exchange as a dialectic between traditional rooted experience and a new hybridity. Discussing such issues in the field of ethnography, James Clifford concludes:

> In my current problematic, the goal is not to *replace* the cultural figure "native" with the intercultural figure "traveler". Rather the task is to focus on concrete mediations of the two, in specific cases of historical tension and relationship.[90]

It seems apparent that the negative discourses which

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[89]Ang (1996), p.157. See Chapter Two and the discussion of *Le Salaire de la peur* for an early negotiation of this relationship between centre and periphery.

[90]Clifford, James: 'Traveling Cultures' in Grossberg, L., Nelson, C. & Treichler, P. (eds.): *Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.96-112 (p.101). Italics author's own.

surround and penetrate the remake process emanate from, and articulate, a specific conjuncture in which enduring French conceptions of identity and culture began to shift and falter. Rather than take on board these changes, many French critics and intellectuals became defensive of the 'national' identity, a defensiveness which was perpetuated in government cultural policy. The 'nation' and 'national' identity are clearly highly complex constructs and Chapter Four will be devoted to an unpacking of these terms and an examination of their negotiation in France. Suffice it to say at this point that the remake became an important focus of contention in this shoring up of French identity in the face of a globalisation exemplified by the products of Hollywood. The remake was perceived as clear proof of an attack upon all things French (an attack seen to be most prevalent in the realm of the audiovisual media and to be led by the United States) and thus it was incumbent upon French critics to condemn the process. Rather than accept the remake as a form of healthy (and increasingly common) interaction, critics described it as a form of theft, a *'vampirisation'*[91] which, like the ongoing construction of the 'global village', threatened to suck the very life-blood of an intrinsically French cultural identity.

The Remake Since 1980: Some Explanations

Having situated French critical responses to the remake process within their particular socio-historical context, let us now turn to an examination of the reasons behind the proliferation of the practice itself. Following the

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[91]*La Revue du cinéma*, no.420, October, 1986.

methodology described in Chapter One, this will necessitate an examination of the cinematic practices (industrial and aesthetic) in Hollywood and France during the period under discussion.

Many critics, both in France and the United States, attributed the growing popularity of the remake amongst Hollywood producers to a dearth of original screenplays. For example *France-Soir*, March 1993, criticised those Hollywood directors 'qui piquent allègrement nos films et en font leur version' due to 'une pénurie scénaristique'[92]. In November 1990, *Ciné Finances* claimed, 'En outre, cette nouvelle vague peut être considérée comme un indice - mais aussi un facteur - de l'appauvrissement de la création cinématographique aux États-Unis'[93]. An executive of the TF1 production company (co-producers of various remake 'sources' including *La Totale* and *Mon Père ce héros*, both 1991), which is now in the process of selling the remake rights of the successful comedy *Un Indien dans la ville* (Hervé Palud, 1994), claimed that this practice would become more and more common as Hollywood studios were increasingly in need of new material[94]. Indeed the adaptation and reworking of 'non-original' material seemed to have become a staple of Hollywood production by the early 1980s. Of 116 films produced in 1982, nine were remakes (of both French films and others), eleven were sequels and series, and thirty-nine were some form of adaptation; of the 128 films produced in the following year, the figures stood at seven remakes,

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[92]*France-Soir*, 24 March 1993.

[93]'Boom des "remakes" aux États-Unis', *Ciné Finances*, no.17, 5 November 1990, p.1.

[94]I am grateful to Sandrine Alpglas of TF1 for these comments.

sixteen sequels and series, and thirty-seven adaptations[95].

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, this explanation of the remake process has an enduring history; although the remake was more widely accepted in France in the 1930s and 1940s, there were suggestions that it was a response to a lack of original material in Hollywood. This account of the practice clearly reinforces dominant discourses about the remake which stress the aesthetic superiority of the French product (French cinema as 'high culture') and which reduce the process to a purely commercial venture, an attempt by Hollywood to reduce risk and ensure profit:

> Ils veulent des idées nouvelles, certes, mais en même temps des idées qui ont fait leurs preuves. Contradiction? pas nécessairement. C'est ainsi que l'Amérique est devenue la spécialiste des films à suite et, bien sûr, des remakes.[96]

Clearly there is some truth in statements such as these; in 1984, Barbara Boyle, then Orion's Senior Vice-President of Production, admitted that the cost of producing and releasing a film inevitably led to attempts to reduce risk and thus encouraged the increased security offered by the already tested remake:

> The industry seems to run in cycles, and we are in a cycle of sequels, prequels and remakes because so much emphasis is placed on our marketing people many of whom are now heads of studios. With the cost of releasing a picture equalling the cost of the negative, you'd better start listening to your marketing people...[97]

Nevertheless, it is vital to deconstruct French critical

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[95]Jaehne, K.:'Once is Not Enough", *Stills*, April-May, 1984, p.11.

[96]*Studio*, no.73, May 1993, pp.110-113.

[97]Cited in *Hollywood Reporter*, vol.282, no.10, 31 May 1984.

discourses which ascribe the financial implications of the remake to the intrinsic quality of French cinema, thus abstracting the practice from the specific industrial and aesthetic structures in which it is located. The remake suggests an attempt to reduce risk in Hollywood, a turning to French production as a source of material and a wider process of transnational interaction and cross-fertilisation. Let us now look at each of these areas in turn, situating them within the context of cinematic practices of the 1980s and 1990s.

Risk reduction: conformity in Hollywood?

The economic and political climate of the 1980s in the United States, and the moves towards deregulation and the free market, saw the reinstatement of vertical integration in Hollywood. Conglomerates holding production and distribution companies began to reacquire theatre chains: for example, by 1991, MCA owned both Cineplex Odeon and Universal Studios[98]. Moreover, the studios followed dominant trends by integrating with other firms to form vast concerns frequently involving foreign investment. This process had begun in the 1970s as the industry began to prosper, however it grew at an unprecedented rate during the 1980s. In 1981 United Artists was sold to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, then in 1982 Columbia Pictures was purchased by the Coca-Cola Company. Foreign investment grew from 1985 when Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation acquired Twentieth Century Fox. Pathé communications purchased MGM in 1990 and in 1992 Crédit Lyonnais foreclosed on loans to MGM and took over the company. The majority of this incursion of

[98]Bordwell, D. & Thompson, K.: *Film History: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994), p.702.

overseas capital came from Japan: Sony bought Columbia in 1989 and Matsushita took over Universal in 1991. In 1989 the American companies Time Inc. and Warner merged to become Time Warner, the world's largest media company, holding significant interests in newspaper and magazine publishing, cable television and the music industry, as well as owning the Warner Brothers studio[99].

The establishment of these companies meant that cinematic production in Hollywood continued to be dominated by the small group of Majors who controlled domestic and international distribution. The lack of a mass-production studio system meant that, unlike the previous period of vertical integration, the 1930s and 1940s, production tended to be initiated by independent producers. However, this production should not be seen as external to the large conglomerates as it could only achieve wide exhibition if it were distributed by the major companies. In 1994 five distribution companies - Buena Vista (Disney), Warner Brothers (Time Warner), Universal (Matsushita), Fox (Murdoch) and Paramount (Viacom) - achieved 69.6 percent of the domestic box-office[100]. Moreover, filmmakers were dependent upon the Majors for financing and studio facilities: the studio production of the early years of Hollywood may have ended but the industry was, to all intents and purposes, vertically integrated.

The concentration of the industry in the hands of a small group of multinational conglomerates led to a reduction in the

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[99]Ellis, Jack C.: *A History of Film* (Boston: Simon & Schuster, 1995, fourth edition), p.437.

[100]Source: *The Hollywood Reporter/ Institut Multi-Médias*. Cited in *Le Nouvel Observateur*, no.1565, 3-9 November 1994, p.82.

number of films produced and a concomitant increase in budgets. This tendency can be seen to date back to the success of *Jaws* in 1975:

> If any single film marked the arrival of the New Hollywood, it was *Jaws*, the Spielberg-directed thriller that recalibrated the profit potential of the Hollywood hit, and redefined its status as a marketable commodity and cultural phenomenon as well. The film brought an emphatic end to Hollywood's five-year recession, while ushering in an era of high-cost, high-tech, high-speed thrillers.[101]

The commercial success of this film demonstrated the value of saturation booking and extensive advertising which placed great importance on a film's performance at the box-office during its first few weeks of release. Consequently, the industry began to concentrate on fewer films involving vastly increased budgets. The Majors realised that over-production would harm all the dominant companies so no more than 150 films were released each year. Average budgets increased from $8.5 million dollars in 1980, to $18 million by the end of the decade, and $27 million in 1991[102]. A large proportion of these budgets was devoted to intensive marketing; indeed in the last fifteen years, average film marketing costs have tripled, totalling $15 million or more. Major Hollywood productions frequently have to gross over $100 million dollars in order to become profitable and thus not surprisingly, many films lose money at the box-office[103].

These changes in strategy have led to the increasing

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[101]Schatz, Thomas:'The New Hollywood', in Collins, J., Preacher Collins, A. & Radner, H.(eds.): *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.8-36 (p.17).

[102]Ellis (1995), p.438.

[103]*CNC Info*, no.256, May 1995, p.66.

importance of the 'blockbuster'. Perhaps somewhat

paradoxically, expensive failures (notably *Heaven's Gate* in

1980 which cost $36 million and resulted in the sale of its

production company, United Artists) demonstrated the necessity

of increasing film budgets in order to ensure maximum

distribution and marketing. However, risk was minimised by

allocating this money to 'safe' projects. The blockbuster is

characterised by innovations in technology (thus increasing

differentiation from smaller-scale independent and foreign

productions), the presence of stars, expensive production

values, and an emphasis on plot over character[104]. Indeed the

majority of blockbusters are action films with minimal

narrative complexity. Such aesthetic choices are necessitated

by the films' situation in a 'diversified, globalized,

synergized market-place'[105]. In other words, major Hollywood

productions, like the industry from which they emerge, can no

longer be reduced to 'cinema' alone. Instead they are diverse

cultural commodities which will be disseminated through

various forms of media and merchandising: the book of the

film, the soundtrack album, computer games, t-shirts and so

on. In order to enable this diversification of the cinematic

product, blockbusters tend towards open-ended, intertextual

narratives which can be easily reformulated in other media:

> ...the blockbuster tends to be intertextual and
> purposefully incoherent - virtually of necessity,
> given the current conditions of cultural production
> and consumption. Put another way, the vertical
> integration of classical Hollywood, which ensured a
> closed industrial system and coherent narrative, has
> given way to "horizontal integration" of the New

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[104]Thus *The Sorcerer* can clearly be seen as located on the cusp of these changes.

[105]Schatz (1993), p.30.

Hollywood's tightly diversified media conglomerates, which favors texts strategically "open" to multiple readings and multimedia reiterations.[106]

Increasing film budgets meant an attendant decrease in the willingness of the Majors to take risks. This in turn led to the industry's growing reliance upon the aforementioned blockbusters as well as sequels, series, reissues, and remakes. This latter group of films reduced risk as they involved formats (narratives or characters) that had already proved successful either in the contemporary domestic market (sequels and series), an earlier domestic market (reissues and remakes of Hollywood films), or an overseas market (remakes of foreign productions). Clearly then, the remake practice can not be reduced to proof of the superior quality of French cinematic work and a corresponding lack of original material in Hollywood. Rather it can be seen to emerge from the changes in industrial and aesthetic structures experienced by Hollywood throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Indeed, comparisons can be drawn with the earlier period of florescence for the remake, the 1930s and 1940s. In both cases vertical integration and domination by the major studios led to a streamlining of the Hollywood product (the established genres of the 30s and 40s and the big-budget pictures of the 80s and 90s) and a concomitant desire to achieve innovation without risk, hence the popularity of the remake.

Why remake French films?

This is not to deny the success of the French films chosen for remaking; indeed much of their appeal for producers seeking

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[106]Schatz (1993), p.34.

low-risk ideas lies in their success at the box-office. However, it should again be stressed that French films do not represent a rich source for Hollywood over and above other European production thanks to some intrinsic quality they may possess. Rather Hollywood continues to remake French films in far greater numbers than it remakes Italian, Spanish or German films due to the fact that the French cinematic industry is significantly more healthy than those of its European neighbours[107].

The relative strength of the French industry is largely due to a continuing system of state support. The cinema was a crucial component of the cultural policy developments of the 1980s described above. Public funding via the *compte de soutien* comes from various sources, all handled by the *CNC* under the auspices of the *Ministère de la Culture*. These include the *taxe spéciale additionnelle* which is levied on exhibitors and then channelled back into the industry, direct government contributions, a tax on pre-recorded video-cassettes and, most significantly, a tax on television which now constitutes fifty-three percent of the *compte de soutien*. Indeed cinema is increasingly dependent upon television both via this fund and for direct investment in production; it is worth noting that in 1986 the then *fonds de soutien* was renamed the *compte de soutien financier de l'industrie cinématographique et de l'industrie des programmes audiovisuels*, thus extending the fund to both cinematic and televisual production and illustrating their interdependence.

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[107]British films obviously represent a slightly different case as they can be distributed in the United States without dubbing or subtitling.

Another important source of funding are the *SOFICAs*, tax shelters established by the Socialists in 1981 in order to encourage investment in the industry. The *compte de soutien* provides two forms of aid: the *soutien automatique*, a compulsory levy on box-office receipts which is then invested in subsequent production, and the *avance sur recettes* which is given to first-time cinematic works.

These systems of state aid, coupled with private investment and EU subsidies, mean that the French cinematic industry maintains production and distribution levels not experienced in other European nations. Evidently this helps to explain the frequency of Hollywood remakes of *French* cinematic works. Moreover, public investment does encourage a diversity not apparent in the American industry. Indeed cinematic diversity was central to the Socialist cultural project, witness their attempts to break down the distinctions between high art and popular culture by removing discrimination in terms of access to funding, and the establishment of an *Agence pour le développement régional du cinéma* in 1982. Such diversity clearly encourages innovation and experiment and thus 'original' material able to appeal to Hollywood producers in search of new ideas. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to over-emphasise the plurality of French cinematic production. Like Hollywood, the French industry is increasingly concentrated on big-budget productions, frequently heritage films, designed to reinforce cinematic prestige and to appeal to both domestic and foreign markets (and of course to combat the success of Hollywood productions). Both *Germinal* (1993) and *Le Hussard sur le toit* (1995) have recently broken French cinematic budget records. The French films dominant at the

box-office tend to be these 'super-productions' and popular comedies, and indeed the latter are frequently the films chosen for remaking. Moreover, despite government attempts to increase independent access to the domestic market, exhibition is still dominated by three groups, Gaumont, Pathé and UGC. These groups operate one fifth of the country's screens but sell nearly half of the tickets. Each has signed an agreement to preserve free competition and to give independent exhibitors access to films, however their control of the market does suggest a certain homogeneity more akin to the American model than the frequently proclaimed 'diversity' and 'originality' of French cinema might suggest

Nevertheless, unlike the action-based narratives of the Hollywood blockbuster, a significant number of French cinematic works, both comedies and *intimiste* dramas, are centred upon well-drawn characters and strong narratives. French producers lack the finances necessary for the technical innovation of Hollywood, hence the absence of an indigenous action genre. This is a distinction apparent in *True Lies* (1994) where the character and narrative-led comedy *La Totale* (1991), becomes a comic action adventure[108]. The continuation of this type of film-making in France does then provide a source of narratives which can be reworked within the aesthetic and industrial context of Hollywood.

This perhaps begs the question as to why these films are not themselves distributed in the United States. As previously mentioned, this fact is partly explained by the tendency to subtitle foreign films. Distributors claim that the American

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[108]See Chapter Five for further discussion of this pair of films.

public is too cinematically 'sophisticated' to accept dubbed works, hence films are subtitled and shown on a reduced circuit of art-house cinemas. Moreover, the changes in the American cinematic industry described above have reduced the space that began to be carved out for non-Hollywood production during the 1960s and early 1970s. Thomas Schatz perceives contemporary Hollywood as comprising three different classes of film: the blockbuster, the mainstream star vehicle with sleeper-hit potential, and the low-cost independent feature targeted for a specific market with little chance of achieving more than cult status[109]. Schatz's third category can be extended to include foreign productions; small companies, such as Miramax and New Line Cinema, finance and distribute overseas production, marketing it for small, niche markets. Thus the distribution of French films in the United States is not entirely absent but it is limited by industrial structures and the dominance of the major distributors. The remake however tends to fall into Schatz's second category, the 'sleeper' hit, which consists of medium-budget films, extensively marketed if they show any signs of early success at the box-office[110]. Thus French cinematic production is much more likely to reach a wide American audience via the remake than in its initial form.

Globalisation, interaction, and cross-fertilisation

The final factor influencing the proliferation of the remake process is the increasing globalisation of the cinema

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[109]Schatz (1993), p.35.

[110]There are of course exceptions; *True Lies* for example was a highly expensive action 'blockbuster'.

industries and their interaction and cross-fertilisation with other media. As previously mentioned, the media conglomerates of Hollywood frequently involve foreign investment; Japanese producers of hardware such as Sony and Matsushita perceived the advantage of investing in the software (films) for their products (televisions and video recorders). Indeed French companies such as Crédit Lyonnais also invested, thus suggesting the need to move away from the oppositions between French and American cinemas so central to the remake debate: if Hollywood is controlled by multinational conglomerates can we continue to perceive it unproblematically as an American industry? Moreover, French production companies are frequently involved in the financing of the American remakes so readily condemned by many French critics; for example Canal Plus co-produced *Sommersby* and Film par Film, D.D. Productions and Cité Films co-financed *My Father the Hero*. Indeed, there exists an active promotion in France of the remake process. A government sponsored agency, Unifrance Film, was set up for the express purpose of encouraging the international distribution of French cinematic works. However, it has also become closely involved in remake deals. Josette Bonte, Unifrance's West Coast Director claims that 'there is at least one contact here in our office per day regarding a remake'[111]. French citizen Victor Drai moved to Hollywood in order to develop the sale of remake rights, focusing particularly upon successful French comedies such as *Le Grand Blond avec une*

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[111]Cited in Mancini, Marc:'French Film Remakes', *Contemporary French Civilization*, vol.xiii, no.1, Winter/Spring 1989, pp.32-46 (p.38).

chaussure noire of 1972[112]. The annual Sarasota French Film
Festival is another market for remakes and French distribution
and production companies are becoming increasingly proactive
in the sale of rights to Hollywood, 'Gaumont has set up an
entire department dedicated to translating its back catalogue
for Hollywood majors eagerly scouring the Left Bank for the
next *Sommersby*'[113].

What critics of the remake process tend to ignore are the
advantages of the process for the French cinematic industry.
The three French co-producers of *My Father the Hero* shared
takings earned in French speaking countries (apart from
Quebec), acquiring forty percent of box-office receipts,
twenty percent of video sales and fifty percent of televisual
rights as well as forty-five percent of worldwide distribution
profits after recuperation by Buena Vista/Touchstone of
production and marketing costs[114]. The sale of rights for a
remake is frequently superior to the money the film could have
made through distribution in the United States and this
revenue will subsequently enable further French film
production. There is an enduring tradition of exchange between
French cinema and Hollywood both in terms of aesthetics and
industrial practices. Indeed, like all film companies
exhibiting in France, Hollywood must pay the tax automatically
levied on all cinema ticket receipts and which is then
reinvested in the French film industry. Thus descriptions of

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[112]Drai went on to produce the remake, *The Man with One Red Shoe*
in 1985.

[113]*Empire*, no.49, July 1993, pp.68-72.

[114]'"My Father: comment faire d'un père deux coups', *Le film
français*, no.2511, 17 June 1994, p.4.

Hollywood and of the remake as sources of endangerment fail to acknowledge their status as important sources of revenue for French cinematic production.

This depiction of the remake as a process of exchange and interaction can be illustrated by the production and reception of *The Birdcage*, Mike Nichols' 1996 remake of Edouard Molinaro's *La Cage aux folles* of 1978. Nichols' film was produced by MGM-UA, a Hollywood studio whose enduring significance does not need to be underlined. However, as previously stated, MGM-UA was, at that point in time, owned by the French bank, *Crédit Lyonnais*, a fact which immediately complicates attempts to define the remake as straightforwardly 'American'. Moreover, the immense box-office success of Nichols' film (it earned $80 million in under four weeks when released in the United States thus proving to be Hollywood's biggest earner of that year so far) reversed the failing fortunes of MGM-UA subsequently enabling *Crédit Lyonnais* to put their acquisition on the market. The losses incurred by the studio had pushed the state-owned bank into technical bankruptcy, forcing the French government to support it through public subsidies worth more than $4 billion[115]. Thus the success of this particular Hollywood remake can be seen to have important financial repurcussions both within the United States and France; the French government was able to divest itself of a possession whose retention was neither politically nor financially advisable whilst the future of a 'great' Hollywood studio was, at least for the time being, secured.

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[115]Walker, Martin: *The Guardian*, April 9, 1996.

In Conclusion

It does then seem apparent that both the discourses surrounding the remake, and the proliferation of the practice itself during the 1980s and 1990s, arise from, and reinforce, a specific socio-historical, cultural, and industrial conjuncture. An awareness of this dialectical relationship undermines the reductive negativity of much of this discourse, stressing the complexity of the process and its mobilisation at this time. Rather than reducing the remake to evidence of American cultural imperialism it is clearly vital to perceive it as a far from isolated manifestation of the interaction and cross-fertilisation of the emergent global economy and indeed of the dissemination of the filmic product through the various audiovisual media. Moreover, critics of the practice should take into account both its own specific history and the endurance of exchange between France and the United States, and indeed between French cinema and Hollywood. Critical hostility to the remake seems somewhat surprising given the existence of this ancestry. However it does seem evident that such reactions are indicative of anxieties in the face of profound changes in French identity and France's international role in the 'global village'. It is to France's attempts to negotiate these concerns though the construction of the 'nation' that we shall turn in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

National Cinemas/National Audiences

The Nation: Origins and Construction

The negative discourses which surround the remake process are clearly bound up with French constructions of a specific national identity, with the perception of cinema as a repository of national culture and with ensuing oppositions between high and popular forms of cultural production. Such discourses enable the establishment of a one-way vertical trajectory from the 'art' of the French film to the debased commercialism of the American remake. Within this trajectory the French film becomes an intrinsic part of French culture and thus an important mobiliser of the national identity. The American film threatens this identity by hijacking the French 'original' and producing a popular copy. This vision of the remake process is manifestly simplistic. It reposes upon a well-defined differentiation between the 'French' and 'American' cinematic product, a differentiation which in turn enables the valorisation outlined above. Clearly it denies the varying forms of exchange and interraction described in the preceding chapters; the tropes of intertextuality and the

hybrid nature of the products of an increasingly globalised cinema industry surely undermine national identities, and yet the nation remains a central organising concept for the critical accounts of the remake process described in Chapter One. With this in mind, it is vital to analyse and problematise the construction of the 'nation' and of 'national identities', and the ways in which cinema is mobilised in the service of these discourses, in order to achieve a clearer understanding of these negative critical accounts and indeed of the remakes and their sources and their location within, and relationship to, specific nations and national identities.

The very concept of the nation is extremely difficult to define. It is a set of discourses, an ideological construct, rather than any clearly discernible 'reality'. In the words of Hugh Seton-Watson, '...I am driven to the conclusion that no "scientific definition" of the nation can be devised; yet the phenomenon has existed and exists'[1]. A nation is not tangible, it is a 'psychological' bond which joins people and hence differentiates them from others[2]. In his seminal work on the origins of nationalism, Benedict Anderson describes the nation as an imagined political community, both inherently limited and sovereign[3]. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know the majority of their fellow

[1]Seton-Watson, Hugh: *Nations and States. An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), p.5.

[2]Connor, Walker: 'A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.1, no.4, October, 1978, pp.377-398.

[3]Anderson, Benedict: *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. edn. (London: Verso, 1991).

nationals yet in the minds of each exists an image of community. The nation is limited because all must have boundaries which separate them from other nations; these boundaries may alter but they are ultimately finite. Anderson describes the nation as sovereign, claiming that the concept of nationhood was born towards the end of the eighteenth century at a time in which Enlightenment and Revolution were undermining the legitimacy of the 'divinely-ordered, hierarchical dynastic realm'[4]. As the Monarch, chosen by God, was put to death, so an entire structuring system collapsed. The nation became a guarantee of freedom, a secular transformation of divinity and monarchy into the sovereign state[5]. Finally Anderson describes nations as 'communities' for, 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship'[6]. It is this comradeship, claims Anderson, which explains the fact that since the beginnings of nationhood so many people have been willing to die for what is, essentially, an imaginary construct.

Anderson claims that nationalism arose as three fundamental cultural concepts were undermined. As the Bible and other religious texts became available in translation so it was no longer accepted that a particular script-language offered access to ontological truth because it was an

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[4]Anderson (1991), p.7.

[5]Clearly the establishment of the French nation here serves as a paradigm for Anderson's account of nationalism, a usage which both emerges from, and reinforces, accounts of the French nation as a universal model of democracy (see Chapters One and Two).

[6]Anderson (1991), p.7.

intrinsic part of that truth. As previously mentioned, the notion that society was naturally ordered around a monarch who ruled through divine dispensation was destroyed on the guillotines of Paris. Finally concepts of temporality began to alter; the belief that cosmology and history were one and the same thing, that the world and mankind shared common origins, began to prove untenable[7]. These cultural changes necessitated the search for a new way of making sense of the universe, of 'linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together'[8]. Anderson claims that this search was precipitated by the development of print-capitalism. The distribution of newspapers and other printed texts created unified fields of communication in which speakers of different dialects could begin to comprehend one another. Language thus took on a new image of fixity which, somewhat paradoxically, helped to construct the notion of timelessness and antiquity which is so central to the ideology of nationhood. At the same time print-capitalism created languages of power which became the language of the emergent nation-state. These developments enabled people to relate to others in new ways. In the words of Anderson:

> ...the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation.[9]

Raymond Williams also stresses the vital role of capitalism in

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[7]Anderson (1991), p.36.

[8]Anderson (1991), p.36.

[9]Anderson (1991), p.46.

the emergence of the nation. In *Towards 2000*[10] he claims that 'natural communities', established through the experience of working and living together have, in the modern epoch, been 'disrupted and overriden' by the forces of capitalism:

> Through these large and prolonged dislocations and relocations, which are still in progress in every part of the world, the older traditional forms of identity and community were dislocated and relocated, within enforced mobilities and necessary new settlements.[11]

Anderson's description of the origins of nationalism underlines the cultural and historical roots of the concept of nationhood. Nations present themselves as both timeless and as rooted in antiquity. This sense of infinite past reinforces the ideology of nationalism which is founded upon a belief that nations are natural communities, sharing common bonds of language, ethnicity, religious and political belief, and location. These communities are then posited as the 'natural' basis for an enduring and successful political order. However, as Anderson's trajectory demonstrates, nationalism is neither timeless, natural, nor indeed rooted in antiquity. The construction of all nations and all nationalisms emerges from specific socio-historical locations. Indeed the building of nations should be seen as an ongoing procedure; as Stuart Hall points out, identities are never given or complete but are always in process[12].

If nations and national identities are not timeless then

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[10]Williams, Raymond: *Towards 2000* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1983).

[11]Williams (1983), p.185.

[12]Hall, Stuart: 'Cultural Identity and Cinematic Representation', *Framework*, no.36, 1989, p.70.

their stability is also undermined by the fact that they are defined as much through difference as through similarity. Through the mobilisation of notions of kinship and home (one thinks of terms such as *heimat*, mother/fatherland, and *patrie*), the nation creates a sense of inclusion, of belonging. Communities are established through a sense of similarity to fellow citizens yet at the same time nationalist ideology is based upon difference; the nation defines its limits by excluding those who do not share those characteristics deemed to be intrinsic to national identity. In an article on the construction of the notion of homeland in contemporary Europe, David Morley and Kevin Robins demonstrate that this process is achieved through the exclusion of a particular other[13]. They claim that whilst the United States continues to provide one boundary, much debate about European identity is now coterminous with what was once termed 'Christendom', its limits set by the beginnings of Islam. This vision of Islam as Europe's dominant 'other' is fuelled by media discussion of Arab terrorism and Muslim fundamentalism. This process of construction and exclusion is abundantly clear in France; the bombs attributed to Algerian terrorists, which exploded in Paris and other French cities in 1995, reinforced the entry of the xenophobic discourse of Jean-Marie Le Pen into mainstream politics as Jean-Louis Debré, the Minister of the Interior, aggravated popular fears through the offer of rewards for the capture of those involved in the bombings, and police stopped immigrants openly on the streets of Paris:

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[13]Morley, David & Robins, Kevin: 'No Place Like Heimat: Images of Home(land) in European Culture', *New Formations: Nation, Migration and History*, no.12, Winter, 1990, pp.1-23.

> Certainly it can be argued that Islam (in the shape
> of the Muslim populations of North Africa, Turkey
> and the Indian subcontinent) is now the primary form
> in which the Third World presents itself to Europe
> and that the North-South divide, in the European
> context, has been largely inscribed onto a pre-
> existing Christian-Muslim division.[14]

Thus European identity, what it means to be European, is constructed as much through exclusion and difference as through inclusion and similarity. Through the construction of a threatening 'other' nations establish a sense of homogeneity and perceivable boundaries. Nations and the identities they produce are not timeless realities, existing in a transcendental realm beyond history and specific socio-cultural formations. Rather they are imaginary structures formed through the ideological discourses which interpellate the 'national' citizens. As Walker Connor points out, 'what ultimately matters is not what is but what people believe is'[15].

The nation and the state

Nevertheless, despite the difficulties inherent to any definition of the nation, it is vital not to mask the importance of this concept as an organising structure, a means of producing identity and differentiation. National boundaries, however arbitrary they may be, have a significant structuring impact on socio-cultural formations. In an article on the nation, Paul Willemen acknowledges the imaginary nature of national unity and its insistence on difference and

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[14]Morley & Robins (1990), p.16.

[15]Connor (1978), p.380.

exclusion yet he stresses the necessity of accepting that national boundaries do exist and are highly influential in the way we think, feel and behave:

> Although we can all agree that cultural zones are far from unified, homogeneous spaces, this should not lead us to deny or unduly relativise the existence of borders. The existence of borders is very real, and although their meaning and function are changeable, their effectiveness has not diminished in the least.[16]

Acknowledgment of the reality of national borders points towards a major weakness in Benedict Anderson's account of the nation. Anderson's thesis is overly culturalist; by describing the nation in terms of culture and identity he fails to recognise its status as a locus of administration and power. In order to remedy this failing it is vital to distinguish between the nation and the state. Walker Connor suggests that the tendency to confuse the terms 'nation', 'state', and 'nation-state' has been a major handicap in attempts to establish theories of nationalism[17]. He gives definitions of each, describing the nation as an intangible 'psychological bond', the state as the 'major political subdivision of the globe' and the nation-state as a territorial political unit whose borders coincide with those of a national group[18]. Confusion between these various terms means that the three formations tend to be equated despite differences.

Connor's definitions are useful but somewhat simplistic. In many ways the state is as intangible as the nation, it

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[16]Willemen, Paul: *Looks and Frictions: Essays in Cultural Studies and Film Theory* (London: BFI, 1994), p.208.

[17]Connor (1978), p.379.

[18]Connor (1978), pp.379-382.

cannot simply be reduced to physical territory. However it is indeed a political construct and an apparatus of power and authority. Régis Debray provides a definition of the state which stresses both aspects of this identity:

> Personne n'a jamais vu un État. Ni à l'oeil nu ni au microscope, ni en photo ni d'avion. Ce n'est pas une chose, comme un territoire ou une portion d'océan. C'est un certain rapport entre les hommes qui rend le droit de commander indépendant de la personne du commandant. Une collectivité est régie par un État lorsque le lien de soumission d'homme à homme est remplacé par une subordination de principe. Cette dépersonnalisation de l'obéissance crée l'institution, avec son double impératif de *légitimité* (le chef est plus qu'un soldat heureux) et de *continuité* (les chefs passent, l'autorité reste).[19]

The state is then the central organ of power. Through the apparatus of the state diverse feelings of location and community can be combined into a unified political organisation. The state may well use the discourses of the nation (a nation which will be equated with the state) in order to further this process; invocations of *La France* for example, subsume varying identities and suggest a nation identical to the centralised state. Raymond Williams describes this use of the nation as a 'functional artificiality'[20], artificial because political, functional because deliberate and effective. This construction of 'national' identity through the powers of the state obscures more limited or locally constructed identities and functions to ratify or override 'unequal social and economic development' and to contain 'the protests and resentments of neglected and marginalised regions

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[19]Debray, Régis: *L'État séducteur: les révolutions médiologiques du pouvoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), p.65. Italics author's own.

[20]Williams (1983), p.180.

and minorities within an imposed general "patriotism"'[21].

Cultural production plays a vital role in this process. States use their culture in order to reinforce and legitimate national identity both internally and externally, and yet at the same time cultural artefacts are nationally determined through the implementation of various financial and industrial measures, government controlled cultural institutions and legislation. Raymond Williams describes such state intervention in its 'hard version' in the totalitarian regimes of Eastern Europe[22] claiming that it is just as prevalent, in a 'soft' version, in Western political democracies:

> In the soft versions, especially since the rise of broadcasting, the creation of any cultural policy must, if we are serious about it, involve some public body and within state terms typically some central body. This body makes choices which are all too often disguised behind counters of argument which are difficult to specify. I mean vague terms like 'standards' and 'excellence' which much more often than not function as ways of deflecting the argument rather than having it...[23]

Williams' definition of the state is firmly based upon its authority, 'Thus 'law and order'; armed forces called a 'defence force' even when some of their weapons are obviously aggressive: these, unambiguously, are the real functions of a

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[21]Williams (1983), p.197.

[22]Williams, Raymond: 'State Culture and Beyond' in Appignanesi, Lisa (ed.): *Culture and the State* (London: I.C.A., 1984), pp.3-5.

[23]Williams (1984), p.4. This distinction between the 'hard' state intervention of totalitarian regimes and the 'soft' intervention of democratic states recalls Lefevere's description of the manipulation at work in the rewriting process; it may seem self-evident that totalitarian regimes will rewrite texts in order to 'manipulate' possible meanings, however Lefevere claims that this manipulation is also prevalent in non-totalitarian societies (Lefevere, 1992).

state'[24]. However, through the discourses of nationalism and patriotism the state clearly commands loyalty from its citizens. Such loyalty is not enforced through the repressive mechanisms of the state, indeed it is apparently spontaneous. The hundreds of flag-waving Britons who annually enjoy the Last Night of the Proms appear to do so of their own volition. Clearly the state is more than straightforward authority and repression. Gramsci describes the modern state as 'hegemony armoured by coercion'[25]. In other words, the state is not just an apparatus of authority but rather offers a 'dual perspective' of authority and hegemony, force and consent, violence and civilisation[26]. Gramsci demonstrates how this binary nature enables the supremacy of a particular class:

> ...the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as 'intellectual and moral leadership'. A social group dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to 'liquidate', or to subjugate perhaps even by armed force; it leads kindred and allied groups. A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise 'leadership' before winning governmental power (this indeed is one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to 'lead' as well.[27]

Similarly the state must rule through both domination (coercion) and leadership (consent). In Gramsci's terms the state is not composed of political society alone but also incorporates civil society. Civil society can be defined as

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[24]Williams (1983), pp.190-191.

[25]Gramsci, Antonio: *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Hoare, Quintin & Nowell Smith, Geoffrey (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p.263.

[26]Gramsci (1971), p.149.

[27]Gramsci (1971), pp.57-58.

the hegemony of a specific social group over the national society, a hegemony established through apparently non-political organisations such as the Church, schools, and the family. Thus the state can be seen to intervene in all aspects of national life; even those spaces determined 'private' (the family home for example) are infiltrated by the mechanisms of the state (through the media, legislation and so on).

Thus social control can be seen to operate through negotiations between force and consent. Political institutions cannot be reduced to repression alone; like civil society they exercise both force and ideological control manifested as hegemony:

> ...Gramsci goes beyond a view of the State as an *instrument* of a class. The State is a class State in that it creates conditions under which a certain class can develop fully, but it acts in the name of universal interests within a field of constantly changing equilibria between the dominant class and subaltern groups. The interests of the subordinate groups must have some concrete and not simply ideological weight.[28]

In this context Althusser's ideological state apparatuses can be equated with Gramsci's notion of civil society[29]. Althusser describes ideology as 'the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence'[30]. In other words, we have a relationship with the world which we perceive as natural and yet which is constructed by ideology. This ideology emanates from the apparatus of the state; the Church,

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[28]Showstack Sassoon, Anne: *Gramsci's Politics*, 2nd. edn. (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p.119.

[29]Althusser, Louis: 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses', in Brewster, B.(ed.): *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (London: New Left Books, 1971), pp.121-173.

[30]Althusser (1971), p.153.

the media and cultural production, and education (Gramsci's civil society). These apparatuses work alongside coercive mechanisms to interpellate us as 'concrete subjects'[31], defining for us a subject position from which we in turn subject ourselves to the dominant order. Debray describes this process as 'une domination symbolique' through which the subject incorporates the very conditions of his or her subjection[32]. Terry Eagleton uses literature to illustrate this ideological interpellation:

> From the infant school to the University faculty,
> literature is a vital instrument for the insertion
> of individuals into the perceptual and symbolic
> forms of the dominant ideological formation, able to
> accomplish this function with a 'naturalness',
> spontaneity and experiential immediacy possible to
> no other ideological practice.[33]

Through the ideology of nationalism the state interpellates us as citizens. Thus the flag-waving patriotism described above can seem both entirely natural and enjoyable[34].

The Construction of French National Identity

It is clear that definitions of the nation can not be reduced to questions of culture and identity alone. The nation is

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[31]Althusser (1971), p.162.

[32]Debray (1993), p.65.

[33]Eagleton, Terry: *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: Verso, 1976), p.56.

[34]Despite the similarities between Gramsci's 'civil society' and Althusser's 'ideological state apparatuses' it is vital to establish a distinction between Althusser's structuralist account of a subject position fixed within ideology and Gramsci's description of ideology as a process of negotiation and consent which enables shifts in relations of power. Gramsci's acount is thus more useful for the present discussion as it permits theorisation of the changing dynamics of Franco-American relations and concepts of nation.

indeed an imagined community but it is also a nation-state, involved in power and administration through the ideological and coercive apparatus of the state. Let us now turn to the specific example of France and the processes by which this state constructs a sense of national identity. France has a long history of clearly defined, centralised national identity manifested by an enduring tradition of political, administrative and cultural centralisation. This tradition is:

> ...deeply rooted in the nation's past, being strengthened with each major shift of regime from absolute monarchy through revolutionary jacobinism to the setting up of an administrative infrastructure under Napoléon. This tradition continued throughout the Third Republic and no doubt accounts for the pejorative sense the French terms *provincial* or *province* acquired during this period.[35]

France has moved towards decentralisation since the Liberation period and, as described in the preceding chapter, since 1981 and the advent of a Socialist government, national identities in France have become increasingly fragmented. Early Socialist linking of economic policy to a nationalist strategy proved ineffective in the globalised market-place and thus a change in economic practices along with an acknowledgement of the multi-cultural nature of French society led to a weakening of a single, central national identity. Nevertheless it should be stressed that this was an undermining, a questioning, rather than a dismissal of such an identity. Indeed, as David Looseley points out, the process of cultural and administrative decentralisation can be seen as a means of

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[35]Looseley, David: 'Paris Versus the Provinces: Cultural Decentralization Since 1945', in Cook, Malcolm (ed.): *French Culture Since 1945* (London: Longman, 1993), pp.217-240 (p.217).

disseminating more successfully a national culture forged in Paris. The idea of the nation and of national identity remains an important ideological structuring system in France.

The construction of a national cinema

A vital means of constructing and maintaining national identity is through cultural production. In the words of Timothy Brennan, 'Nations then are imaginary constructs that depend for their existence on an apparatus of cultural fictions...'[36]. The role of cultural production as a means of 'gaining' the nation is made explicit in France by the continuing existence of a centralised Ministry of Culture. Audiovisual and cinematic production play a significant part in this construction process in France; witness for example France's mobilisation over the GATT debates and its fierce protection of French and European cinema industries. It is not insignificant that in other European countries this debate was seen as a dual discussion between the United States and France[37].

Central to the construction of a 'national cinema' in France is the *Centre National de la Cinématographie (CNC)*, a division of the *Ministère de la Culture* devoted specifically to cinematic and audiovisual production. The *CNC* is responsible for the regulation of finance; administering state budgets and tax incentives, managing investment programmes with both European and non-European states and participating

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[36]Brennan, Timothy: 'The National Longing for Form', in Bhabha, Homi (ed.): *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.44-70 (p.49).

[37]See Chapter Three.

in research into new technologies. It is also responsible for legislative practices and for establishing and regulating relations with those working in the domain of the audiovisual. Perhaps most significantly for the present discussion, the *CNC* ensures the promotion of cinema and the protection of the *'patrimoine'*. This it does through support of national and international film and television festivals, the promotion of French cinema abroad, finance and support for education and training, ciné-clubs, and *'cinémas d'art et essai'*, and through the protection and diffusion of French cinematic heritage via the *Cinémathèque*[38]. It is the *CNC* that determines what constitutes a French film, a vital process as international co-productions become increasingly frequent. In order to be termed 'French' a film must be produced by French nationals or E.U. members and it must involve French writers, actors, directors or technicians. If filmed in a studio, this must be located in mainland France or in French overseas territories and finally the film must be developed and edited in a similarly situated laboratory. The *CNC* plays a vital role in the creation, protection and diffusion of a French cinematic product. As a central part of French cultural heritage and thus of national identity, subsequent French governments, via the Ministry of Culture and the *CNC*, have ensured the survival of French cinema despite constant competition from the United States, and hence the continuing dissemination of a specifically French cultural identity. The importance of state protection for European cinematic

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[38]Tavenas, Stéphane & Volard, François: *Guide du cinéma européen: les sources de financement de la production* (Paris: Editions Ramsay/Eurocinéma, 1989).

production is made manifest by a comparison between France and Britain. In France in 1994 the United States attained 57.6 percent of the market share, clearly a high figure. However, French production achieved 34.8 percent of the market share, statistics which compare favourably with Britain where American films attained 87 percent of market share and British production only 4.7 percent[39]. The British government does not support and protect indigenous cinematic production in a manner comparable to that of France a fact which serves to underline the vital role of the *CNC* in the maintenance of French cinema. Moreover, it would seem that its very existence is testimony to the importance of cinematic production as part of the national cultural identity. It is significant that as many countries celebrated the 100th anniversary of cinema in 1996, celebrations of the event were held throughout France in 1995 as the birth of cinema was traced back to the Lumières brothers in 1895. Thus cinema was presented as a *French* invention, an intrinsic part of the national cultural heritage.

Differentiation from Hollywood: art and entertainment, the global and the local

However, it is not sufficient to simply define French national cinema in terms of the role of the *CNC* and its discourses. Just as definitions of the nation are complex and shifting so cinema itself is an extremely multifarious system made up of films themselves, the discourses and images which surround and penetrate them and the industrial and cultural institutions

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[39]Figures supplied by the *CNC*: *CNC info*, no.256, May 1995.

within which they are produced, distributed and exhibited. The identification of a national cinema necessarily denies this plurality as it is based upon a sense of coherence and homogeneity. Just as the nation is defined through similarity and difference so national cinemas are posited against an 'other'; in France this role is given to Hollywood, the dominant 'other'. As Andrew Higson points out, there exist two central methods of establishing the unity of a national cinema:

> First, there is the method of comparing and contrasting one cinema to another, thereby establishing varying degrees of otherness. Second, there is what might be termed a more inward-looking process, exploring the cinema of a nation in relation to other already existing economies and cultures of that nation state.[40]

Clearly both practices can be seen at work in France where the aforementioned discourses surrounding the remake process demonstrate differentiation from the United States, and the enduring popularity of literary adaptations and films based upon moments in French history show an interrogation of other aspects of the national culture. This inward-looking process can enable an acknowledgement of the 'others' of French society (through cinema of the regions, 'beur' cinema and so on). Yet it can also signal further homogenisation as 'minorities' are used to reinforce the 'majority' (the nation); thus the Provence of *Jean de Florette* is mobilised to suggest both a specific region and a space which, through tradition and history, is intrinsically 'French'.

However, the establishment of a specifically national

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[40]Higson, Andrew: 'The Concept of National Cinema', *Screen*, 30.4, Autumn, 1989, pp.36-46 (p.38).

cinematic identity is problematised by the location of cinematic production in what is essentially an international industry. In order to achieve commercial success films must conform to standards which, although originating in Hollywood, are now globally dominant. Thus national cinemas are faced with the paradox of attempting to create specifically national cultural artefacts within the context of a global industry. Indeed this interface between the global and the local has become increasingly important in the capitalist world order of the 1980s and 1990s, causing a sense of disorientation which tends to find solace in the discourses of nationalism and heritage:

> Globalization is profoundly transforming our apprehension of the world: it is provoking a new sense of orientation and disorientation, new senses of placed and placeless identity. The global-local nexus is associated with new relations between space and place, fixity and mobility, centre and periphery, 'real' and 'virtual' space, 'inside' and 'outside', frontier and territory.[41]

The traditional answer to this dilemma in Europe has been the production of a 'cinema of quality', a state-subsidised art cinema which is mobilised against Hollywood's 'mass production'[42]. These films are often based upon other national cultural artefacts (classic novels for example) and involve prestigious actors, directors and other personnel. As Ginette Vincendeau demonstrates, these films borrow Hollywood's big-budget production values whilst differentiating themselves through subject matter (frequently historical and/or literary)

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[41]Robins, Kevin: 'Tradition and Translation: National Culture in its Global Context', in Corner, John & Harvey, Sylvia (eds.): *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp.21-44 (p.41).

[42]Higson (1989), p.41.

and language. As such they can be seen to form a contrast with French auteur cinema which opposes Hollywood through *mise en scène* and subject matter which tends to be non-historical/non-literary[43].

Thus, just as national identities are constructed through difference, so a national cinema is established through differentiation from Hollywood, the dominant other. This binary opposition clearly feeds into the discourse surrounding remakes and the positing of French high cultural artefacts, copied and popularised by Hollywood. The establishment of a national 'cinema of quality' in France in opposition to American mass culture demonstrates anxieties about globalisation and the undermining of European and French identity. French outbursts against American cultural imperialism conveniently forget France's own enduring claim to universality. It is perhaps the weakening of such a project and the perceived homogenisation of global capitalism that makes the construction of national cultures so urgent.

However, the identification of French art cinema as a specifically national product is itself problematised by the fact that these films also circulate in a global market. As Andrew Higson explains:

> ...the market for art cinema is indeed decidedly international, as is the network of film festivals and reviewing practices, and other means of achieving a critical reputation and both a national and an international space for such films.[44]

Indeed, as demonstrated in Chapter One, the establishment of

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[43]Vincendeau, Ginette:'Unsettling Memories', *Sight and Sound*, July 1995, pp.30-32.

[44]Higson (1989), p.41.

a binary opposition between so-called 'art' and 'popular'
cinemas is far from straightforward. All cinematic products
are commodities functioning in the globalised market place.
Art cinemas are an attempt to create a particular space within
this market, a space which is differentiated from that much
larger space occupied by Hollywood. This space is thus within
the wider cinematic framework, not external to it:

> Art Cinema, fundamentally, is a means of producing
> and sustaining a division within the field of cinema
> overall, a division that functions economically,
> ideologically, and aesthetically. The terms of that
> division are constructed through a discrimination of
> art and industry, culture and entertainment, meaning
> and profit. However, the division and its
> discrimination do not, in general, function so as to
> challenge the economic, ideological and aesthetic
> bases of the cinematic institution as it currently
> exists. They function, instead, so as to carve out
> a space, a sector within it, one which can be
> inhabited, so to speak, by national industries and
> national film-makers whose existence would otherwise
> be threatened by the domination of Hollywood.[45]

In other words, both 'art' cinema and 'popular' cinema operate
within the same market yet they compete using slightly
different tools. Despite invective against the commercial
nature of 'mass' cinema, 'art' cinema does not then
fundamentally alter the structures of this commercial
industry. This task falls to radical avant-garde film-making
which can be seen to be located at the margins of 'art' cinema
or in 'a different social and cinematic space altogether'[46].

Thus it would seem clear that the distinction between the
French 'national' cinematic product as 'art' and the Hollywood
product as popular culture designed for mass appeal is

[45]Neale, Steven: 'Art Cinema as Institution', *Screen*, vol.22,
no.1, 1981, pp.11-39 (p.37).

[46]Neale (1981), p.37.

somewhat reductive. It should be noted that France does not produce 'high' cultural artefacts alone. Indeed some of the most successful films in France in recent years have not been American productions but indigenous popular works, for example comedies such as *Les Visiteurs* (1993), and big budget heritage films such as *Germinal* (1993) which, through successful marketing and wide distribution, succeed in being representative of both quality cinema and mass-market popular entertainment. It is significant that of a list of the top fifty-eight films in France since 1956, in terms of box office revenue, twenty-five are French and thirteen of these are comedies[47].

It would seem that the identification of a specific, homogenous French cinematic identity, defined through the discourses of 'art' and 'quality', is not a straightforward process. It should be noted that so-called 'French' films are frequently the result of international, often European, co-productions, so even if they do meet the *CNC*'s definition of a French film their identification as purely national products is highly problematic; it is clear that French cinema is part of a wider European cinematic industry. Moreover, Hollywood itself can be seen as part of French national cinema. Through its enduring penetration of overseas markets, Hollywood production has become part of the cultural landscape of these nations, 'It is now anyway, part of Europe's own popular culture and American images, icons and genres can themselves

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[47]*CNC* (1995), p. 33. It should also be noted that many of the films remade are 'popular' films, frequently comedies.

be employed to explore aspects of European cultural
identity'[48]. Above all it is vital to note the plurality of
French cinemas. Just as it is impossible to define a unique,
entire identity for cinema itself, so cinematic production in
France is diverse and fragmented. It is composed of both the
high cultural artefacts and the popular production already
referred to yet this binary identity is itself dispersed by
minority cinemas, for example 'beur film', women's film,
cinema of the regions and so on. The establishment of a
national cinema necessitates a form of 'internal cultural
colonialism'[49]. Along with the plurality of cinematic
discourses themselves, the diversity of production is denied
in order to enable the construction of a dominant, national
cinematic entity.

Cinematic constructions of the 'national'

Nevertheless, just as it is vital not to deny the importance
of the nation as an organising concept so we should not ignore
the construction of national cinemas despite the difficulties
inherent to definitions of this discursive strategy. Nations
mobilise films and other cultural artefacts in order to
disseminate and reinforce a specific 'national' identity.

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[48]McLoone, Martin: 'National Cinema and Cultural Identity:
Ireland and Europe', in Hainsworth, Paul, Hill, John &
McLoone, Martin (eds.): *Border Crossing: Film in Ireland,
Britain and Europe* (Belfast: IIS/BFI, 1994), pp.146-173
(p.151). A fine example of this process can be perceived in
French popular music where the singer Johnny Hallyday has
constructed his image around American icons (Harley-Davidson
motorcycles, cowboy boots and videos shot in the United
States) and yet is perceived as an intrinsically French
product, 'notre rocker national'; the images of Americana have
been appropriated and 'nationalised'.

[49]Higson (1989), p.44.

Moreover, either explicitly or implicitly films interrogate the discourses of their particular moment and place of production:

> Films are not reality but they never totally get rid
> of the actual situation; like mirrors which frame,
> set limits, sometimes distort, but eventually
> reflect what is in front of them, films exhibit
> aspects of the society which produces them.[50]

In other words, however precarious definitions of the 'nation' and of 'national cinemas' may be, films can be seen to emerge from, and to enter into debate with, specific national constructions.

It is then necessary to determine how cinemas establish particular cultural identities, how individual films are located within, and penetrated by, discourses of the 'national', and how these films interpellate 'national' audiences. Andrew Higson suggests that in order to establish the cultural identity of a national cinema it is vital to examine the narrative content or subject matter of a particular group of films, the 'sensibility' or world-view of these films, and their style or 'formal systems of representation' (for example genres and aesthetic and industrial codes and conventions)[51]. However, attention should not be paid to the filmic text alone; rather all those discourses which construct that which is 'cinema' (finance, distribution and exhibition, critical discourse, star personas and so on) should be interrogated so as to reveal the manner in which they can be seen to construct and mobilise a specific

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[50]Sorlin, Pierre: *European Cinema, European Societies 1939-1990* (London: Routledge, 1991), p.14.

[51]Higson (1989), p.43.

national identity.

Spectatorship and the Construction of National Audiences

It is essential not to limit this examination to production alone; a national identity can also be seen to be constructed through the process of spectatorship or consumption. In order for a film to possess a national identity it must be received as such by its audience. There exist a number of different audiences for individual films, both within particular nation-states and external to them, and thus it is necessary to examine both the ways in which films construct 'national' audiences and the processes by which audiences use films to establish a sense of their own identity within the nation. As Andrew Higson points out, this stress on the point of consumption:

> [...]involves a shift in emphasis away from the analysis of film texts as vehicles for the articulation of nationalist sentiment and the interpellation of the implied national spectator, to an analysis of how actual audiences construct their cultural identity in relation to the various products of the national and international film and television industries, and the conditions under which this is achieved.[52]

The construction of the audience: 'imagined communities'

This distinction between the filmic production of national discourse and constructions of national or non-national identities through the activity of consumption suggests a binary division which is central to much of the debate surrounding the notion of 'audience'. Typically theorists have posited a two-way definition of the audience; the spectator is

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[52]Higson (1989), p.46.

both a textual subject and/or a real member of the social world[53]. As Ien Ang demonstrates, the somewhat uneasy hovering between these two constructions of the audience has tended to culminate in 'the abstracted reification' of the individual spectator, in an examination of the audience as produced by the cinematic or televisual text and a subsequent bracketing of specific socio-historical realities[54]. This particular division has been extended through further binary oppositions; for example between production and consumption, senders and recipients, critical and non-critical spectatorship, and audiences as 'markets' to be conquered and gratified or as a 'public' to be instructed and improved[55].

These oppositions enable and sustain a vision of the audience as a perceivable mass which remains passive in the face of ideological manipulation. Discussing the distinction between audience as market and/or public, Jon Cruz and Justin Lewis point out the role of such distinctions in the perception of audience as 'mass':

> Within this market-versus-morals framework, the meaning of the audience came to rest, always tendentiously, on a simple presupposition: "Audience" assumed an assembly of passive yet malleable listeners whose attention was devoted to an externally produced communication, a view rooted in the earlier debate over the new industrially dependent mass society during the early twentieth century.[56]

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[53]Ang, Ien: *Desperately Seeking the Audience* (London: Routledge, 1991). Mayne, Judith: *Cinema and Spectatorship* (London: Routledge, 1993).

[54]Ang (1991), p.13.

[55]Ang (1991), p.23-28, Mayne (1993), p.3.

[56]Cruz, Jon & Lewis, Justin: *Viewing, Reading, Listening: Audiences and Cultural Reception* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), p.8.

This construction of the audience is clearly itself an ideological formation, part of the ideology of mass culture so central to the emergent industrialisation of the early twentieth century[57]. Indeed the very process of constructing an identifiable audience, both by those who produce media artefacts and those who produce the discourses surrounding them, is a means of measuring and thus of power and control. Ien Ang compares this process to Foucault's notion of a 'technology of power' in which the desire to exert control over groups of people is 'connected to and articulated in the institutionalized production of knowledge about them'[58].

The notion of a mass, homogenous audience must be understood as a discursive construct. Ien Ang describes the audience as a 'taxonomic collective'; unrelated individuals who form a group because each one shares a specific characteristic, the act of spectatorship[59]. Just like the nation, the 'audience' is an imagined community. This is especially true of the audience for mass media. It is possible to actually see the audience for a concert or a sporting event as spectators gather in the stadium or the concert hall. However, television audiences are dispersed, they cannot be viewed in any single gesture. Nevertheless, as they sit at home watching particular programmes, television viewers are aware that millions of fellow citizens are doing just the same thing, thus a sense of 'imagined community' is created.

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[57]Ang, Ien: *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*, trans. Couling, Della (London: University Paperbacks, 1985), p.114.

[58]Ang (1991), p.57.

[59]Ang (1991), p.33.

This is subsequently recreated by the discourses surrounding the viewing process[60]. The cinema audience has traditionally fallen between these two taxonomies. The cinema viewer is physically surrounded by other spectators in a specific cinema and thus a definable audience can be perceived. Yet the spectator is aware that other viewers in other cinemas are watching, have watched, and will watch the same film thus the imagined community of the cinema is dispersed across both space and time. As discussed in Chapter One, the limits of these 'communities' are gradually being extended and even discarded through the development of global media and communication networks such as satellite television and the internet, and as films are increasingly viewed on video and television. Although such changes do not negate descriptions of the audience as an 'imagined community' of individuals related only through the act of viewing, they do underline the highly problematic and purely discursive nature of attempts to posit a measurable 'mass' audience.

Fragmenting the audience

Clearly any attempt to examine spectatorship and viewing practices necessitates a fragmentation of this notion of a mass audience and its immanent binary oppositions. It is vital to discern who watches what, how they watch it and what they do with it in specific socio-historical contexts. By combining three traditional approaches to audience study (effects, uses

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[60]Thus the mass media can be seen to continue the role of print capitalism in the creation of a sense of nation.

and gratifications, and context[61]), a study of this kind is able to exploit their strengths and yet avoid individual gaps and pitfalls. Evidently any discussion of a national audience is extremely problematic; when we talk about a national film do we assume that it must have a national audience (as does Andrew Higson) and if so does this restrict the definition to popular film as the only film to reach a genuinely 'nation-wide' audience? If we accept this to be true then can popular Hollywood productions be seen as part of specific national cinemas, reaching as they do 'national' audiences?

Such overarching definitions demand dissection. Audiences are highly diverse and fragmented. They are not the unified mass outlined above. As Shaun Moores argues, audiences exist outside the discourses which construct them as measurable entities yet this 'reality', '[...]is a dispersed and embedded set of everyday practices which always finally eludes attempts to fix and objectify it - something more than just an "invisible fiction"'[62]. Spectators are differentiated through culture and history (people from different cultural formations at different times will view films in different ways) and again through race, gender, class, and sexuality. It is thus

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[61]An 'effects' approach perceives the audience as being influenced in an unmediated fashion by the films and programmes it views. Thus this approach would establish straighforward links between viewing habits and behaviour. A 'uses and gratifications' approach would posit a more mediated relationship in which audiences view film and television in various ways and then 'use' what they have seen, also in various ways, in their behaviour. Clearly this permits some agency for the viewer, she/he does not simply reflect behaviour on screen as the 'effects' approach suggests. Finally, a 'context' approach would examine the socio-historical context of any act of spectatorship thus avoiding the positivism of the two previous approaches.

[62]Moores, Shaun: *Interpreting Audiences: The Ethnography of Media Consumption* (London: Sage, 1993), p.2.

vital to carve out a space between the viewing positions created by films, which can be limited and homogenising, and the actual positions taken up by spectators. Clearly viewing practices differ according to where and when a film is shown and who makes up the audience; contrast the 1940s American families at whom *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) was aimed and its current appropriation by gay male spectators as part of the oeuvre of Judy Garland, an icon for many gay men.

The importance of consumption in the forging of national cultural identities, and the role of socio-historical contextualisation in determining viewing practices is made explicit by the variations in reception of cinematic works inside and outside their country of production. Consider once again Claude Berri's film of 1986, *Jean de Florette*. At first sight the film can certainly be considered as the product of a specifically French cinematic culture, the 'cinema of quality'; it is based upon a novel by Marcel Pagnol, it has a prestigious director and features two stars of French cinema, Yves Montand and Gérard Depardieu, and it focuses lovingly on the French landscape. However, the film was not a high cultural artefact; indeed it was one of the most popular films in France for many years, reaping huge profits at the box office. Moreover, as outlined above, the film played upon the local/national nexus, constructing an image of France or 'Frenchness', of national identity, through the representation of a specific region and its various myths and traditions. As such the film can be seen to arise from, and indeed to reinforce, the anxieties attendant upon an era of increasing globalisation and an ensuing recourse to local identities. The film changed as it was exported to the United States. Here it

was subtitled thus taking on the status of 'art' cinema. Although it achieved relative success, the audience it attracted was composed of those possessing the cultural capital necessary for the consumption of a subtitled film, clearly a marked contrast to the popular French audience. Furthermore, the film's regional specificities are unlikely to have been apparent to American viewers. As the film was subtitled and exhibited in art-house cinemas so it became something other, an art film located in, and dealing with France; its mobilisation of the local was rendered invisible. Thus it can be seen that different national identities for *Jean de Florette* were constructed through viewing processes external and internal to the nation of production. Clearly national cinematic identities shift and alter according to the cultural and historical location of both the moment of production and consumption.

Taste and consumption

The work of Pierre Bourdieu can provide a useful theoretical tool for a fragmentation of the cinema audience, particularly in terms of class difference. His examination of the relationship between social institutions, systems of thought, and different forms of material and symbolic power, discussed in Chapter One, demonstrates the socially bound nature of different forms of taste and consumption:

> Contre l'idéologie charismatique qui tient les goûts en matière de culture légitime pour un don de la nature, l'observation scientifique montre que les besoins culturels sont le produit de l'éducation: l'enquête établit que toutes les pratiques culturelles (fréquentation des musées, des concerts, des expositions, lecture, etc.) et les préférences en matière de littérature, de peinture ou de musique, sont étroitement liées au niveau

d'instruction (mesuré au titre scolaire ou au nombre d'années d'études), et secondairement à l'origine sociale.[63]

In other words, the material conditions of existence of different social classes determine the ways in which they relate to cultural artefacts. Bourdieu distinguishes between the aesthetic disposition and the popular aesthetic[64]. The former tends to involve detachment from the cultural object and an appreciation of formal and specifically aesthetic attributes. In terms of cinematic production, this would mean a concern with narrative devices, *mise en scène*, camera work and so on. The latter seeks a more immediate sensual gratification and tends to prefer mimetic codes of representation; so for example the cinema spectator will favour realist films which invite strong emotional involvement. As described in Chapter One, participation in either one of these forms of taste and judgement will depend upon the *habitus* of the individual agent (the particular location or environment constructed through class, education and so on) and its interaction with the wider socio-cultural *field* and the resulting struggle for cultural and material capital.

Bourdieu's work avoids both the Marxist view of any social act as being utterly devoid of free will, and opposing theories which describe acts occurring in some sort of vacuum. Rather the agent is situated in the habitus which provides 'un sens pratique', a practical understanding of the rules of the

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[63]Bourdieu, Pierre: *La Distinction: critique sociale de jugement* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1979), p.1.

[64]Bourdieu (1979), pp.29-36.

game, the 'right way to act'. This knowledge then inclines
agents to act in a certain manner in a certain situation and
yet these reactions are not necessarily calculated in any
conscious way and they are not just straightforward obedience
to a collection of rules, 'So, if consumption can always be
seen as an active process, it is also one that always moves
within (or against) structural constraints'[65].

Clearly agents from different social classes and social
groups will view different films in different ways according
to the dispositions inculcated through the habitus. This
evidently means that rather than attempting to talk about
homogenous national audiences we should examine the various
responses generated in different social groups and indeed
cultures. The notion of the habitus demonstrates that the
choice of which films we see, and the way in which we see
them, are intrinsically linked to our social and historical
position. The habitus provides a structured and structuring
set of dispositions which lead to different practices and this
clearly includes viewing practices. Bourdieu claims that 'Le
goût classe, et classe celui qui classe'[66]. Taste and
consumption practices form a process of distinction which
serves to reproduce systems of domination and subordination
between different social classes; variations in taste are not
only a matter of difference, they are also invested with forms
of 'capital', power and value.

The work of Bourdieu demonstrates not only the non-
immanent nature of definitions of high and popular culture but

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[65]Morley, David: *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies*
(London: Routledge, 1992), p.217.

[66]Bourdieu (1979), p.6.

also the contingent nature of all forms of consumption. Our position within a particular socio-cultural formation will determine the films we choose to watch and the ways in which we consume them. This underlines the need to move away from the notion that a filmic text can possess only one meaning, and of a mass audience able to consume specific texts in only one way. Bourdieu's exposal of the class-bound nature of audience consumption should be extended to gender, race, and sexuality in order to reveal the fragmentation of the audience and the polysemic nature of viewing practices; bear in mind once again the appropriation by various viewing 'groups' (gays and lesbians, teenagers, women, ethnic minorities and so on) of specific texts[67]. Shaun Moores stresses the importance of:

> [...]mapping diversity and distinction in media consumption. It enables us to open up a politics of cultural taste and value, shaking the foundations of established aesthetic judgements and giving voice to previously mocked or silenced social pleasures.[68]

Rather than positing a 'national' audience and a unified form of consumption it is vital to examine how a film is constructed (in terms of genre, narrative styles and aesthetic devices) and the audience's possession of the competence necessary for consumption of the film. Films may address a 'national' audience but it is clear that not all spectators will have the cultural capital needed to follow this

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[67]An interesting example of this type of appropriation is provided by *The Celluloid Closet* (Rob Epstein/Jeffrey Friedman, USA, 1995). The film examines the ways in which gays and lesbians have been represented in popular cinema. However, rather than condemn the films for their homophobia or denial of non-heterosexuality, interviewees are invited to discuss the ways in which they manage to construct positive images of homosexuality through their viewing of mainstream cinema.

[68]Moores (1993), p.8.

'dominant' reading whilst others will be able to read 'against the grain'. The enduring popularity of Hollywood productions in France means that many spectators are extremely competent in the consumption of these films. Does this then suggest that Hollywood productions are reaching a French 'national' audience and thus can be perceived as part of a French 'national' cinema?

Passive viewing/active viewing

As the work of Pierre Bourdieu demonstrates, processes of consumption and judgement are neither entirely free nor entirely determined. Much study of viewing practices has tended to suggest, somewhat pessimistically, that the 'mass' audience is always a passive victim of ideological manipulation; if the film interpellates a 'national' audience and a 'national' reading then the audience will comply. The fragmentation of the 'mass' audience discussed above clearly undermines such a vision. Different spectators can view films in different ways and they are able to consume in an active way thus refusing the dominant viewing position offered by the film. This is not to suggest that films can be viewed in any way; it is vital to distinguish between polysemy and pluralism. In his essay 'Encoding/ Decoding'[69], Stuart Hall stresses this distinction:

> Polysemy must not, however, be confused with pluralism. Connotative codes are *not* equal among themselves. Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world. These

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[69]Hall, Stuart: 'Encoding/Decoding', in Hall, S., Hobson, D., Lowe, A. & Willis, P. (eds.): *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-1979* (London: Hutchinson, 1980), pp.128-138.

constitute a *dominant cultural order*, though it is neither univocal nor uncontested.[70]

Echoing Gramsci, Hall suggests that all texts contain various possible decoding positions; a dominant-hegemonic position (the viewer accepts the dominant connoted meaning and its form of encoding), a negotiated position (the viewer accepts the legitimacy of the dominant meaning and code yet at the same time interprets according to his/her own rules), and an oppositional position (the viewer rejects the dominant meaning and code and re-encodes the text according to another structure of meaning)[71]. Texts then are open to numerous (yet not infinite) numbers of readings/viewings. However, Hall claims that these are 'structured in dominance'; the message will be encoded by the producer so as to perform a determining effect on the ensuing process of communication in favour of the dominant reading/viewing. In other words, producers of cultural artefacts will attempt to make sure that the preferred message is the one most likely to be taken.

Clearly as an heuristic device Hall's model is not without problems. These are evidently ideal, typical positions and there are difficulties inherent to any attempt to determine what are the preferred messages of a given text at a given moment and to assess audience acceptance of such readings. Nevertheless, the model is useful for the current discussion in that it demonstrates the polysemic nature of both cultural objects and those who consume them. Texts do not possess fixed, linear meanings and audiences are not

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[70]Hall (1980), p.134. Italics author's own.

[71]Hall (1980), pp.136-8.

undifferentiated masses. As Hall suggests, cultural consumption is a thoroughly liminal practice; spectators will tend to hover between critical and non-critical readings:

> So the truth is, negotiated readings are probably what most of us do most of the time. Only when you get to the well-organized, fully self-conscious revolutionary subject will you get a fully oppositional reading. Most of us are never entirely within the preferred reading or entirely against the whole grain of the text. We are boxing and coxing with it.[72]

These readings will depend upon the identity of the individual spectator and the socio-historical conjuncture in which he or she is located.

This recognition of the fragmentation of the audience and of viewing practices does then problematise attempts to posit a national audience. To claim the existence of such an audience is to suggest unity and homogeneity and thus to deny the pluralistic nature of contemporary Western cultures. Moreover, if the 'nationality' of a cinema audience is determined by the films it consumes then surely it is impossible to talk, for example, about a French audience, as non-French, especially Hollywood, productions find a wide audience in France. If the national identity of a film is determined by the audience it reaches, then again films designed for a global market can surely not be deemed 'national' products. This would leave only minority and experimental cinemas which are not produced for the global market and yet which clearly do not reach a 'nation-wide' audience.

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[72]Hall, Stuart: 'Reflections upon the Encoding/Decoding Model: An Interview with Stuart Hall', in Cruz & Lewis (1994), p.265.

Le Retour de Martin Guerre and *Sommersby*

This problematisation of constructions of national cinemas and national audiences reveals the sterility of the binary trajectory so frequently attributed to the remake practice. A recognition of the plural and shifting nature of national identities, cultures and consumers prohibits attempts to simply condemn the Hollywood remake as a straightforward pilfering of an intrinsically French cultural product and thus as a threat to French cultural identity. However, it should once again be stressed that this is not to deny that films do indeed enter into dialogue with constructions of the nation and interpellate national audiences albeit in a far more sophisticated fashion than the aforementioned discourse would suggest. Let us now turn to a particular French cinematic work and its Hollywood remake in order to examine how these films can be seen to engage in these processes. This will then enable us to move beyond the typically reductive accounts of the remake practice, towards a recognition of its thoroughly complex nature. The works in question are *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* (Daniel Vigne, France, 1982) and its 1993 remake, *Sommersby* (Jon Amiel, USA).

Both films are essentially costume dramas set in a specific moment in the national past. They share the same basic narrative structure; a man (Martin Guerre/Jack Sommersby) leaves his village, abandoning his wife and son. Years later a man returns claiming to be Guerre/Sommersby. His identity is initially accepted and he reinserts himself into the community proving to be a vastly improved husband, father, and worker. However, his identity is subsequently questioned

by fellow villagers and he is tried and eventually hanged. The two films achieved success both in their country of origin and abroad. *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* was a commercial success in France and, perhaps owing to critical approbation in Anglo-Saxon countries (Depardieu was elected best actor of 1982 by the Society of American Critics), it proved to be one of the most successful foreign films of the early 1980s in the United States. *Sommersby* also achieved box office success in both France and the United States. Evidently it must be stressed that as a subtitled work distributed in art-house cinemas, the commercial potential of Vigne's film in North America was slight when compared to that of *Sommersby*, which was supported by all the power of Hollywood distribution. Nevertheless, what these commercial trajectories do show is that the two films achieved a certain cross-over between the United States and France, a fact which both suggests a certain similarity and yet at the same time complicates any identification of the films as uniquely national products. This undermining of a specifically national identity is reinforced by the fact that a major co-producer of *Sommersby* was *Le Studio Canal Plus*, a French production company.

Le Retour de Martin Guerre is based upon a 'true' anecdote which has a long history in French popular folk tales. The written origins of the events are found in two contemporary accounts, published in Lyon in 1561, a year after the hanging of the imposter Arnaud du Tilh, and later in Paris in slightly altered versions[73]. The *Arrest Memorable* was

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[73]Gilbert, Ruth: 'Identity on Trial: Doubling and Dissembling in *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* and *Sommersby'*, *diatribe*, no. 3,Summer, 1994, pp.9-20.

written by Jean de Coras, the judge at the trial, and the *Admiranda historia* by Guillaume Le Sueur, a clerk. Since these initial accounts the tale has been retold many times, as a play, a novel, an operetta and, most recently, a stage musical entitled *Martin Guerre* by Boublil and Schonberg. Clearly this repetition of the narrative in various forms undermines any attempt to establish a binary opposition between Vigne's film and its American remake. *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* can surely not be perceived as an 'original', copied and thus threatened by Hollywood, when it is itself preceded by numerous other versions of the tale.

Le Retour de Martin Guerre and history

Vigne's film underlines the historical roots of its narrative through its insistence on historical veracity. Vigne and his script-writer, Jean-Claude Carrière, worked alongside an historical consultant, Natalie Zemon Davis, a specialist in the society and culture of early modern France. In her own account of the film-making process, Zemon Davis stresses her role in the film's representation of its historical and social location and her desire to ensure its accuracy[74]. This attempt to create a sense of historical verisimilitude is immediately made apparent by the film's opening voice-over narrative which reveals the precise temporal and geographical location of the events related, describing them as a 'real-life story'. The

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[74]Benson, Ed.: 'Martin Guerre, The Historian and the Filmmakers: An Interview with Natalie Zemon Davis', *Film and History*, vol.13, no.3, September 1983, pp.49-65. It is perhaps worth pointing out that Zemon-Davis is an American citizen, a fact which, given her input to the film's recreation of a specifically French history, can also be seen to undermine the work's identity as a uniquely French national product.

spectator is thus invited to view the film not as a piece of fiction, part of cinematic myth, but as a precise account of a true historical event. This veracity is reinforced by the film's attention to the details of costume and physical location and in its depiction of the everyday life of the village community. Zemon Davis discusses her admiration for René Allio's film of 1976, *Moi, Pierre Rivière* (based upon Michel Foucault's work of the same title[75]), explaining that she hoped to emulate its social and historical realism and its contemporary relevance. This comparison is significant as it locates Vigne's film in a specific French cinematic trend, beginning in the 1970s, which produced films dealing with the past but which deliberately rejected a positivist approach to history. In these films:

> History is no longer spectacularised but grounded in the reality of everyday life. The history now is the history of the ordinary people, no longer great men (sic) and great moments. History becomes popular history and not biopics.[76]

It is worth noting that Vigne himself, prior to *Martin Guerre*, was best known for a television series, *'Le paysage français'*, for which Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie worked as historical consultant. Le Roy Ladurie is renowned for his work with the *Annales* school which pioneered the study of a history rooted in common experience.

Sommersby and history

Sommersby's location in, and treatment of, history is very

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[75]Foucault, Michel: *Moi, Pierre Rivière, ayant égorgé ma mère, ma soeur et mon frère* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973).

[76]Hayward, Susan: *French National Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.269.

different. The narrative is set in the American South immediately after the Civil War. By transposing his film from sixteenth century France to a specifically American location, Amiel ruptures its connections to earlier accounts of the tale and thus denies its historical veracity. The film is set in a certain part of the United States at a certain moment but unlike *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* it does not reveal specificities. In contrast to the opening scenes of the French film which show images of Jean de Coras, the destination and source of the narrative, coupled with the aforementioned voice-over, the opening scenes of Amiel's film give no precise information. Time and location are suggested as we see soldiers in the uniforms of the Civil War, and 'Sommersby' travels from the cold of the North to the warmth of the South. However, whereas *Martin Guerre* sets out to suggest the truth of its history, its status as non-fiction, *Sommersby* is closer to other cinematic representations of the period, for example *Gone With the Wind*, than to verifiable historic sources. It is perhaps worth noting that some of the film's costumes were originally used in Selznick/Fleming's film.

Instead the opening scenes concentrate on close-up shots of Richard Gere (Sommersby). The use of the close-up in classical Hollywood cinema is a privileged means of gaining knowledge of the psyche of individual characters and through use of the close-up here, it is immediately demonstrated that this is to be a film centred around this individual character with whom the audience is invited to identify. This process continues throughout the film as most major encounters are constructed around shot/countershot, in marked contrast to *Martin Guerre* which tends to show characters within social

groups[77]. Indeed the film is essentially a love story, focusing on the relationship between Sommersby and his wife (Jodie Foster) and as we shall see, it eschews many of the issues raised in *Le Retour de Martin Guerre*. However, as a romantic drama, the film can be seen to fit into Hollywood genre conventions just as the source work can be located in a specific French tradition. As such the American film is clearly not a straightforward copy, it has become something other.

Cinema and history

The fact that both works are 'historical' films is not insignificant in terms of their location within, and construction of, the 'nation' and as such it is worth considering for a moment the relationships between cinema and history. The 'non-factual' history film can be seen to take three basic forms: the 'biopic' or those films that feature the lives of 'great' men and women (consider for example Richard Attenborough's *Gandhi* of 1982); the reconstruction of specific events of the past through the depiction of a fictional protagonist and his or her involvement in these events (Ken Loach's *Land and Freedom* of 1995); and costume dramas, those films which depict fictional protagonists in indeterminate historical locations[78]. Clearly both *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* and *Sommersby* can be seen to fall into the latter category. Although, as we have seen, their general

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[77]Vincendeau, Ginette: 'Hijacked', *Sight and Sound*, July 1993, pp.22-25.

[78]Gili, Jean: 'Film storico e film in costume', in Redi, Riccardo (ed.): *Cinema italiano sotto il fascismo* (Venice: Marsilio, 1979), p.129.

historical settings can be determined, they do not deal with specific moments or events but rather situate their narratives in identifiable historical 'periods' albeit in somewhat different ways.

However the distinction between these three categories is not at all clear cut. The insistence of Vigne's film upon its 'true' source may cause us to question its status as costume drama; should it perhaps be situated between costume drama and documentary? Such questions are clearly not relevant to *Sommersby* which makes no claims to historical fact and presents itself as pure fiction. Yet it should be stressed that however much history films may strive for veracity, adhering to what Marc Ferro terms 'la tradition érudite'[79] of historical authenticity, they remain fictions. However reliable their source materials may be, however many historians they may consult, the production of history films necessarily involves an imaginary reconstruction of the past. They are 'fictions' of the past, intrinsically rooted in the present in which they are produced and as such they are both representations of history and part of history themselves:

> L'hypothèse? Que le film, image ou non de la réalité, invention, est Histoire; le postulat? Que ce qui n'a pas eu lieu (et aussi pourquoi pas, ce qui a eu lieu), les croyances, les intentions, l'imaginaire de l'homme, c'est autant l'Histoire que l'Histoire.[80]

Clearly this recalls Foucault's genealogical account of history described in Chapter One. History is made up of both past and present, indeed through its reconstruction of the

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[79]Ferro, Marc: *Cinéma et histoire*, 2nd. edn. (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), p.219.

[80]Ferro (1993), p.40.

past it can be seen to shape the present. As the present shifts and changes so the past is open and not determined[81].

There can be no straightforward reflection of historical moments, rather the past is reconstructed according to the exigencies of the specific moment of production. However accurate the history film may claim to be, this is rarely its sole objective; instead history is reconstructed in order to say something about the present. Sue Harper claims that it is vital to abandon the search for veracity as a means of analysing the history film:

> ...it is far more important to establish the extent to which films provide a coherent symbolism for their audiences, or a set of class alliances. Such films, though they may have had little to do with historical fact, draw on deeply rooted cultural topoi.[82]

The history film's use of culturally specific references helps to explain their important role in constructions of myths of the nation. Representations of a 'national' past can be mobilised to underwrite the 'national' present. Yet, the propaganda film aside, these films should not be seen as simple reflections of dominant ideological discourses. Marcia Landy describes them in Gramscian terms, as types of folklore[83]. Folklore is not completely negative; rather it is the way in which subaltern groups make sense of and rationalise the conditions in which they live. These films

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[81]Lombardo, Patrizia: 'The Ephemeral and the Eternal: Reflections on History', in Roth, Michael S.(ed.): *Rediscovering History: Culture, Politics and the Psyche* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp.389-403.

[82]Harper, Sue: *Picturing the Past: The Rise and Fall of the British Costume Film* (London: BFI, 1994), pp.2-3.

[83]Landy, Marcia: *Film, Politics, and Gramsci* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), p.29.

then reveal the processes through which social power is both exercised and undermined. They can and do present the hegemony of the dominant classes but it should be stressed that this hegemony does not simply operate pyramidically from the top of society but is a constant negotiation between coercion and consent:

> The Gramscian conception of folklore and commonsense and its relation to hegemony has implications for rethinking the nature and meaning of subalternity, a repositioning of it away from melodramatic notions of oppressor and oppressed and towards a more complex understanding of how subalternity is implicated in existing social and cultural formations through mechanisms of coercion and (more relevant to cultural study) mechanisms of consent.[84]

The history film is a site for this struggle. It addresses people and events within the context of specific national narratives about the past. Through its reconstruction of a unified vision of the 'national' past it is able to mask social difference. Homi Bhabha claims that the dominant powers of national communities work to fill the gaps at their margins through specific textual strategies of 'cultural identification and discursive address'[85]. These function in the name of the nation and the people, making them the implicit subjects and objects of the narrative. This process can clearly be seen at work in the history film as it shapes the social imaginary through its reconstruction of a shared past. Yet these visions of the past (and by definition the present and the future) are not simply imposed upon the

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[84]Landy (1994), p.15. This argument clearly relates to the shifting relations of power and dominance in Franco-American relations described in the preceding chapters.

[85]Bhabha, Homi: 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation', in Bhabha, Homi (ed.): *Nation and Narration* (London, Routledge, 1990), pp.291-322 (p.292).

nation's spectators. This 'commonsense' historicising is indeed far more fragmented than may at first seem apparent. Through a complex process of coercion and consent, the history film becomes a site for the struggle over understanding. Sue Harper makes this process clear in her analysis of British historical films of the 1930s, 40s and 50s:

> For the middle classes, it was a means of enforcing class distinctions in cultural matters; but for the working classes, and probably also for women of that class and the lower-middle class, it was a means of imaginative liberation. It encouraged them to conceptualise social and sexual relations in a pre-industrial landscape. Popular historical films required considerable audience creativity, and that is the key to understanding mass taste, which is never simply the prisoner of common sense.[86]

It would then seem that history films are both reconstructions of the past and thus in some way 'true', and fictions and thus 'not true'. Tana Wollen sees this distinction in terms of history and memory[87]. She claims that history belongs to writing and is as such verifiable. Memory however belongs to oral transmission of personal and local identities and does not require verification[88]. The history film can be located between these two taxonomies; it reconstructs and records the past and thus is 'history' yet at the same time it is fiction, 'story' rather than 'history', and a part of memory. Our understanding of our collective past has traditionally been closely linked to popular memory (witness the early oral accounts of the life of Martin

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[86]Harper (1994), p.188.

[87]Wollen, Tana: 'Over Our Shoulders: Nostalgic Screen Fictions for the 1980s', in Corner, J.& Harvey, S. (eds.): *Enterprise and Heritage: Crosscurrents of National Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp.178-193.

[88]Wollen (1991), p.187.

Guerre). Film and television usurp this role as they present images of the collective past to a 'national' audience. The control of these media by powerful conglomerates suggests that they impede the continuing propogation of a truly 'popular' memory. Such control is vital to the process of nation building; indeed a central part of the process of becoming a nation involves telling people what to remember and what to forget:

> It is through this syntax of forgetting - or being obliged to forget - that the problematic identification of a national people becomes visible. The national subject is produced in that place where the daily plebiscite - the unitary number - circulates in the grand narrative of the will. However, the equivalence of will and plebiscite, the identity of part and whole, past and present, is cut across by the 'obligation to forget', or forgetting to remember.[89]

Such a 'stifling' of popular memory entails a battle for the past and the attempted construction of a framework within which to understand the present[90].

Yet, somewhat paradoxically, history films can also enable popular memory as they make visible people and events of the past that have otherwise been ignored. Indeed Robert Rosenstone suggests that filmed history fulfils the role once taken by oral history, the works of cinema supplanting the tales of bards and griots[91]. Certainly it should be stressed that films now play a crucial role in our understanding of our

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[89]Bhabha (1990), p.310.

[90]Foucault, Michel: 'Film and Popular Memory: An Interview with Michel Foucault', *Cahiers du cinéma*, 251-2, July-August 1974, trans. Jordin, Martin, pp.24-29.

[91]Rosenstone, Robert A.: '"Like Writing History with Lighting": Film historique/vérité historique', *Vingtième siècle: revue d'histoire*, no.46, April-June 1995, pp.162-175.

individual and collective past. The ways in which we see the past are closely linked to cinematic images. Indeed popular cinematic representations of history make available knowledge (albeit partial) hitherto reserved for the specialist.

Clearly the relationship between cinema and history is both complex, and vital to representations of the nation and the national past. Both *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* and *Sommersby*, despite their differing emphasis on historical authenticity, should be perceived as fictions which in various ways interrogate and mobilise aspects of national myth and identity. The variations between the films in historical and geographical location are important in terms of the position of the two films within the specific cinematic traditions from which they emerge but also in terms of the specific cultural references upon which they draw and the version of the national past and present to which they can be seen to give voice.

Le Retour de Martin Guerre and myths of the nation

The events of *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* take place between 1542 and 1560, a time during which France was involved in wars with Spain and the struggle between Catholicism and Protestantism. Evidently the Jacobin notion of a centralised national identity, forged by the Revolution, was not in existence at this time. This is a period during which French identities were in a process of construction. Central to this struggle for identity was religion and it is significant that the film informs us that Jean de Coras was a Protestant, killed during the notorious massacre of Saint Bartholomew in 1572, twelve years after the trial of Martin Guerre; the

instability of these times, the struggle for identity through religion, is thus underlined. However, Vigne and Carrière articulate this pre-Revolutionary moment through a post-Revolutionary ideology of liberty and universal human rights. Zemon Davis points out that the court scene is historically erroneous. The film depicts an open court, filled with the villagers and other spectators despite the fact that courts at this time were not open to the public and were thus far more forbidding than that shown in the film. Furthermore, a contrast is established between the superstition of the village Priest and the rationality of Coras. However, Zemon Davis claims that Coras did indeed believe in the devil and stated in his own account of the events that Arnaud du Tilh had conjured up a spirit in order to acquire his knowledge of Martin Guerre:

> With Coras, they tended to see him as a Protestant man of the Enlightenment. I could understand this, because Jean-Claude comes from a Protestant background and there's an important tradition in France that thinks of Protestantism in terms of the rational tolerance of Pierre Bayle rather than the zeal and doctrines of Calvin.[92]

It would seem that the film presents a moment in the nation's past from the perspective of subsequent French history. In this way the film enables an interrogation of the antecedents and foundations of a unified national identity based upon rationalism, liberty and justice.

Le Retour de Martin Guerre examines the very constitution of identity. Is identity determined through vision, the sight of Martin's bodily presence as he returns to the village, through the touch of the blind woman in the court room, or

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[92]Benson/Zemon Davis (1983), p.62.

through writing, Bertrande's signature? Each of these affirmations of identity is ultimately proved false and thus the film seems to suggest the instability of identity, its inessential and hence performative nature. Arnaud du Tilh, the imposter, proves that identity can be assumed by anyone. He is both Arnaud, Pansette and Martin and he fulfils the role of the latter more successfully than the 'first' Martin Guerre, finally filling the leggings made for him by his wife[93]. This usurpation of the 'original' Martin provides an interesting allegory of the remake process itself. Arnaud du Tilh's effective assumption of Martin's identity throws into doubt the latter's status as the 'original' Martin just as the remake process causes the vacillation of the 'original' film. Similarly it can be perceived as an allegory of the history film; the history film is fiction which tries to persuade the spectator of its authenticity just as Martin/Depardieu must persuade the villagers of *his* identity.

Vigne's film can thus be understood as a metaphor for the very construction of national identity, its instability and temporality, a metaphor which underlines and reinforces the previously discussed interrogation of a specifically French history and identity. Just as national identity is based upon similarity and difference so the acceptance of 'Martin's' identity as he returns to the village is founded both upon his similarity to the original Martin and upon difference, as, 'forgetting' names and faces he points out to what extent people have changed[94]. The film's articulation of identity as

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[93]Gilbert (1994), p.16.

[94]Gilbert (1994), p.15.

liminal and inherently unstable can be seen to coincide with the construction of national identity. National cultures may present themselves as stable and enduring but this is a necessary misrecognition. Instead, as previously discussed, they are in a constant process of construction, never fully formed and always shifting. This notion of the liminality of national identity is underlined by the interrogation of French history and identity perceived in *Le Retour de Martin Guerre*. It is surely not insignificant that the film was produced as the Socialist government came to power in France, heralding a period of both continuity (the reassertion of the French democratic tradition and cultural heritage) and change (a new plurality and a shift in what it meant to be French)[95]. Thus the film's very interrogation of the instability of identity enabled readings emerging from a 'micro' context of similar interrogation whilst at the same time engaging with a 'macro' context of longstanding tradition through the depiction of history[96].

Sommersby and myths of the nation

Jon Amiel's film, *Sommersby*, is also set in a time of uncertainty and change, the immediate aftermath of the American Civil War. In terms of the mobilisation of national myths and the film's identity as a national artefact this is

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[95]See Chapter Three.

[96]Interesting links can be established between this film and other costume dramas of the period. I am thinking particularly of *La Reine Margot* (Patrice Chéreau, 1995) which depicted the massacre of Saint Bartholomew and the intrigues in the French court which preceded and accompanied it, and which can thus also be seen to interrogate this pre-revolutionary moment from the perspective of the 1980s/1990s.

a significant choice. The Civil War and the reconstruction period which followed it can be seen as founding moments in the construction of American identity. Unlike *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* which focuses on a community, Amiel's film concentrates on an individual, the supposed Jack Sommersby. Thus the film plays upon the American tradition of individualism and individual effort, constructing a heroic representation of the enlightened saviour. Despite a similar narrative structure based upon the dissembling of identity, *Sommersby* differs from Vigne's film in that it does not attempt to question the construction of identity. This is perhaps significant in that the film emerges from an American society based upon the notion of the melting pot, the right to plurality and difference. 'Jack's' new identity serves as a metaphor for the reconstruction of American society and the enabling of this multi-cultural society. He represents the American capitalist dream that every man and woman can become what he or she wants to be through individual effort; identity is something to be earned. The representation of this conception of identity is reinforced by the significant difference in the ending of the two films. In Vigne's film the first Martin Guerre returns thus underlining the doubling and dissemination of identity that is a central theme of the film. We learn that Arnaud du Tilh is an imposter and yet his effective assumption of the role of Martin demonstrates the performative nature of identity. In *Sommersby* the opening scenes show the supposed Jack burying a body which we later learn is the real Jack Sommersby. The doubling of identity is thus not an issue in this film; indeed in an early scene we see Laurel, Jack's wife, putting out a photograph of her

husband, suggesting that identity can in some way be fixed and that such doubling is thus implausible. Horace Townsend earns the right to assume the identity of Jack Sommersby through his hard work and sacrifice on behalf of the village and his family. At the end of the film Townsend/Sommersby is hanged like Arnaud du Tilh. However, he is hanged for the past crimes of Sommersby, having chosen to retain the identity to which he has given rebirth through his attainment of peace and prosperity for the village community. The film does seem to suggest a certain complicity on the part of Jack's wife in his deception. Early scenes showing them looking at their reflections in a shaving mirror and her words 'Who is this man sitting in my kitchen?' suggest that she does not 'know' him but chooses to accept his identity. This is reinforced at the end of the film when she abandons her attempts to prove that he is Horace Townsend in order to save his life, accepting his right to take on the identity of her dead husband. Amiel's film does not then question the very construction of identity, showing its liminality and instability, rather it represents identity as something to be earned. Clearly this can be located within the ideology of an American capitalist meritocracy where what you are, or what you become, supposedly depends upon how hard you are prepared to work.

It is perhaps somewhat paradoxical that Amiel's film both shows Jack Sommersby earning his identity within the ideological context of a libertarian, capitalist society and yet at the same time represents him as a founder of the self-same society. The film's rather uncomfortable racial politics suggest that through the endeavours of the white hero, blacks and whites begin to work together thus establishing the

beginnings of the 'melting pot' culture. In contrast to the
curé in *Martin Guerre*, superstition here does not emanate from
the Reverend but from those Southerners who refuse to accept
the rebirth enabled by Jack and the construction of a 'new'
American identity. By depicting them as the 'bad' characters,
Amiel reinforces the film's affirmation of the foundation of
a specific ideological construction of American society. It is
significant that just as *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* was
produced as the Socialists came to power in France so
Sommersby was released as Bill Clinton became President in the
United States after years of Republican rule. In a review of
the film in *Sight and Sound*, Jason Drake describes Jack
Sommersby as a 'Clintonesque figure'[97], a comparison
reinforced by Richard Gere's vocal support for Clinton prior
to the presidential elections. Clinton based his campaign upon
an ideology of rebirth and renewal for American society, thus,
just as *Martin Guerre* engages with both a micro and a macro
national context, so *Sommersby*'s articulation of these themes
can be seen to voice myths of the national past and to emerge
from a specific national present. Indeed by making visible the
process of renewal after the Civil War and the foundations of
an enduring vision of American identity, the film enabled a
viewing which gave a sense of anchorage and stability to
contemporary plans for renewal.

Revolution and civil war

It is clearly not insignificant that both films interrogate
moments of great upheaval and social change in the national

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[97]Drake, Jason: Review of *Sommersby*, *Sight and Sound*, May 1993,
p.57.

past. *Sommersby* is manifestly set in the period of reconstruction which followed the American Civil War and, as suggested above, *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* can be seen to represent the period prior to the French Revolution in terms of revolutionary and post-revolutionary discourses of enlightenment, liberty and justice. Pierre Sorlin describes both these events as 'original shocks' or 'starting points' against which subsequent history is defined[98]. Constant interrogation emphasises their central position in national history and identity; since the earliest days of cinema there have been about 800 American films on the Civil War and forty French films on the Revolution[99]. Significantly Sorlin only cites films dealing explicitly with these events, ignoring those films which interrogate them implicitly. Marc Ferro discusses cinematic representations of history in terms of their 'lapsus' or 'zones de réalité non-visible' which, he claims, can reveal as much as, or perhaps more than, their manifest content, '...un film quel qu'il soit est toujours débordé par son contenu. Au-delà de la réalité représentée ils ont permis d'atteindre, chaque fois, une zone d'histoire jusque-là demeurée cachée, insaisissable, non-visible'[100]. The French Revolution can similarly be described as the latent content of *Martin Guerre* as the film depicts and/or suggests those aspects of French society which can be seen to pre-date and indeed give rise to the Revolution; the Wars of Religion

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[98]Sorlin, Pierre: *The Film in History: Restaging the Past* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980),pp.45-47.

[99]Sorlin (1980), p.47. Clearly the contrast in numbers can be explained by Hollywood's much greater production.

[100]Ferro (1993), p.61.

which led to the establishment of an absolute monarchy, the Enlightenment tradition, and the three 'estates' which made up French society prior to the Revolution: clergy (the *curé*), nobility (de Coras), and the third estate (including wealthy peasants such as the Guerre family)[101].

Both the Revolution and the Civil War are founding moments in the establishment of national identity. France was not a nation-state before the Revolution; indeed the creation of a unified nation was a central legacy of the revolutionary period. The Civil War can be seen to have a similar role in American history. Although the popular image of this war is of a battle to emancipate Southern slaves, like the French Revolution the Civil War was a bourgeois revolution[102]. The central issue for Lincoln was the preserving and strengthening of the American state:

> The old federal republic in which the national government had rarely touched the average citizen except through the post office gave way to a more centralised polity that taxed the people directly and created an internal revenue bureau to collect the taxes, drafted men into the army, expanded the jurisdiction of the federal courts, created a national currency and a national banking system, and established the first national agency for social welfare-the Freedman's bureau[103].

The war may have brought about the freedom of the slaves but it also established the political hegemony of the Northern industrial and financial bourgeoisie and laid the foundations

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[101]Callinicos, A., McGarr, P.& Rees, J.: 'Marxism and the Great French Revolution', *International Socialism*, no.43, June 1989.

[102]Callinicos, Alex: 'Bourgeois Revolutions and Historical Materialism', *International Socialism*, no.43, June, 1989, pp.113-171.

[103]McPherson, J.: *Battle Cry of Freedom* (New York, 1988), p.859, cited in Callinicos, p.155.

for the emergent capitalist nation-state.

Both the French Revolution and the American Civil War led to the overthrow of old feudal systems and the ensuing dominance of industrial capitalism. Thus each has resonances in the other culture (perhaps helping to explain the success of *Martin Guerre* and *Sommersby* both in France and the United States). Yet at the same time these events were the founding moments in the construction of the individual nation-state and as such are firmly rooted in the national past. Indeed, as discussed in the preceding chapter, not only have France and the United States constructed their respective national identities via these founding events, but their differing concepts of democracy and revolution have also long formed the corner-stone of Franco-American relations. Interrogation of these moments is vital as they are used to underwrite the national present (witness the use of the Revolution as a founding myth by the French Socialist party during the early 1980s) and moreover, as increasing globalisation led to a crisis in these democratic traditions throughout the 1980s. Thus the mobilisation of the Revolution of 1789 and the Civil War in *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* and *Sommersby* demonstrates the location of these films within a 'national' culture and their articulation of national myths.

Representing the past through the present
Despite their clear differences both of these films can be seen to articulate concerns about the national present through their representations of the national past. In the words of Colin McArthur, '[...] No matter what period history-writing or historical drama is ostensibly dealing with, in reality it

is providing for the ideological needs of the present'[104]. They are part of a wide cinematic tradition of historical drama which can be seen to shape collective memories, represent specific histories, and reconstruct national identities. As Anne Friedberg points out, cinema offers an ideal site for this type of interrogation and reconstruction of the past as through its 'mobilized, virtual gaze' it enables boundless travel through space and time[105]. She claims that in the act of cinema viewing the past is uprooted and becomes a part of the present, going on to state that by so bringing the past into the present, cinema radically changed the way people experienced both their collective and personal past. Clearly the history film is an exceptionally privileged site for the articulation and interrogation of national identities. As *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* and its American remake demonstrate, they enable focus on moments in the national past which in turn enable representation and/or critique of national myths and the construction of national identities, which can then make possible a fresh understanding of contemporary society.

This account of these two films serves to demonstrate some of the complex ways in which cinema mobilises national identity and is itself mobilised as part of that identity, underlining both the position of the films within specific national cinematic industries and their exchange and

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[104]McArthur, Colin: 'Historical Drama', in Bennett, Tony, Boy-Bowman, Susan, Mercer, Colin & Woolacott, Janet (eds.): *Popular Television and Film* (London: BFI, 1981), pp.288-301 (p.288).

[105]Friedberg, Anne: *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern* (Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1993).

interpenetration. Furthermore, this discussion of the films in terms of their articulation of the nation demonstrates the highly reductive nature of accounts of the remake as a straightforward copy of a French 'original' and as a threat to a specifically French national identity. As this analysis of *Sommersby* reveals, the remake does not simply copy the French film upon which it is based, rather it reworks its narrative elements within the context of the Hollywood industry, aesthetic, and history. The remake is then the product of another context; it is a new film and thus something entirely other. The French film and its remake are separate artefacts; indeed the production of a remake can be seen to create a new audience for the work upon which it was based, witness *Le Retour de Martin Guerre* which has recently been re-released on video in Britain as 'the film remade as *Sommersby*'. It does then seem that in the case of the cinematic remake, reworking and adaptation within another national context can be seen as an extension, an addition to the source film rather than as an explicit threat to its identity and the identity of its country of production.

A bout de souffle and *Breathless*

Clearly history is a privileged site for representations and interrogations of the national identity. However, as previously stressed, many other aspects of cinematic production and cinematic culture can also be mobilised to construct or 'narrate' the nation. Let us now then turn to *A bout de souffle* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1960) and its remake of 1983, *Breathless* (Jim McBride, USA), in order to examine to

what extent each of these films can be seen to constitute and/or transgress a particular national aesthetic.

A bout de souffle and French art cinema

Godard's film had an immediate and enduring impact on cinematic culture, both in France and beyond. Although the first full-length film of Godard's career, *A bout de souffle* was his most successful work in terms of the box-office, attracting almost 260,000 spectators in seven weeks of its first run in Paris in March 1960[106]. It was also a critical success, inciting much comment upon its innovation and transgression of the established codes of contemporary French cinema. Godard himself has stressed this innovation and its centrality to his project in *A bout de souffle*:

> De plus, *A bout de souffle* était le genre de film où tout était permis, c'était dans sa nature. Quoi que fassent les gens, tout pouvait s'intégrer au film. J'étais même parti de là. Je me disais: il y a déjà eu Bresson, il vient d'y avoir *Hiroshima*, un certain cinéma vient de se clore, il est peut-être fini, alors mettons le point final, montrons que tout est permis. Ce que je voulais, c'était partir d'une histoire conventionnelle et refaire, mais différement, tout le cinéma qui avait déjà été fait. Je voulais rendre aussi l'impression qu'on vient de trouver ou de ressentir les procédés du cinéma pour la première fois. L'ouverture à l'iris montrait qu'il était permis de retourner aux sources du cinéma et l'enchaîné venait de là, tout seul, comme si on venait de l'inventer.[107]

The film has since been canonised as a seminal work of the

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[106]Marie, Michel: '"It Really Makes You Sick!": Jean-Luc Godard's *A bout de souffle* (1959)', in Hayward, S. & Vincendeau, G, (eds.): *French Film, Texts and Contexts* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp.201-215.

[107]Bergala, Alain (ed.): *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma-Éditions de l'étoile, 1985),p.218.

nouvelle vague or 'New Wave'[108], a term bestowed upon the work of Godard and many of his contemporaries and used, particularly in France, to describe a specific cinematic practice made up of complex technical, aesthetic, and political positions. Consequently the film is commonly perceived as an exemplar of a typically French or European 'art' cinema, a high cultural artefact. This is perhaps especially true of external perceptions of *A bout de souffle*, for outside France the *nouvelle vague* tends to be defined quite straightforwardly as 'art' cinema, ignoring the complexities and diversity of the works subsumed under this title and their interrogation of the very concept of traditional 'art' cinema through the development of the *politique des auteurs*[109].

By describing Godard's film as 'art' cinema, critics conveniently situate it in a specifically French and European tradition of great art and high culture. As Richard Dyer and Ginette Vincendeau explain, European culture has traditionally been characterised internally in two somewhat contradictory ways; through emphasis on the past (consider the heritage film) and through modernity[110]. By invoking Europe as the foundation and site of modernity through recourse to the traditions of Enlightenment and rationalism, discourses on European identity establish an opposition between European

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[108]The term was in fact coined in the early 1960s by Françoise Giroud, editor of the then centre-left magazine *L'Express*, to describe the burgeoning French youth culture.

[109]Forbes, Jill: *The Cinema in France after the New Wave* (London: BFI/Macmillan, 1992), p.3.

[110]Dyer, R. & Vincendeau, G. (eds.): *Popular European Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.6.

culture and both 'vulgar mass culture'(read the United States) and the obscurantist forces of 'non-enlightened societies'[111]. Dyer and Vincendeau perceive two approaches to the modern in cinematic production; realism and modernism. The latter is typically perceived as a privileged manifestation of the high white tradition of European culture and is assumed to 'speak' a common European language. Via these two routes an 'art' cinema is constructed, a form of cinematic production which is considered able to cross national boundaries whilst reinforcing specific national cultures, and which is aimed at a clearly defined yet international audience.

The preceding chapters have established the problematic nature of any attempts to posit clearly defined 'French' or 'European', 'art' or 'popular' cinemas. Nevertheless such discourses merit mention at this juncture as both within its country of production and abroad, critical debate has incorporated A bout de souffle within the broad context of 'art' cinema. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, cinema can be perceived as a tripartite structure consisting of the commercial cinema, art cinema (which is at once both within and without commercial production), and experimental or avant-garde cinema. Pamela Falkenberg describes these divisions as the classical narrative cinema, the art cinema, and the modernist cinema[112]. Godard's film can be seen to originate in the third category along with much of his later work. The film

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[111]Dyer & Vincendeau (1992), p.7. The setting up of Islamic fundamentalism as Europe's principal 'other' provides a clear example of this type of construction.

[112]Falkenberg, Pamela:'Hollywood and the Art Cinema as a Bipolar Modeling System: A bout de souffle and Breathless', Wide Angle, vol.7, no.3, 1985, pp.44-53.

was produced on an extremely modest budget; 40 million francs at 1959 value or approximately half the average budget for French production of that period[113]. Although this money was provided by producer Georges de Beauregard, Godard had almost complete control of the project. He refused to use the machinery of the studio, preferring to shoot in natural light using a hand-held camera. The film's intertextuality, including allusions to high cultural artefacts such as Patricia's quotation of Faulkner's *Wild Palms*, made high cultural demands upon the audience. Experiments with dialogue and editing refused the coherence of a classical narrative trajectory. As a result he overturned many of the traditions of French art cinema, situating his work outside this genre and producing an innovative and independent 'modernist' work. However, unlike his later works which remained within avant-garde or experimental cinema, *A bout de souffle* was subsequently critically appropriated as an art cinema artefact. Its relative commercial success began this process and, as Godard's innovation influenced later films and became accepted cinematic practice, so it became the seminal film of the *nouvelle vague* and part of a different cinematic field. Indeed, as Susan Hayward points out, the early success of the New Wave films led producers to screen them in mainstream cinemas, thus relocating them within commercial production. However, this strategy proved inefficient as audiences rejected their experimentation and by 1963 very few of the so-called New Wave films were exhibited at all. Significantly, many of the directors involved in this work, for example

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[113]Marie (1990), p.201.

Truffaut and Chabrol, later joined mainstream production. Thus, somewhat paradoxically, early distribution practices shifted many of the films of the *nouvelle vague* from the avant-garde into the domain of commercial art cinema whilst also contributing to the demise of the 'movement'[114].

Nevertheless, through this location within the *nouvelle vague* and thus a French art/*auteur* cinema, Godard's film has been accorded a specifically French cinematic identity. The very term *nouvelle vague* confers homogeneity upon a group of films and directors which was in reality quite disparate. Moreover, by grouping works within a 'movement' which is commonly perceived as inherently and uniquely French, critical discourse, both within France and beyond, enables the description of these films as national products and ignores the complications to which this definition gives rise. The New Wave was seen by critics to rejuvenate French cinematic production, establishing a new 'French' identity and reasserting aesthetic dominance:

> Il y a dix ans le meilleur cinéma du monde était le cinéma italien. Sa 'nouvelle vague' offrait les noms de Vittorio de Sica, Fellini, Lattuada, Castellani, Visconti etc. Aujourd'hui le meilleur cinéma du monde est sans contredit le cinéma français.[115]

A bout de souffle and Hollywood cinema

This appropriation and incorporation of *A bout de souffle* within a European art cinema and a French national cinema clearly demands deconstruction. As previously stated, the film is highly intertextual. However its intertexts are not only the 'high' cultural items already referred to but also, and

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[114]Hayward (1993), p.235.

[115]Dutourd, Jean: *Carrefour*, 23 March 1960.

indeed more importantly, a welter of popular cultural artefacts. Godard's film demonstrates a fascination with the popular icons of contemporary France; the girlfriend visited by Michel in the early scenes of the film smokes Lucky Strikes and listens to Radio Luxembourg, Michel's drive from Marseilles to Paris suggests a new concept of France based upon tourism and the recent availability of the car.

The most striking and recurrent intertexts of *A bout de souffle* are its references to Hollywood cinema. The film's roots are evidently situated in the gangster films of the 1930s and 1940s and in *film noir*, a genre or style which was highly popular in the United States during the early days of Godard's work as a film critic and cinema spectator[116]. These roots are made explicit by the film's opening dedication. The introductory quotation to Truffaut's script, upon which the film was based, was from Stendhal and thus part of a specifically French high cultural tradition. In contrast, Godard dedicates his film to Monogram Pictures, a small American production company specialising in B movies, low budget westerns and crime series. Thus it would seem that Godard very deliberately names his intertexts, shifting his film from the domain of the specifically French to something other derived from mass culture and Hollywood.

The film's narrative clearly borrows from the genres referred to above, presenting as it does a criminal anti-hero doomed to failure and death by his love for a dangerous

[116]Smith, Steve: 'Godard and *Film Noir*: A Reading of *A bout de souffle*', *Nottingham French Studies*, vol.32, 1993, pp.65-73.

woman[117].   Godard   himself   commented   upon   the   film's

faithfulness to its Hollywood models, particularly in terms of

its ending:

> Ce qui m'a demandé du mal, c'est la fin. Le héros
> allait-il mourir? Au début, je pensais faire le
> contraire de, par exemple, *The Killing*: le gangster
> réussissait et partait pour L'Italie avec son
> argent. Mais c'était une anticonvention très
> conventionnelle, comme de faire réussir Nana dans
> *Vivre sa vie* et la montrer roulant en voiture. Je me
> suis dit à la fin que, puisqu'après tout mes
> ambitions avouées étaient de faire un film de
> gangsters normal, je n'avais pas à contredire
> systématiquement le genre: le type devait mourir.[118]

A bout de souffle contains abundant references to American

mass culture and Hollywood cinema. Michel is obsessed with

both, the former typified by American cars and the latter by

Humphrey Bogart. His love for Patricia, an American woman, is

bound up with these desires; he wants the woman to go with the

car and the films. This identification of Patricia with

American mass culture is made explicit by the telephone

conversation during which Michel refers to '*une belle

américaine*', meaning a car. Patricia overhears and assumes

that it is to she that he is referring. Michel models himself

upon Bogart, frequently running his finger across his lips in

a gesture copied from his cinematic hero. The film depicts

Michel outside a cinema which is showing *The Harder They Fall*

(Mark Robson, 1956), gazing at a photograph of Bogart, running

his fingers across his lips. The scene intercuts between

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[117]Although Patricia is not a typical *femme fatale* she is
equally dangerous. Michel refuses to leave Paris because of
his love for her and thus he can not escape capture and death.
She also displays some of the narcissism of *noir* women, asking
Michel to describe her best features and repeatedly examining
her reflection in the mirror during the long scene in her
bedroom.

[118]Bergala/Godard (1985), p.218.

Belmondo and Bogart, each in medium close-up and, as Steve Smith points out, filling the frame despite the diminutive size of the photo, and thus establishing an identification between the two:

> The shooting of the scene [...] unmistakably suggests the effect of a mirror; Michel's gaze is clearly an act of narcissistic identification. As he gazes at 'Bogey' he sees only an Imaginary construction of himself and with this his real adventure begins.[119]

Michel/Belmondo both is and isn't Bogart. He wears the fedora of the gangster and yet sports it at a jaunty angle thus transgressing gangster style whilst at the same time imitating it. The film takes place within the city, preferred location of the gangster film and *film noir*, yet here the city is not Los Angeles but Paris. Nevertheless, it is this imitation which propels the narrative; in enacting this imitation Michel must remain in Paris, must pursue Patricia, must die. In other words, he must fulfil the role of a *noir*/gangster hero, he must be Bogey. The film both transgresses and copies the codes of its cinematic intertexts but it is this imitation which decides the direction of the narrative.

This outline of *A bout de souffle*'s Hollywood intertexts serves to demonstrate the film's relationship with American popular culture. Clearly these 'Americanisms' problematise the previously described attempts to locate Godard's film within a specifically French art cinema. The film overtly borrows from and imitates cinematic genres which are neither French nor a part of high culture and thus its own identity is thrown into question.

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[119]Smith (1993), p.68.

Godard was not the only French director of the period to seek his cinematic roots in American mass culture. Indeed, as Jill Forbes demonstrates, such influence was apparent in many French films of the 1950s and 1960s, particularly the *'polars'* or *'séries noires'* which were often adapted from translations of popular American detective stories and which were strongly influenced by the conventions of *film noir*[120]. Amongst these films were those of Jean-Pierre Melville, for example *Bob le Flambeur* of 1956. Godard openly refers to this film in *A bout de souffle* during the scene in Tolmatchoff's travel agency and Melville appears in Godard's work as the writer Parvulesco[121]. By situating his film within this wider intertextuality, Godard further undermines notions of a specifically French cinema and at the same time interrogates this tradition of influence.

The *Cahiers* critics and the *politique des auteurs*

The impact of Hollywood cinema was particularly strong amongst the so-called 'Cahiers critics', the group of cinephiles, including Godard, Truffaut and Rohmer, who wrote for the *Cahiers du cinéma* during the 1950s and early 1960s. Their writings for this journal and their establishment of a *politique des auteurs* which privileged individual expression through *mise-en-scène* and formal innovation formed a theoretical underpinning for the cinematic production of the New Wave. These critics rejected the notion of apprenticeship, inveighing against tradition and the *'cinéma du papa'*, the

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[120]Forbes (1992), p.49.

[121]Andrew, Dudley: *Breathless* (New Jersey: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1987).

established French 'cinema of quality'. Presenting Truffaut's
Les 400 coups (1959) at Cannes, Godard stressed his distaste
for the French cinematic establishment:

> Et quand, depuis cinq ans, nous attaquons dans ces
> colonnes la technique fausse des Gilles Grangier,
> Ralph Habib, Yves Allégret, Claude Autant-Lara,
> Pierre Chenal, Jean Stelli, Jean Delannoy, André
> Hunebelle, Julien Duvivier, Maurice Labro, Yves
> Ciampi, Marcel Carné, Michel Boisrond, Raoul André,
> Louis Daquin, André Berthomieu, Henri Decoin, Jean
> Laviron, Yves Robert, Edmond Gréville, Robert
> Darène..., nous ne voulons rien leur dire d'autre
> que ceci: vos mouvements d'appareil sont laids parce
> que votre sujet est mauvais, vos acteurs jouent mal
> parce que vos dialogues sont nuls, en un mot, vous
> ne savez pas faire de cinéma parce que vous ne savez
> plus ce que c'est.[122]

Instead they turned to American cinema. It should be noted
that despite its commercial success, Hollywood production was
held in low esteem by the majority of French critics at this
time. It was dismissed as mass entertainment and contrasted
with the apparent quality of French cinema[123]. The *Cahiers*
critics, however, praised Hollywood production for its
freshness and innovation which they believed compared
favourably with the staleness of contemporary French cinema.
Discussing Anthony Mann's *Man of the West* (1958), Godard
praises the director's ability to 'reinvent' cinema:

> ...chaque plan de *L'Homme de l'Ouest* donne
> l'impression qu'Anthony Mann réinvente le western
> comme, disons, le crayon de Matisse le trait de
> Piero della Francesca. Et d'ailleurs, c'est mieux
> qu'une impression. *Il le réinvente*. Je dis bien
> réinventer, autrement dit: montrer en même temps que
> démontrer, innover en même temps que copier,
> critiquer en même temps que créer; bref *L'Homme de
> l'Ouest* est un cours en même temps qu'un discours,
> ou la beauté des paysages en même temps que
> l'explication de cette beauté, le mystère des armes

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[122]Bergala/Godard (1985), p.194.

[123]See Chapter Two for discussion of French cinematic culture
and opinions of Hollywood at this time.

> à feu en même temps que le secret de ce mystère,
> l'art en même temps que la théorie de l'art... du
> western, c'est-à-dire du genre le plus
> cinématographique du cinéma, si j'ose m'exprimer
> ainsi; de sorte qu'en fin de compte il se trouve
> tout bonnement que *L'Homme de l'Ouest* est une
> admirable leçon de cinéma, et de cinéma moderne.[124]

Godard's vision of cinema and what it should achieve as described in this quotation is clearly central to his project in *A bout de souffle* and its innovation through imitation.

His reference here to Matisse and Piero della Francesca is significant. The *Cahiers* critics did not only seek innovation in the work of the American directors they praised, they also admired Hollywood cinema for its 'classicism', its formal perfection. They saw it as both the aesthetic summit of the medium and, because of its global dominance, as possessing a universal appeal whuch could never be achieved by the national specificities of French production[125]. Through reference to 'great' painters, Godard underlines this perceived classicism. Indeed, the work of these critics can be seen to remove American directors from the realm of mass culture and reinstate them within a pantheon of 'great' cinema. It is largely thanks to their work that directors such as Hitchcock, Lang, and Hawks are now widely regarded as 'great' directors or *auteurs*.

The *politique des auteurs* was indeed the key to this reappraisal of American production. Rather than view films in terms of the studio system from which they emerged, the *Cahiers* critics stressed the importance of individual expression and of *mise-en-scène* as its reflection. Thus Hawks

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[124]Bergala/Godard (1985), p.164.

[125]Forbes (1992), p.50.

and Hitchcock, for example, were seen as producing personal films despite the constraints of the studios, and hence their work could be described in terms of an individual oeuvre. The *politique des auteurs* was central to the cinematic project of the New Wave; directors were no longer to be a mere part of a wider production team but would be artists in charge, the creators of personal cinematic texts.

The reappraisal of American directors and the development of the *auteur* theory are clearly significant in terms of attempts to describe *A bout de souffle* and other so-called New Wave films as part of a specifically French 'art' cinema. The work of the *Cahiers* critics undermined some of the long-standing oppositions between a French cinema of quality and American mass culture. Indeed, by identifying the personal within the products of Hollywood the critics enabled a reexamination of the very concept of mass culture and its impact. This is not to suggest that they praised mass production as such; rather, they questioned the overarching definition of Hollywood as mass entertainment, and appropriated some of its directors for the domain of high culture:

> If auteur analysis often selected as its objects works that had heretofore been considered vulgar and escapist, the method of auteur criticism was largely focused on locating high cultural techniques in the works of mass culture. The auteurist tendency to reread these works in the light of certain modernist considerations, especially estrangement and reflexivity, while downplaying aspects of commercial cinema, was consonant with attempts to create a more flexible and politically responsive form of cinema.[126]

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[126]Landy, Marcia: *Film, Politics, and Gramsci* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1994), p.89.

The *politique des auteurs* did not discard the notion of 'mass' and 'high' culture, indeed it was at the root of subsequent polarisations of French cinematic production into 'art' (the work of the individual *auteur*) and 'popular entertainment' (mass production unmarked by the particular genius of the director), a fact which clearly adds to the problematic nature of attempts to locate Godard's film in either category. Nevertheless, it did attempt to posit a more dialectical understanding of the relationship between the two, an understanding which would undermine traditional perceptions of Hollywood and France as always and already positioned on either side of the cultural fence.

It does then seem a dangerous venture to describe *A bout de souffle* as part of a specifically French cinematic aesthetic or indeed as a 'high' cultural artefact. Godard's film deliberately rejects the French cinematic tradition which precedes and surrounds it, instead seeking explicit intertexts in the films of Hollywood. Its national specificities (Paris, its 'star', Belmondo[127]) are both imitations and transgressions of the codes of Hollywood genre cinema and thus they lose their national specificity, becoming liminal, something at once both French and other. Similarly, the film is situated on the cusp of high and popular cinemas. Its experimentation and innovation seem to situate it within the context of avant-garde and/or art cinema yet its imitation of Hollywood production and its popular cultural references relocate it within commercial entertainment. It would seem

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[127]It should be noted that Belmondo was still a relatively unknown actor at the time of the film's release, yet to become a star.

that the identification of *A bout de souffle* as a uniquely French 'art' film is symptomatic of a retrospective homogenisation of the diversity of the work of the New Wave period (paradoxically arising from the polarisation in French production instigated by the discourses of *auteurism*). The 'movement's' impact on French cinematic production was such that it is now frequently perceived as a founding moment in a specifically French aesthetic of film. As a result the fragmentation and shifting identities of both the 'movement' itself and of individual works is denied.

Breathless and Hollywood

In contrast, Jim McBride's *Breathless* tends to be critically located within the industrial and aesthetic traditions of Hollywood. Comment on the film frequently draws a clear distinction between the 'art' of *A bout de souffle* and the commercial nature of the remake. McBride's use of an established star (Richard Gere), colour film stock and sophisticated production values, and the film's 'simplification' of Godard's dialogue and narrative are cited in order to justify descriptions of *Breathless* as 'pure Hollywood':

> Vingt ans après, McBride insiste sur tout ce que Godard suggérait. Il lie ce que Godard déliait. L'un écrit avec des points, l'autre avec des 'et'. 'On part de *Scarface* et on arrive quelquepart du côté de chez Vigo', avait écrit Jean Collet à propos de Godard. Ici c'est exactement l'inverse: on part de chez Vigo et on aboutit à *Scarface*, c'est-à-dire à un romanesque hollywoodien, voisin du pur romantisme... Curieusement, le film de Jim McBride ressemble à un vieux classique hollywoodien qu'un débutant nommé Godard aurait déterré pour tourner, en 1959, un "remake" génial qui allait tout

bouleverser.[128]

This location of *Breathless* within Hollywood commercialism underpins a subsequent set of oppositions between Godard's film as 'high culture' and 'original production' and the remake as 'debased mass culture' and 'copy' or reproduction.

Clearly McBride's film is a reproduction; it follows Godard's narrative closely and it was released in France as *A bout de souffle made in USA* thus drawing explicit attention to its status as remake and its 'Americanisation' of a French cinematic work. However, the relationship between the two films is far less straightforward than the oppositions outlined above would suggest. It should be remembered that *Breathless* is a reproduction of a reproduction; it reappropriates for Hollywood Godard's own appropriation and transformation of a specific Hollywood tradition. Pamela Falkenberg sees the films in terms of their attempts to transform the commercial cinema in which they are situated through transformation of another cinematic tradition. In other words, both films function as reproductions whilst performing an equivalent if inverse rewriting:

> In this sense Godard's *A bout de souffle* might be described as a simultaneous and double rewriting: the rewriting of the French commercial cinema (conceived of as a transformation) through the rewriting of the Hollywood commercial cinema (conceived of as reproduction): the real art cinema as Hollywood. Twenty-five years later, the Hollywood remake of *A bout de souffle* might be described in inverse but nonetheless identical terms, as the rewriting of the commercial Hollywood cinema (conceived of as transformation) through the rewriting of French cinema (conceived of as reproduction).[129]

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[128]*Télérama*, no.1745, 22 June 1983.

[129]Falkenberg (1985), p.44.

Evidently the films cannot be perceived of in terms of 'original' and 'copy', as both perform an act of reproduction or transformation. Moreover, the description of *Breathless* as a typical product of Hollywood is itself problematic. At the time of the making of this film, Jim McBride was not part of the Hollywood 'mainstream'. Rather he emerged from American 'underground' production; in *David Holzman's Diary* (1967) for example he chose the format of a film diary, a determinedly non-commercial cinema, in order to attempt a demystification of *cinéma-vérité*. As such he can be seen to engage in an experimentation and innovation not unlike that of Godard. It is significant that McBride's career as a director began during the 1960s, the time of the *nouvelle vague*. The films of this period had an important impact upon Hollywood which was searching for novelty in order to counteract the dangers posed by the decline of the studio system and the advent of television. The techniques of the New Wave influenced many of those working at this time and helped to create the aesthetic developments subsequently dubbed the 'New Hollywood'[130]. *Breathless* must be situated within these changes and thus as part of a Hollywood production much influenced by European 'art' cinema; as such its status as pure Hollywood 'mass entertainment' becomes untenable.

This is not to deny out of hand the film's identity as a product of Hollywood. Its use of an established star, its narrative based upon an outlawed 'anti-hero' and the fulfillment of heterosexual love, and its privileging of action above dialogue all serve to link it to a specifically

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[130]See Chapter Two.

Hollywood tradition which is located both in the past (the gangster films of the 30s and 40s) and the present (action films of the late 70s and early 80s). Yet these same features can also be seen to transgress the codes of mainstream Hollywood production. The narrative remains partly open, there is no full resolution. The closing scenes of the film depict Jesse (Gere) dancing in front of the armed police who have come to arrest/shoot him. As he bends down to pick up a gun the image freezes, thus fixing him in this parodic gesture of both dance and (potential) death. The film neither depicts his death nor the resolution of the narrative of desire. Monica (Valerie Kaprisky) runs towards him as he dances but is excluded from the final freeze-frame. The film's portrayal of heterosexual sex, whilst linking it to a Hollywood tradition which refuses depiction of non-heterosexual or transgressive sexual activity, serves at the same time to marginalise it as its 18 certificate distances its from the 'family' films which are central to mainstream Hollywood production.

It is perhaps not insignificant that McBride's film is much admired by director Quentin Tarantino[131]. Tarantino's own work (*Reservoir Dogs*, 1991 and *Pulp Fiction*, 1994) has enjoyed both critical and commercial success thus locating it within and without mainstream American production. Like *Breathless* his films quote and incorporate other popular cultural artefacts whilst depicting graphic scenes of violence (in contrast to the sexual activity portrayed in McBride's film) which preclude them from the 'family' audience. *Pulp Fiction* quotes briefly from both *Breathless* and Godard's *Bande à part*

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[131]See 'My Heroes by Quentin Tarantino', *The Guardian*, 2 February 1995, p.28.

(1964), thus establishing a relationship which underlines the necessity of perceiving McBride's film as part of a non-Hollywood tradition which is situated within both popular and commercial cinema. Just as *A bout de souffle* can be seen as both French and not French, art and entertainment, so *Breathless* can be seen to shift between the discourses of Hollywood, European art cinema and American independent production.

Breathless as simulacrum

Breathless can perhaps most usefully be seen as a simulation or simulacrum. Baudrillard describes simulacra as copies which no longer possess a referent, the objects of a 'hyperreality' in which 'reality' and the 'past' have been eclipsed and disappeared:

> Dans ce passage à un espace dont la courbure n'est plus celle du réel, ni celle de la vérité, l'ère de la simulation s'ouvre donc par une liquidation de tous les référentiels - pire: par leur résurrection artificielle dans les systèmes de signes, matériau plus ductile que le sens, en ce qu'il s'offre à tous les systèmes d'équivalences, à toutes les oppositions binaires, à toute l'algèbre combinatoire. Il ne s'agit plus d'imitation, ni de redoublement, ni même de parodie. Il s'agit d'une substitution au réel des signes du réel, c'est-à-dire d'une opération de dissuasion de tout processus réel par son double opératoire, machine signalétique métastable, programmatique, impeccable, qui offre tous les signes du réel et en court-circuite toutes les péripéties.[...] Hyperréel désormais à l'abri de l'imaginaire, et de toute distinction du réel et de l'imaginaire, ne laissant place qu'à la récurrence orbitale des modèles et à la génération simulée des différences.[132]

Pamela Falkenberg characterises McBride's film as 'the

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[132]Baudrillard, Jean: *Simulacres et simulation* (Paris: Eds. Galilée, 1981), pp.11-12. See Chapter One for a more detailed discussion of these theories.

hyperrealism of the remodeling of a model'[133]. The referent to which *Breathless* alludes is *A bout de souffle*, itself a simulation. The remake is then the representation of a representation, its authorial expression a hyperexpression modeled upon Godard's expression which in turn remodels its own defunct referents. This eclipsing of the past and reality, this constant recycling of images, was remarked upon by Serge Daney in his review of McBride's film:

> Il y a quelque chose de fascinant dans la façon dont le cinéma américain, partout, toujours, sait récupérer son bien, le recycler et le rendre anodin et intemporel. *A bout de souffle*, comme tous les films de Godard, est un film daté, vieilli. *Breathless*, comme tous les films américains est déjà un film sans âge. Sans une ride, oui, mais il n'en aura jamais.[134]

The discourses of postmodernism seem especially pertinent to a discussion of *Breathless*. McBride's film is pastiche, the fragmentation and incorporation of both *A bout de souffle* (the simulation of simulation) and what Fredric Jameson calls the 'whole "degraded" landscape of schlock and kitsch'[135]. Jesse is fascinated with the songs of Jerry Lee Lewis and the *Silver Surfer* comic strips. Clearly this in some way mirrors Michel's identification with Bogart yet Jesse's imitation is two-fold and thus entirely depthless as he models himself on both Michel and his American heroes. Moreover, unlike Godard, McBride does not attempt to reapropriate these artefacts for high culture. They are pure simulacrum, the representation of objects without referent, a flatness or depthlessness which

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[133]Falkenberg (1985), p.51.

[134]*Libération*, 24 June 1983.

[135]Jameson, Fredric: *Postmodernism or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p.2.

Jameson describes as the 'supreme formal feature of all the postmodernisms'[136].

This depthlessness is made explicit during a scene in which Monica is followed by a police officer who is in turn followed by Jesse. This three way chase mimics that of *A bout de souffle*, yet here its circular and hence parodic nature is reinforced by the painted representations of Los Angeles in front of which it takes place. Similarly, in an earlier scene Monica waits for a bus in front of a sign which reads 'Hollywood Wax Museum. Mingle with the Stars'. This juxtaposition of the film's female 'star' and an advertisment for copies of the stars invokes both the film's identity as a 'copy' and its postmodern depthlessness. Indeed, the double simulation of *Breathless* is apparent in the film's cinematic quotations. Clearly its principal intertext is *A bout de souffle*, yet, just as Godard's film refers to Hollywood production of the 1930s and 1940s, so *Breathless* contains elements of these same works. This is manifest in the film's narrative (which follows closely that of Godard) and in explicit reference to earlier films. For example, Monica and Jesse hide in a cinema and mimic the action shown on the screen. The film projected is *Gun Crazy* (Joseph H. Lewis, 1950), which tells the story of a man and a woman who set off on a trail of armed robbery and murder, in other words the story of Jesse and Monica. Significantly it was produced by Monogram Pictures and thus McBride underlines the reproductive trajectory of his film; *Breathless* simulates *A bout de souffle* which simulates Hollywood crime films which are in turn

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[136]Jameson (1991), p.9.

simulated by *Breathless*.

Jesse/Gere himself becomes a highly postmodern artefact in this film. Jameson perceives representations of the human figure as sites for a postmodern 'waning of effect'; the repudiation of depth and authenticity in favour of multiple surfaces[137]. Human figures are 'commodified and transformed into their own images'[138]. Jesse is a mass of fetishised icons; the film's opening scene focuses on the steel toe-caps of his boots. Significantly he does not change his clothes until his arrival in Los Angeles and his realisation that he is wanted by the police. Here he purchases a new set of clothes from a second-hand store which he then wears throughout the rest of the film. He thus becomes these clothes which are at once new (to him) and old (second-hand); like the film Jesse is pastiche:

> Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a linguistic mask, speech in a dead language. But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter and of any conviction that alongside the abnormal tongue you have momentarily borrowed, some healthy linguistic normality still exists. Pastiche is thus blank parody, a statue with blind eyeballs:[139]

Like Michel, Jesse wears a hat in bed. However, Michel wears a fedora which both recalls and transgresses Bogart and in retrospect recalls Belmondo's role in later films such as Jacques Deray's *Borsalino* (1969). Thus Michel imitates but his imitation can be seen to possess an identifiable referent.

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[137]Jameson (1991), pp.11-12.

[138]Jameson (1991), p.11.

[139]Jameson (1991), p.17.

Jesse wears a hat and as such imitates Michel and yet the hat he wears is an exaggerated *sombrero*, an artefact of touristic kitsch and thus an image with no stable referent.

Breathless can almost be viewed as a textbook of postmodern style. It is clearly not insignificant that a scene from the film takes place in Los Angeles' Westin Bonaventure Hotel, a construction which Jameson describes as a 'full-blown postmodern building'[140]. As such the film can be located within a contemporary tradition of postmodern cinematic production typified by focus on parody and/or pastiche, intertextuality and bricolage. This identity clearly complicates attempts to define McBride's film as part of Hollywood mass production. As previously stated, the film's intertexts are both 'art' (French film) and 'popular' (comic strips, rock and roll) and as such it must be situated between these two taxonomies. Indeed it establishes a dialectical relationship between them and as such performs one of the central features of postmodern style:

> ...namely, the effacement [...] of the older (essentially high-modernist) frontier between high culture and so-called mass or commercial culture, and the emergence of new kinds of texts infused with the forms, categories, and contents of that very culture industry so passionately denounced by all the ideologues of the modern, from Leavis and the American New Criticism all the way to Adorno and the Frankfurt School.[141]

This perception of *Breathless* as a postmodern artefact also complicates attempts to describe the film as part of a specifically national aesthetic. Postmodernism emerged in the era of global capitalism, and as a product of a global

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[140]Jameson (1991), p.38.

[141]Jameson (1991), p.2.

industry, namely Hollywood, McBride's film should surely be situated within the global/local nexus outlined earlier in this chapter. It is indeed possible to see *A bout de souffle* as part of a European (local) modernism and *Breathless* as part of a globalised postmodernism, a perception which can be born out by the films' respective endings. Michel may imitate his cinematic heroes but this imitation causes his death and thus he fulfils his filmic destiny. The fragmentation of imitation thus finds a certain coherence. Jesse however is not seen to die; the film closes with his 'performance', coherence is denied. Patricia Waugh demonstrates this difference to be central to the distinction between modernism and postmodernism:

> Alan Wilde, whose book *Horizons of Assent* appeared in 1987 [...] attempted to view Modernism and Postmodernism, respectively, in terms of two varieties of irony: the 'disjunctive' and the 'suspensive'. Disjunctive irony portrays the world as fragmented but is propelled by an impulse towards resolution, transcendence and coherence which can exist simultaneously with the acknowledgement of fragmentation. Suspensive irony intensifies fragmentation and suspends the impulse towards coherence.[142]

In Conclusion

Clearly then, identification of *A bout de souffle* and its American remake as products of a specific national aesthetic is highly problematic. Indeed it seems that it may be more productive to discuss them in terms of the global/local nexus so central to current theories of the postmodern. The identities commonly attributed to the films are part of an intricate process of appropriation and rewriting; *A bout de*

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[142]Waugh, Patricia (ed.): *Postmodernism: A Reader* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), p.9.

souffle has been appropriated for art cinema and the logic of the discourses of this tradition means that its 'remake' must be dismissed as commercial reproduction. The films are both different and the same. Both shift between high and popular cultures, indigenous and 'other' cinemas. Moreover, description of Godard's film as 'modernist' may be deemed unacceptable. Its sheer intertextuality and experimentation may situate it within the postmodern thus again eroding the simple binary relationship between the two films. Thus it is evident that rather than describe these films solely in terms of their location within a particular national aesthetic, it is vital to examine their position on the cusp of various cinematic aesthetics and identities.

Nevertheless, the tendency to appropriate *A bout de souffle* for an 'art' cinema which is seen as intrinsically French, and to confine *Breathless* to an American 'popular' cinema, has enabled the location of these films within specific national contexts. As has been demonstrated, both films were involved in a renewal of a cinematic aesthetic which could be perceived as 'national' (the *nouvelle vague's* overturning of the traditions of the *cinéma de qualité*, and the innovations of the 'New Hollywood' of the 1970s). However, this renewal took place through a rejection of the dominant 'national' cinema and a recourse to other non-national cinematic traditions. Thus although each film may be located within the trajectory of a particular national cinema, this identity is evidently rendered highly complex by the hybrid nature of the films' intertexts and aesthetics. It is significant that *A bout de souffle* (and indeed the *nouvelle vague* in general) tends to be posited as a seminal work in the

history of French cinema. However, clearly this is not a straightforwardly French product, borrowing as it does from American films and American culture. Ultimately these films can be seen as a microcosm of cinema's relation to discourses of the nation. They emerge from specific cultures at specific times and engage with aspects of this culture, yet they also reveal and articulate discourse external to the moment and the place of production. Furthermore, their identity as 'national' product is fixed not so much by their moment of production but by subsequent moments of reception; *A bout de souffle* set out to overturn everything which made up a 'French' film yet it is now described as a central work in the history of French cinema.

This leads us back to the critical discourses which surround and penetrate the remake process. These also describe the French source films as intrinsically 'national' products, thus enabling condemnation of the remake as an act of violence against the 'national' culture. However, as this chapter has demonstrated, the cinematic mobilisation of the 'nation' and of national identities is never this simple; films articulate national and non-national discourses in thoroughly complex ways. Moreover, to condemn the remake as an explicit attack is to deny the transformation which necessarily occurs as films shift between cultures, as they are both reproduced and re-consumed. It would seem that to understand the work of the remake process it is vital to examine the shifts and alterations that take place as the source film is transposed to the target culture.

Chapter Five

Comparators and Comparison

Introduction

The preceding chapters have revealed the sterile nature of those discourses which dismiss the remake process as the diminution of a uniquely French 'original' text through a debased American 'copy'. By locating the films and indeed these discourses within their specific moments of production and reception, and by dissecting the various ideologies which sustain such accounts, it has become apparent that the practice of remaking can no longer be reduced to the Manichean binaries of art/entertainment, France/America, and original/copy. However, in order to move beyond this assertion and to perceive the actual work which takes place as a cinematic text is transposed across cultures, it is vital to turn to a close analysis of the texts themselves. This transformation will be revealed via the films' signifying structures and the ways these alter as the source text is re-produced and re-articulated within the target culture. Clearly these signifying structures are numerous and diverse; they include genre, gender, *mise en scène*, stars, race, and

sexuality, as well as history and aesthetics, already discussed in the preceding chapter. Any one of these signifying structures can provide a useful point of entry for the type of analysis posited in this thesis. However, the following chapter will focus on three of these comparators, namely genre (in this case, comedy), gender (figured through masculinity) and stars.

Section One: Remaking Comedy

The remakes of the 1980s and 1990s have been dominated by comedy. Of the twenty-eight films remade since 1980, eighteen can be seen to identify in some way with this genre. These films include domestic comedies such as *Trois hommes et un couffin* (1985) and *Three Men and a Baby* (1987), action/spy spoofs such as *La Totale* (1991) and *True Lies* (1994), and romantic comedies such as *Cousin, cousine* (1975) and *Cousins* (1989). Significant within this group of films is the work of Francis Veber; six of the French films remade during this period were written and/or directed by Veber and he was both the script-writer and the director of *Les Fugitifs* (1986) and its remake of 1989, *Three Fugitives*.

Why remake comedy?

Clearly these figures beg the question as to why comedies should prove such a fruitful source for the remaking process. Comedy is an eminently popular genre in France, often achieving great commercial success. *Les Visiteurs* of 1993, directed by Jean-Marie Poiré, demolished almost all previous French box-office records achieving 13,634,523 admissions in

its year of release[1]. *Gazon Maudit*, directed by Josiane

Balasko and released in 1995, proved the second most popular

film in France that year, selling over four million tickets[2].

The films selected for remaking tend also to be commercial

successes in their country of production: for example, *Un*

éléphant ça trompe énormément (Yves Robert, 1976) attracted

over 500,000 spectators in France during its first four weeks

of release[3]. The commercial success of these films

demonstrates the ability of 'national' comedies to challenge

Hollywood productions at the French box-office. Indeed as

Ginette Vincendeau points out:

> Although the conventional image of French cinema is
> centred on dramatic trends such as Poetic Realism
> and *auteur* cinema, the importance of comedy shows
> that the construction of national identity by French
> cinema should rather be sought in comedy - the only
> domestic genre to resist Hollywood.[4]

This commercial success is further emphasised by the endurance

of the genre in French cinematic production. A significant

amount of silent production involved comics such as André Deed

and Max Linder and early sound films were influenced by comic

genres derived from both the theatre and the music hall. Since

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[1]Robinson, David:'The Chronicle of Cinema 5, 1980-1994', *Sight and Sound*, January 1995, p.127. It is worth noting that despite its commercial dominance in both the United States and other European countries in the same year, Steven Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* achieved only 6,344,779 admissions in France and was thus vastly outstripped by *Les Visiteurs*. Significantly, this film is still outstripped in terms of French box-office figures by another domestic comedy, *La Grande Vadrouille* (France/Britain, Gérard Oury, 1966) which achieved 17,227,000 admissions in France.

[2]Vincendeau, Ginette: 'Twist and Farce', *Sight and Sound*, April 1996, pp.24-26.

[3]*Cinéma français*, no.6, November 1976, pp.4-8.

[4]Vincendeau, Ginette (ed.): *Encyclopedia of European Cinema* (London: BFI, 1995), p.88.

the postwar period the popularity of domestic comedies has continued through the work of actors and/or directors such as Jacques Tati, Louis de Funès, Bourvil and, more recently, Yves Robert, Gérard Oury, Claude Zidi and, of course, Francis Veber. The prevalence and the commercial success of this genre in France evidently undermines the constructions of French cinematic production as high art which, as we have seen, are so common in much critique of the remake process. As Vincendeau remarks, these works are not 'art' films, nor are their directors considered to be *auteurs* despite the fact that in some cases the director is also the script-writer and even the star of the film[5]. As a result, comic films are frequently dismissed by French critics, in many cases the same critics who condemn the hegemony of Hollywood production challenged by these comedies. This critical disregard is apparent in the general absence of any sustained analysis of domestic comedy in the pages of *Positif* and *Cahiers du cinéma*, the principal 'serious' French cinema journals. Yet it is these popular films which are most frequently selected for remaking, thus rendering somewhat paradoxical calls for the protection of French 'art' in the face of Hollywood: it would seem that it is not French 'art' which is 'under threat' from the remake

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[5]A case in point is Josiane Balasko's *Gazon Maudit*. Indeed, Balasko condemns French critical disregard for popular production stating,'People say I make commercial cinema, but I write my own scripts, I direct them, I write plays...I am an *auteur*. Many directors of popular French films are *auteurs*.'(Vincendeau, April 1996, p.26.). Balasko's stance is somewhat paradoxical; whilst decrying the critical hegemony of 'art' cinema in France she seems also to attempt to insert her own work into that tradition through her claims to *auteur* status. However, it should be stressed that the films under discussion are significant as popular comedies and not because of any claims to *auteurism* made by, or on behalf of, their directors.

but rather those popular domestic genres often despised by the critics.

Despite commercial success in their country of production, French comedies fail to achieve equal success in the United States. This failure is demonstrated by the striking disparity between North American box office takings for individual comedies and those for their subsequent remakes: both *Le Grand Blond avec une chaussure noire* (Yves Robert, 1972) and *Un éléphant ça trompe énormément* (Yves Robert, 1976) made approximately 1.5 million dollars in the United States whilst *The Man with One Red Shoe* (Stan Dragoti, 1985, remake of *Le Grand blond*) made 9 million dollars and *The Woman in Red* (Gene Wilder, 1984, remake of *Un éléphant*) made over 24 million dollars[6]. Evidently there are many reasons for the French films' failure to match the profits made by the American productions. As outlined in the preceding chapters, distribution and exhibition practices, as well as the resistance of American audiences to non-English language productions, will all help to determine the career of a French film in the American market. Nevertheless, coupled with these factors it has become a critical commonplace to claim that comedies are intrinsically unexportable. Perhaps more than any other genre, comedy is said to be highly culturally specific; that which proves amusing to an audience in Paris will invariably fail to raise a laugh amongst spectators in New

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[6]*Video à la une*, no.91, June 1993, p.10. Despite the significant gap between the box-office takings of the French productions and those of their American counterparts, these figures compare quite favourably with the commercial trajectories of many French films released in the North American market. Their relative succes both suggests their appeal as remake material and reinforces problematisation of the unexportable nature of cinematic comedy.

York. Whether or not something is funny:

> [...] depends in part on personal taste and in part on different cultural and aesthetic standards and values: norms change from group to group, class to class, historical period to historical period, society to society.[7]

The apparent inability of much comedy to transcend national boundaries is thus seen to explain the frequency of the comic remake. The domestic success of French cinematic comedies demonstrates their potential to American producers and they are subsequently remade according to the comic norms and conventions of Hollywood. It is surely not insignificant that both *The Woman in Red* and *The Man with One Red Shoe* were co-produced by Victor Drai and based upon films directed by Yves Robert. The source of *The Man* was released four years before that of *The Woman* suggesting that the box-office success of Wilder's film proved the viability of Robert's work as remake material and prompted Drai to set in motion the later production.

Comedy: a hybrid genre

However, an initial viewing of these pairs of films tends to problematise this description of comedy. The plots of both of these films and indeed many of their jokes and gags appear to undergo little change during the remake process. In the first pair of films (*Un éléphant/The Woman*) a middle-aged married man spots a young woman in a red dress 'dancing' over an air vent, her skirt raised, and subsequently becomes besotted with her. The rest of the film deals with his attempts to find the

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[7]Neale, Steve & Krutnik, Frank: *Popular Film and Television Comedy* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.67.

woman, arrange a date and ultimately take her to bed. Both films begin and end with the male protagonist standing outside the woman's window having been forced to hide due to the arrival of her husband. As crowds of people, television cameras, journalists, and the emergency services look on, the man jumps into a safety net below. In the second pair of films (*Le Grand Blond/The Man*) the chief of Secret Services realises that a colleague is attempting to steal his job. In order to undermine his plans he arranges for him to investigate a 'nobody', picked out from the crowd at an airport. The chosen individual (the man with one red/black shoe) is a violinist. The film then follows attempts on the part of the colleague and his team to discover the identity and the aims of this apparent spy. Both films end with a romance between the chosen man and the young female spy set to pursue him.

Clearly such similarities in plot structure can simply be seen to reinforce condemnations of the remake as a straightforward copy. However such similarities should not be abstracted from broader notions of intertextuality and the hybridity of comic genres. Comedy can take many forms; indeed it is extremely difficult to define even the characteristics of Hollywood comedy or French cinematic comedy. The very diversity of the French comedies chosen for remaking suggests the impossibility of constructing limits and boundaries for any description of the genre. This fluidity is carried through to the films themselves. Consider the following reviews of *Un éléphant* (released in the United States as *Pardon mon affaire*):

> *Pardon mon affaire* [...] is a peculiarly Gallic version of the *Seven Year Itch* comedy genre. A quicksilver amalgam of American screwball comedy and

> a dash of French boudoir hi-jinks, the comedy is as
> light and as fluffy as an expertly made soufflé...[8]
>
> Yves Robert has modelled his new film on *The Seven
> Year Itch*, a fact signalled by Etienne's first
> enticing glimpse of Charlotte walking over a hot-air
> grille..., and later confirmed by an occasional
> borrowed plot device, notably the wife's discovery
> of her husband's amorous activities through an
> involuntary television appearance.[9]

These reviews demonstrate the unfeasibility of establishing
straightforward definitions of 'French' comedy, clearly
distinct from the work of Hollywood. Whether or not Yves
Robert consciously drew upon Billy Wilder's film of 1955 is
not at issue here. Rather it is vital to perceive Robert's
film as a highly intertextual artefact which enables a
similarly intertextual reading on the part of its spectators
and which thus complicates attempts to describe it as an
unproblematically 'French' comedy[10]. It should also be pointed
out that as heterosexual romantic comedies, both films can be
inserted into an enduring comic tradition and more
specifically, the remake can be located within a revival of
this genre in Hollywood during the 1980s[11].

It would then seem that comic cinematic themes and plots
are not necessarily entirely culturally specific or
unexportable. Certainly the depiction of a middle-aged man's
attraction to, or relationship with, a younger woman is a

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[8]*Hollywood Reporter*, vol.247, no.7, 24 June 1977, p.2.

[9]*Monthly Film Bulletin*, vol.45, no.530, March 1978, p.50.

[10]See Chapter One for a discussion of notions of
intertextuality and Chapter Four for an analysis of the
construction of national cinemas.

[11]For example *Splash* (1984), *Romancing the Stone* (1984),
Something Wild (1986), *Blind Date* (1987), *Moonstruck* (1987),
and *When Harry Met Sally* (1989).

common comic theme. Consider Tom Ewell's pursuit of Marilyn Monroe in *The Seven Year Itch*, John Cleese's romantic involvement with Jamie Lee Curtis in *A Fish Called Wanda* (Charles Crichton,1988) and two other pairs of remakes which deal with a similar older man/younger woman dyad, *Un Moment d'égarement* (1977)/*Blame it on Rio* (1983) and *Mon Père ce héros* (1991)/*My Father the Hero* (1994). Similarly the comic caper/mistaken identity plot of *Le Grand Blond* and *The Man* has been frequently reworked in both Hollywood and French cinematic production. A clear example of this is provided by a later pair of remakes, *La Totale* (1991) and *True Lies* (1994).

Thus similarities between these pairs of films should not be dismissed as mere evidence of copying and 'unoriginality'. Furthermore, descriptions of comic genres as clearly culturally defined and unexportable should be problematised. Cinematic comedy is both fluid and hybrid; films from different cinematic cultures will draw upon similar themes and motifs, reworking them in a thoroughly intertextual fashion. Victor Drai demonstrates this commonality as he describes his selection of films for the remake process, '"I first look for solid stories and universal themes, things that any culture can relate to or that Americans can especially appreciate. Provincial, culture-specific approaches just don't work"'[12].

Physical comedy and verbal comedy

Nevertheless, as the review quoted above makes clear, there is

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[12]Mancini, Marc: 'French Film Remakes', *Contemporary French Civilization*, vol.13, no.1, Winter/Spring 1989, pp.32-46 (p.39).

something 'Gallic' about the French films; in other words there are differences between the French film and its remake, in the way narratives are structured, in film and acting styles, in ideological content and so on: let us now examine these differences in the two pairs of films cited above, *Un éléphant ça trompe énormément/The Woman in Red* and *Le Grand blond avec une chaussure noire/The Man with One Red Shoe.*

As previously stated, both of these remakes were co-produced by Victor Drai[13]. Drai resists the sterility and negativity associated with the remake, claiming that these films are not in fact remakes at all but 'translations'. He states that rather than simply copying the French source films, the Hollywood productions rework their plots and motifs according to the cinematic conventions of the target culture:

> "My films are not remakes at all. [...] The basic situations are retained but the comedy styles are completely different. French audiences, who are accustomed to working harder than American audiences, like cerebral farce and become angry if you give them a lot of physical comedy in their domestic films. American audiences, who prefer to be simply entertained, for the most part like a much broader physical type of comedy, and have difficulty sitting through a lot of cerebral comedy. This is not to say that French audiences are more intelligent than American audiences. It's just that the habits are different." [14]

The broad nature of Drai's descriptions of French and American comic traditions is somewhat simplistic; one need only consider the sight gags of the films of Jacques Tati or the wordy comedy of Woody Allen to understand that neither

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[13]As a French national resident in the United States, Drai's involvement in these productions complicates descriptions of them as distinctly 'American'.

[14]Desowitz, Bill:'Drai Says He Produces French Translations', *Hollywood Reporter*, vol.282, 5 July 1984, p.4.

'national' cinema can be seen to focus exclusively on either physical or cerebral comedy. Nevertheless it is perhaps not insignificant that the work of Tati, in contrast to so much French domestic comedy, found an audience in the United States, whilst the films of Woody Allen continue to attract larger audiences in France than in their country of production. Certainly there are various reasons for these successes, not least, in the case of Tati, the lack of a linguistic barrier due to the physicality of his comedy. However, they also reinforce Drai's descriptions of a strong tradition of cerebral comedy in France and the contrasting popularity of physical comedy in the United States. These distinctions are further illustrated by a later pair of remakes, *Mon Père ce héros* and *My Father the Hero*, as the following remarks make clear:

> ...*My Father* est loin d'être la copie conforme de *Mon Père*: l'affiche qui représente Gérard Depardieu dans une situation burlesque sur des skis nautiques, dénote l'accent mis sur le côté action comique, plus que sur la relation père-fille mise en avant dans le film – et l'affiche – français. [...] C'est bien connu, les films français, même comiques, parlent toujours de choses sérieuses.[15]

It is certainly true that without in any way being intellectual films, both *Un éléphant* and *Le Grand blond* are quite verbose comedies with a strong emphasis on dialogue. This is particularly true of *Un éléphant*. The film opens with a voice-over from the central protagonist, Etienne (played by Jean Rochefort), and this voice-over recurs throughout the film, providing a commentary on the action and linking together different sequences. The language used by Etienne for

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[15]'*My Father*: comment faire d'un père deux coups', *Le Film français*, no.2511, 17 June 1994, p.4.

these voice-overs is strikingly flowery and somewhat self-conscious. In contrast, the voice-over provided by Teddy (Gene Wilder), the main protagonist of *The Woman in Red*, is both far less frequent and is couched in a more prosaic register. Consider for example the closing voice-over of each film. As Etienne falls towards the waiting safety net, we hear him say, 'Néanmoins, j'ai pris sur moi de tomber posément...A vrai dire, je n'étais qu'au début de mon ascension'. We also hear the voice of Teddy as he falls, but in contrast he simply remarks upon his own foolishness, the lesson he has or has not learnt. In the French film the language itself is foregrounded, whereas in the American work the words merely provide a commentary on the action.

This verbosity is also displayed in the films' differing attitudes towards language and action. These can be exemplified through reference to a sequence from *Un éléphant/The Woman* in which the male protagonists set out on horseback in search of the woman in red. In the source film the entire sequence lasts for just under two minutes. However, the vast majority (seventy-five seconds, thirteen frames) is taken up with a scene shot in Etienne's home in which he pulls on his riding boots under the amused gaze of his wife and his godmother. This then cuts to a much shorter scene (thirty seconds, seven frames) showing him on a horse, setting out to begin his search. These scenes are accompanied by Etienne's voice-over, indeed it is language that is privileged here rather than action, the humour emanates from the irony of his commentary on his endeavours. Etienne's rather pompous, romantic account of the events forms a striking contrast with the palpable absurdity of his actions (reinforced by Marthe's

amusement which he interprets as intrigue) and reveals him as a naive or fallible narrator/protagonist. Throughout most of the sequence the camera remains still. At one point it pans from right to left to follow a group of horses as they gallop across the frame, however it ultimately comes to rest upon Etienne as he and his horse move slowly forward towards the camera. This lack of mobility clearly echoes the foregrounding of linguistic over physical comedy at this juncture. In contrast, the equivalent sequence in the second film focuses upon Teddy's rather unsuccessful attempts to ride a horse. Although the sequence is of approximately the same length as that of the French film, it takes place entirely at the riding stables and the park. Apart from the final frame of the sequence, the action is not accompanied by Teddy's voice-over thus suggesting that here it is action that is privileged rather than language. Indeed the humour emanates from Teddy's inability to control his horse. This is underscored in the frames depicting his attempts to urge his mount to leave the stables; as the sequence cuts between Teddy and a bemused riding instructor in a classic shot/reverse shot structure, so the viewer is invited to identify with the latter's amusement at the physical exploits portrayed.

A similar disparity between physical and linguistic comedy can be perceived in *Le Grand blond avec une chaussure noire* and *The Man with One Red Shoe*. The American production involves far more action and physical gags than its French counterpart. For example, the first film opens with a sequence depicting a French spy undergoing a lie detector test in New York. The questions posed by his captors reveal that he has been arrested in possession of heroin. The sequence is brief

(sixty-seven seconds) and is composed of fourteen frames which cut between close-ups on the lie detector and the spy's face and hands, and zooms out to medium shots of the spy and his interlocutors. This relative simplicity of structure is reinforced by the high key lighting and the lack of music. In contrast, the second film opens with an extended action sequence set in Morocco, depicting the planting of cocaine upon an American agent and his subsequent arrest by the Moroccan authorities. This sequence is both much longer than its French equivalent (three minutes and fifty-three seconds) and possesses a far more complex structure. The forty-one frames reveal a great variety of camera angles (straight on, high angle, and low angle), camera distances (ranging from long-shots through to close-ups) and camera movements (tracking shots, crane shots, pans and tilts) as well as a certain distortion of the frame achieved through Dragoti's decision to film via mirrors (Maddy's reflection in the car's wing mirror), binoculars (point of view shots) and through wire fences. This complexity is heightened by the tense rhythm of the non-diegetic music which accompanies the sequence and the varied use of lighting to suggest both bright sunlight and contrasting shadow. The length of this extract, coupled with the very fact that it opens the narrative, underlines the centrality of physical comedy or action in the film, in marked contrast to the French production. Moreover, the formal complexity described above underscores the action displayed, increasing tension and pace.

Perhaps most striking of all is the different handling of the chase sequence which takes place towards the end of both of these films. In *Le Grand blond* this sequence is quite

brief, lasting only eighty seconds; after the initial frames which show François setting off in pursuit of the car containing Christine (Mireille Darc), the scene cuts to a medium-shot of the front of the car followed by a long-shot which tracks backwards as the car moves down the street towards the camera. A further medium-shot of the front of the car shows Christine grabbing the steering wheel and this then cuts to a long, high-angle shot of the car as it enters a tunnel clearly marked with a no-entry sign. The camera zooms in on this sign and remains static as we hear the car crash and see the sign detach itself from the tunnel due to the impact. The relative formal simplicity of this sequence (there is no music, lighting is high-key, and there are few changes in camera angle or movement) echoes the depiction of the chase in which the climax of the action (the crash and Christine's subsequent escape) is suggested rather than made visible. In *The Man* the sequence is far longer. It uses crosscutting to move between the actual chase and events occurring simultaneously in Richard's apartment, thus heightening a sense of action, movement and speed. The total length of the sequence is seven minutes and thirty-five seconds and of this well over six minutes are devoted to the chase alone. Like the film's opening sequence described above, this extract displays a formal complexity which reinforces the frenetic action portrayed. Particularly notable are the rapid editing (ninety-four cuts in the final five minutes), and the great variety of camera angles; for example the different point of view shots which switch between the various characters and their contrasting perspectives thus creating a sense of disorientation and dizziness which both reinforces and

duplicates the energetic on-screen activity. Thus it can be seen that both films employ that mainstay of action cinema, the car chase, yet whereas the French film down-plays the event, displaying little visible action, the American production exploits the chase to such an extent that it becomes one of the most prolonged sequences of the film.

It is vital to stress at this point that neither film can be seen to belong solely or unproblematically to a single tradition of either physical or verbal comedy. Both films exploit each of these comic forms to a greater or lesser extent. Indeed it is perhaps significant that the later horse-riding sequence in *Un éléphant/The Woman* in which Etienne/Teddy finally catches up with Charlotte albeit somewhat clumsily, is of an almost equal length in both films, is composed of a similar number of frames, and uses similar camera angles and distances, and dialogue, thus suggesting that neither film can be said to eschew either verbal or physical humour entirely. However, it seems clear that Drai's distinctions between a cerebral French comedy and a physical American comedy can be seen to apply here in terms of the different emphases exemplified by the sequences described above. It should be noted that such differences can not be reduced to aesthetic trends alone; the inferior budgets available to the French productions would tend to preclude the type of complex action sequences present in *The Man*. Nevertheless, without wanting to over-generalise, it does seem apparent that these French films belong to a tradition of linguistic humour, a fact exemplified by the following review of *Un éléphant*:

Chez Robert et Dabadie, le film est fait de moments

> trop souvent distendus [...] dont on essaie de masquer la lenteur en sacrifiant au dialogue. Le 'mot' fleurit alors, héritage de Prévert et de Jeanson qui empoisonne doucement, quarante ans après, la comédie de goût français.[16]

The American remakes have then taken the basic plots of these films and reworked them according to the conventions of a more physical comedy.

Narrative structure: comedy, buddies and sexuality

A further distinction between the two pairs of films can be perceived in the remakes' streamlining or 'literalising' of narrative:

> Studies of classical Hollywood cinema have defined one of its key characteristics as clear-cut motivation, both of causality (no loose ends) and character (good *or* evil). By contrast, the essence of European/French auteur cinema has been seen as ambiguity (Buñuel, Fellini, Resnais and so on). Remakes show us how much this is also true of popular genres.[17]

This streamlining is particularly evident in *The Woman in Red*. The various subplots and digressions of *Un éléphant* are either discarded (Simon's relationship with his mother) or minimised (the departure and return of the wife of Bouly/Joe and the 'relationship' between the wife of Etienne/Teddy and Lucien/Shelly). The result in the American film is a far more straightforward linear narrative and a consequent change in emphasis. The French film, due to its development of the characters of Etienne's friends, can be seen to be as much about the relationships between these protagonists as about

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[16]*Positif*, no.188, December 1976, p.74.

[17]Vincendeau, Ginette: 'Hijacked', *Sight and Sound*, July 1993, pp.22-25 (p.22). Italics author's own.

Etienne's pursuit of the woman. It is not insignificant that the film's opening credits appear over the tennis match between the four friends, about five minutes into the film. This would seem to suggest that all that has preceded this moment (Etienne's first sighting of Charlotte [Anny Duperey], his initial attempts to set up a date with her and the resulting lies to his wife) is in some way a prelude to the film's principal concern, male friendship. In contrast, the remake focuses almost exclusively upon Teddy's pursuit of Charlotte (Kelly Le Brock). The French film is far more episodic in structure than its American counterpart; it eschews a single linear narrative in favour of a series of digressions or plural narratives. As such it can be perceived as both romantic comedy, sex farce, and male 'buddy' movie, it has no single genre identification.

The Hollywood version is far less open. It is structured around a dominant goal-oriented narrative and as such can be more straightforwardly defined as sex farce/romantic comedy. This description is reinforced both by the emphasis upon Teddy's pursuit of Charlotte and by other plot devices. For example, in an early scene Teddy overhears a colleague making a telephone call. He becomes uncomfortable and annoyed as he understands the conversation as sexual 'double entendres', a common source of humour in the sex farce. In a later scene Teddy's wife, Didi, (Judith Ivey) accidentally fires a gun as they discuss Joe's infidelity. This scene also occurs in the French film yet there are telling differences. Didi fires the gun into Teddy's underpants and subsequently, as he responds to the telephone call which he had hoped would enable him to spend the evening with Charlotte, she sits beside him with the

gun placed on his lap, pointing towards his genitals. Evidently both the underpants and the position of the gun suggest the penis, Teddy's sexual desires, and the possible consequences of his deviation. As such this scene can be seen to reinforce the sexual comedy of the film. Indeed the very linear structure of the film can be seen to support its definition as sex farce/romantic comedy:

> There is a suggestive similarity in the way both male sexuality and narrative are commonly described. Male sexuality is said to be goal-oriented; seduction and foreplay are merely the means by which one gets to the 'real thing', an orgasm, the great single climax. Equally, it has been suggested that if one compares the underlying structure of most narratives in Western fiction, it is about the pursuit of a goal and its attainment, usually through possession.[18]

Whereas the French production constantly shifts its emphasis away from Etienne's desire for the woman in red, the remake remains far more centred upon this single story. The linear progress of the narrative echoes the attempt to attain Charlotte and thus the film's status as romantic/sex comedy.

A similar 'streamlining' can be discerned in the films' depiction of character. French cinematic production tends to be character rather than action-based, a trend surely influenced by both aesthetic conventions and the material conditions described above:

> François Truffaut repeatedly argued that French films emphasize the individual, not the story. There are many cultural causes, here, but one very pragmatic one: the average French film budget is a quarter of its American counterpart. For that reason, French filmmakers eschew the special effects, elaborate action sequences or frequent boom shots that characterize American cinema. Instead, the French tend to concentrate on [...] complex,

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[18]Dyer, Richard: *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.120.

well interpreted characters.[19]

Certainly it is true that the two French films under discussion engage in a far more complex character development than their American counterparts. This is exemplified in the depiction of Etienne's friends described above. These protagonists not only figure more prominently in the narrative but they are also portrayed in more detail; for example we witness the hypochondria of Simon (Guy Bedos) and the flamboyant dress sense of Claude (Claude Brasseur). The contrast between the depiction of Bouly (Victor Lanoux) and Joe (Joseph Bologna) is particularly striking. Whilst Joe is portrayed in terms of stereotypical machismo (he chases other women and becomes angry when his wife leaves him), Bouly is a somewhat more complex character. He also flirts with other women yet his reactions to his wife's departure range from violent anger to tears and melancholy. Indeed the film plays upon this contrast; as he discovers that his wife and children have left home Bouly wears a T-shirt bearing the words *bisoo bisoo* and two 'lipstick kisses'. This mark of an inveterate playboy forms an amusing contrast with the close-up on his soft, rather babyish face and his tearful reaction. The disparity between the heterosexually 'macho' goings on of the four friends (sports, ribald humour, chasing other women) and some distinctly 'non-macho' character traits (Bouly's inability to cope with his wife's departure, Simon's hypochondria and overly close relationship with his mother, Claude's homosexuality) suggests an ambiguity not present in the remake where these characters are far less developed.

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[19]Mancini (1989), p.37.

These incongruities are also an important source of humour; we are invited to laugh at the characters' self-deception and thus a certain critique is implied. By choosing not to develop these ambiguities, the remake eschews irony and to a great extent the male friends become mere ciphers, amusing examples of the consequences of sexual infidelity.

Such differences have a significance which extends far beyond formal or generic concerns. The narrative transformations which take place as the French film is remade in Hollywood are indicative of contrasting articulations of, and work upon, ideological structures. Both productions can be described as romantic/sex comedies, however the emphasis upon male friendship in *Un éléphant* clearly necessitates the insertion of this work into a tradition of male 'buddy' movies which both explore and articulate constructions of masculinity. Indeed, the film can be seen to negotiate a sense of masculinity in crisis. Each of the four male protagonists is in some way infantilised: consider again Simon's dependent yet problematic relationship with his mother, Bouly's inability to cope with his wife's departure and the visual emphasis on the soft, childlike aspects of his body, Claude's disavowal of his homosexuality, and Etienne's attempted rejection of marital responsibility. Moreover, each lacks self-knowledge and displays dishonesty both towards the self and others. This is nowhere more apparent than in the irony of Etienne's voice-over narrative. This depiction of flawed masculinity and the concomitant suggestion of a failure to negotiate the Oedipal phase and accept the full weight of patriarchal authority, reveals the film's articulation of a crisis in masculinity which can be seen to emerge from the

particular socio-historical context of its moment of production. By 1976, the year of the film's release, the women's movement in France had achieved a certain status and currency which furthered the calling into question of traditional gender roles. Moreover, the social upheavals of the late 1960s, including the changes in sexual mores, had given way to a period of relative reflection, an attempt to come to terms with these transformations. Thus the 'mid-life crisis' of Etienne and his friends can be seen to emanate from, and work upon, a similar 'mid-life crisis' in gender identities and sexual conventions in France at that time. It is also significant that the 1970s saw French society beginning to face up to the relative nature of its own position in the global economy (a process which, as has been demonstrated, continued throughout the 1980s); witness the onset of recession, the undermining of long-established hierarchies through the events of May 1968, and the disappearance of both the French colonial empire and the strong 'patriarch', De Gaulle. Thus the film's representation of frail masculinities seems to negotiate a similar oscillation in the social structures of patriarchal authority at the time of its production.

By concentrating upon Teddy's pursuit of Charlotte and marginalising other narratives, *The Woman in Red* positions itself firmly within a tradition of romantic comedy/sex farce. Indeed, in contrast to the French film, it can be seen to explore masculine (hetero)sexuality rather than broader issues of identity. With this in mind the film's relationships with former romantic comedies, particularly the aforementioned *The Seven Year Itch*, are especially revealing. As Steve Neale and

Frank Krutnik point out, whereas the screwball romantic comedies produced in Hollywood during the 1930s and 1940s would concentrate on the heterosexual couple and thus on both male and female desires, the sex comedies of the 1950s and 1960s would frequently focus upon male sexual fantasy with marriage posited both as a threat to this desire and the means of its eventual containment[20]. *The Woman in Red* can be seen to renegotiate the latter concerns in the context of post-feminist and post-'sexual revolution' society. In other words, a society in which male heterosexual desire is confused by the contradictions apparent in the growing power of women through feminist politics and their increasing reification in the products of consumerism. This confusion is clearly visible in the film. In their discussion of *The Seven Year Itch*, Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans remark:

> Brilliant but limited, *The Seven Year Itch* is capable of anatomising the poverty of male categorisation of women, while finding it difficult to escape some of the limitations it castigates in its characters. There are neither female nor male voices of maturity in the film; without them the comedy of desire is denied the ballast of exemplary ideals of living.[21]

This criticism can also be applied to *The Woman* which both displays and mocks male reification of women and yet reinforces it through its own formal structures. Whereas the French film both diffuses and critiques Etienne's perception of Charlotte through its deployment of irony, the remake tends

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[20]Krutnik & Neale (1990). Consider for example *Pillow Talk* (1959), *That Touch of Mink* (1962), and *Sex and the Single Girl* (1964).

[21]Babington, Bruce & Evans, Peter William: *Affairs to Remember: The Hollywood Comedy of the Sexes* (Manchester: M.U.P, 1989), p.220.

to reinforce Teddy's objectified vision of women. In *Un élephant* Etienne's wife is pursued by a young student, a subplot which is developed at some length. The emphasis on this digression undermines Etienne's image of his wife (as he sits in the airport imagining her waiting for him she is in fact in the process of fending off her suitor) and suggests the possibility of sexual relationships between older women and younger men which both contrasts with and ridicules Etienne's liaison with Charlotte. By downplaying this subplot the remake reduces Judith so that she becomes no more than Teddy's wife, the obstacle to his affair with Charlotte, and disavows the sexual possibilities made visible in the French film. This confusion is nowhere more apparent than in the representation of Charlotte herself. Certainly both films can be seen to reify her, to present her as the object of Teddy's/Etienne's gaze, and by implication, that of the heterosexual male viewer. However, this process becomes far more extended in the American film as a sequence is devoted to a modelling assignment in which Charlotte is presented in various poses whilst Teddy looks on. Moreover, it is not insignificant that in both films Charlotte is initially nameless; she is 'the woman in red/*la femme en rouge*'. Unlike the Marilyn Monroe character in *The Seven Year Itch* she does eventually receive a name, suggesting that she is more than just reified 'woman', the object of male desire. However, the remake's confusion is underlined by the decision to both name Charlotte and yet deny this name through the film's title.

The film's articulation of masculine sexuality displays an ambivalence clearly bound up with ideological configurations in the United States in the 1980s. The

establishment of the women's movement, which by this point had shifted from the margins of political debate to the centre, meant the vacillation of traditional male perceptions of women. This, coupled with the continuing reification of women as sex objects in the media, suggested a crisis in masculine sexuality revealed in *The Woman in Red*. The film seems to want to have it both ways; whereas the Tom Ewell character in *The Seven Year Itch* renounces an affair with 'the girl' through fear, Teddy simply fails to consummate the relationship through mischance. In other words, the film both disavows marital fidelity and at the same time recuperates it. As such *The Woman* can be seen to hark back to earlier comedies in which marriage would ultimately circumscribe illicit desire, to invoke the absence of moral strictures of *Un éléphant,* and to prefigure the Hollywood romances of the late 1980s in which marriage would once again be invoked, this time as protection against AIDS, the danger of non-monogamous, non-heterosexual sexuality. This conservative revisionism of sexual possibilities is underlined by Teddy's dismissal of Charlotte as a 'piece of ass' at the end of the film. The return of her husband shows her to be inimical to both romance and monogamy and thus she is verbally 'punished', a somewhat disturbing double standard which suggests, albeit fleetingly, the attacks upon active female sexuality displayed in films such as *Fatal Attraction* (Adrian Lyne, 1987) and *Basic Instinct* (Paul Verhoeven, 1991).

Narrative structure: causality and motivation

The streamlining described above is perhaps not quite so apparent in *The Man with One Red Shoe*. As previously stated,

the film introduces gags and action sequences not present in the French film, thus in some way it complicates the initial narrative structure. However the film can be seen to reduce the ambiguity present in the French production through its tendency to 'literalise', to introduce clear-cut narrative motivation and causality. Consider for example the opening scenes of the film described above. The drug smuggling plot which sets the narrative in motion is made visible and thus is far more literal than the equivalent incident in the French film. An ensuing scene represents Ross (Charles Durning), the chief of the CIA, explaining to his assistant, Brown (Ed Herrmann) that he has tried to set up Cooper through this incident. In contrast the French film neither shows the smuggling incident nor does it make clear who is responsible for it; both Toulouse (Rochefort), the Secret Service chief, and Milan (Bernard Blier), his 'opponent', deny their involvement. Similarly, in *Le Grand Blond avec une chaussure noire* we do not learn how the spies identify François. In contrast this is made clear in the remake as Maddy removes Richard's wallet at the airport. This insistence upon causality and the consequent reduction in ambiguity is reinforced by the limited diegetic time (Cooper points out that they have only forty-six hours and eighteen minutes to discover Richard's role before the Senate hearing), and an ensuing increase in pace, heightened by action sequences and rapid editing. Both films can be seen to be goal-oriented, however causality is more clearly established in the remake and the narrative moves towards its goal at a much quicker pace.

The contrasts in character depiction identified in *The*

Woman and *Un éléphant* can also be perceived in *Le Grand Blond* and *The Man*, particularly in the characters of Toulouse/Ross and Milan/Cooper. Whereas Ross and Cooper are portrayed as stereotypical 'bad' characters whose aims, to remain/become the chief of the CIA, are clear-cut, and who eventually receive their come-uppance, Rochefort and Milan are far more ambivalent. We are told that the two men are 'friends' (Toulouse sends Milan a case of wine for his birthday) thus complicating their status as rivals. Both Blier and Rochefort play their characters with subtlety and a low-key style; there is none of the blustering and shouting of the typical comic villain. This echoes the film's low key tone and emphasis on bathos, or the rendering extraordinary of the entirely ordinary. Perhaps most striking of all are the homoerotic suggestions surrounding Toulouse. His apartment is filled with Greek-style statues of naked men, he lives alone with his mother, and as he stands on his balcony he is seen to gaze at a semi-clad male runner in the park below. Whilst the equation of a stereotypical homosexuality and improbity is somewhat problematic, the mixed undercurrents suggested by these character depictions do reinforce the relative ambiguity of the French films described above.

These contrasts in character portrayal are visible in the central protagonists of both pairs of films. This is partly due to acting styles; Rochefort's wordy, rather self-regarding performance as Etienne creates a humorous paradox between his image of himself and of events and these same events as they actually occur. In contrast, Wilder emphasises Teddy's nervousness via his various mannerisms, thus tending to invite sympathy rather than mockery. Pierre Richard interprets

François as a clumsy fool, a fact made immediately apparent as
he battles with a sweet and its wrapper during the early
scenes in the airport. Hanks' portrayal of Richard is that of
a more conventional Hollywood hero. He breaks his tooth not
due to mishap but because his friend Morris has given him a
'joke' nut. These differences are particularly striking in the
films' 'seduction' scenes. Whereas that between François and
Christine is shot through with physical gags, the equivalent
scene between Richard and Maddy is a far more traditional
'romantic' sequence. As a result the gag involving the
catching of the woman's hair in the male protagonist's zip
which features in both films, seems somewhat out of place in
the remake. Nevertheless, as part of a Hollywood tradition
which tends to eschew ambiguity in favour of clear oppositions
between good and evil, it is perhaps not surprising that
Hanks' 'heroic' qualities should be emphasised; he resists an
affair with his best friend's wife far more vociferously than
François (the latter has sex with Paulette in *Le Grand Blond*,
Hanks spurns the advances of Paula), he is shown to be a
philanthropic figure, giving music lessons to underprivileged
children, and unlike the discordant composition of François,
his romantic melody seduces Maddy. Indeed the romance between
these two characters is emphasised far more strongly than that
between François and Christine in *Le Grand Blond*. Maddy and
Richard meet towards the beginning of the narrative (Christine
and François meet only about 45 minutes into the film), and
Maddy is shown to be a more sympathetic character; unlike
Christine she does not begin to care for her eventual lover
only after the seduction scene, instead she is seen to express
concern for his well-being early on in the narrative and

pauses to admire one of his childhood photographs as she searches his home.

Comedy: subversion and recuperation

Comedy aims to subvert or transgress particular conventions yet, as Neale and Krutnik point out, this subversion is contained by the very fact that it is a built-in feature of the comic:

> To sum up, we have argued that *all* instances of the comic involve a degree of non- or anti-verisimilitude, that *all* instances of the comic involve a deviation from some kind of norm, rule, convention, or type, whether culturally general or aesthetically specific. However, since this is the basis of comedy as a genre, since it is what we expect of the comic, neither comedy nor the comic can be regarded as inherently subversive or progressive, or as inherently avant-garde.[22]

This is clearly significant in terms of the pairs of films under discussion; all four are comedies and each can be seen to transgress certain norms and conventions yet in different ways and to a varying extent. The two French comedies both represent a playful attitude towards moral codes and ethics, revealingly absent from the American remakes. Thus despite his status as 'hero', François engages in an affair with his best friend's wife. Richard on the other hand, sleeps with Paula only once and then, we are told, because 'she got him drunk'. He is a victim rather than a perpetrator of this infidelity and thus his role as hero is untainted. Similarly, in *Un éléphant ça trompe énormément* Etienne ultimately goes to bed with Charlotte. In contrast, the 'sex' scene between Teddy and Charlotte is reduced to farce as he throws his underpants onto

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[22]Krutnik & Neale (1990), p.93. Italics authors' own.

a lamp and wallows around on her water bed and the arrival of her husband prevents the consummation of the affair. Thus the representation of a sexual infidelity which is acceptable within the context of French cinema and culture is, when reworked in Hollywood, denied and recast as a moral lesson. Both films play upon the fantasies of middle-aged men yet whereas Robert's film follows this through to its logical conclusion, the remake chooses not to depict a sexual act which would sully Wilder's role as 'hero' and make the film unacceptable to a broad audience[23].

Plot changes in *The Man with One Red Shoe* also reveal subversions and recuperations which differ sharply from those of *Le Grand Blond avec une chaussure noire*. In the French film, the central villain, Toulouse, goes unpunished. Moreover, the film's closing scenes show him watching a slide of François as he leaves the country and suggesting that he will employ him as a secret agent upon his return; neither is Toulouse punished nor is François, the innocent victim, entirely free. In the Hollywood remake, Cooper is arrested as he runs into the Senate hearing and Ross is demoted, his job given to Brown, the instigator of Richard's continuing protection. The Senate hearing itself is highly significant; by representing governmental investigation of CIA malpractice at the beginning of the film, the remake reinforces

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[23]It is significant that Robert's film was released in the United States as *Pardon mon affaire*, thus marking it as clearly French and hence perhaps making its moral attitudes more acceptable to American audiences. It is also worth noting that the film was first given an X certificate for release in Britain and was subsequently recertified as AA. As the film does not actually depict any scenes of sex and violence this, along with the changes in the remake, does suggest something about Anglo-Saxon (or puritan) attitudes to marital infidelity, or at least its representation.

constructions of the United States as the land of democracy and justice and confines the film's events to comic action, eschewing any hint of social critique. As such it plays upon former cinematic representations of the Senate as both symbol of legitimacy and malpractice (for example, *All the President's Men,* Alan J. Pakula, 1976, and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, Frank Capra, 1939) here recuperating it for bourgeois ideology as a site of justice. This relationship becomes all the more interesting when we consider that the film was released shortly before the revelation of the Irangate affair and the consequent vacillation in American Republican structures. The French film closes with a subtitle containing an extract from the penal code which affirms the right of each individual to privacy, a right belied by the events of the narrative. As such the film can be inserted into a French cinematic tradition of social critique, an identity reinforced by the ambivalent nature of the film's closure. Indeed it is perhaps fair to say that whereas the Hollywood film ultimately only transgresses aesthetic norms through its parody of the spy thriller, the French production subverts both aesthetic conventions and ideological structures through its implicit critique of the overweening power of state-controlled Secret Services.

In Conclusion

Thus each of the films can be seen to subvert certain conventions yet in contrasting ways. It should be stressed that none of the productions can be said to be particularly adventurous or transgressive in terms of their ideological

work or indeed their formal attributes. As has been demonstrated, the French films make less attempt to contain the reversals and upheavals they set in motion than do their American counterparts, a difference clearly linked to the context of production and reception of each film. Nevertheless, like many popular comedies, each of the films ultimately resists far-reaching transgression, containing their playfulness within the comic form itself.

Above all, what these differences indicate is the process of transformation which takes place as a film is remade in Hollywood. Despite the similarities discussed earlier in this chapter, it is clear that these French films and their remakes are in many ways quite separate artefacts. Certainly each should be seen as a hybrid structure yet as they emanate from different cinematic, cultural, and temporal contexts so their reworking of genre conventions, of formal features, and of cultural codes will alter. To dismiss the remakes as inferior purely because they follow the French films upon which they draw is a fruitless and ultimately unsustainable argument. The films do not only emanate from different contexts, they are also made for different audiences. This is especially clear in the case of *The Woman in Red*, which was widely marketed on the basis of its Stevie Wonder soundtrack in a clear attempt to attract a youth audience, an audience unlikely to view a French production centred upon the exploits of a group of middle-aged men. Moreover, it should be stressed that each of these films is a popular comedy. To claim the superiority of the French versions reveals more about inherent conceptions of the relative status of French and Hollywood cinematic production than about the merits of the films themselves. As

the preceding analysis demonstrates, such judgements should give way to an examination of the films in terms of the cinematic, specifically comic, conventions from which they emerge and indeed the context in which they are consumed. Only then can a true assessment of these remakes be posited.

Section Two: Stars and Masculinity

Genre is not the only signifying structure to provide access to the various transformations which take place as a film is remade. Equally revealing are specific mobilisations of film stars and star images and, in order to demonstrate this assertion, the following section will analyse *La Totale* (Claude Zidi, 1991) and its remake of 1993, *True Lies* (James Cameron) in terms of their uses and representations of their respective male stars, Thierry Lhermitte and Arnold Schwarzenegger. This will entail discussion of the ways in which these representations consolidate and/or interrogate hegemonic cultural constructions of masculinity, ultimately suggesting an additional set of discourses through which the work of the remake can be made visible.

More popular comedies...

Like so many of the films already discussed, both *La Totale* and *True Lies* are popular cinematic works. Indeed both are clearly marked as non-high cultural artefacts by virtue of their very genre (at least within their countries of production; the cultural status of a French film released in the United States is, as we know, liable to alter). *La Totale* is a comedy and hence part of the most commercially successful

indigenous French cinematic genre, a genre which is almost invariably ignored by the French critical establishment. *True Lies* is essentially an action film, a film of spectacle. Yvonne Tasker pointedly describes these films as 'dumb movies for dumb people', claiming that their emphasis on spectacle has tended to their exclusion from critical esteem:

> If the phrase 'Dumb Movies for Dumb People' indicates the extent to which the pleasures of the action cinema are primarily those of spectacle rather than dialogue, then this might also help us to understand the contempt with which these films have been critically received. [...] By way of contrast, academic film criticism has often placed an inordinate emphasis on the operations of narrative, hence the significance often given to the moment of narrative resolution as a way to decode the politics of a given text. Whilst valuable work has been undertaken on, for example, cinema-going as a social practice, the cinema as sensuous experience is too often neglected.[24]

Clearly Tasker's own work is part of a recent move to accord action cinema just such critical attention[25], however her comments underline the non-high cultural status of action cinema such as *True Lies*. Once again we have a pair of films which cannot be differentiated via a high/popular culture binary but must instead be perceived as popular commercial artefacts, produced for a broad audience and large-scale national and/or international distribution.

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[24]Tasker, Yvonne: *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre, and the Action Cinema*, (London: Routledge, 1993), p.6.

[25]See for example work on Cameron's earlier films also starring Schwarzenegger, *The Terminator* (USA, 1984) and *Terminator 2: Judgement Day* (USA, 1991): Pyle, Forest: 'Making Cyborgs, Making Humans: Of Terminators and Blade Runners' in Collins, J., Preacher Collins, A. & Radner, H. (eds.): *Film Theory Goes to the Movies* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.227-241. Jeffords, Susan: 'Can Masculinity be Terminated?' in Cohan, Steve & Hark, Ina Rae (eds.): *Screening the Male: Exploring Masculinities in Hollywood Cinema* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp.245-262.

The films share an almost identical narrative structure. In each, the hero, François (Lhermitte) and Harry (Schwarzenegger), pretends to lead a routine existence employed in a dull nine-to-five job. However this is a cover for his true occupation as a secret agent. In both films the hero finds his marriage in trouble as his wife, Hélène (Miou-Miou)/Helen (Jamie Lee Curtis), longing for excitement and unaware of her husband's true identity, falls for the lies of a car salesman who claims to be a secret agent. François/Harry discovers this liaison and captures both wife and would-be paramour, subsequently involving Hélène/Helen in a 'spoof' covert operation which turns to reality when they are captured by the Arab terrorists whose illegal transport of arms, and plans to detonate a large explosive device which will threaten 'national' security, have been jeopardised by the hero. Both films also contain a narrative centred around a rebellious offspring - the hero's daughter in *True Lies*, a son in *La Totale*. In both films the various strands of the narrative are resolved: the terrorists' plans are thwarted and harmony is restored in the hero's marriage and family. The narrative similarities are extended by many identical gags (for example Hélène's/Helen's elimination of numerous villains as she drops a machine gun down the stairs causing it to fire as it hits each step), jokes (the play on the contrasts between the hero's assumed identity and the dangerous reality of his true function), and even dialogues.

Nevertheless, the films are not identical artefacts. They belong to very different genres, or as José Arroyo points out in an article in *Sight and Sound*, they use different

combinations of elements from various genres[26]. *La Totale* is essentially a domestic comedy; it focuses primarily on the family plot, indeed around two thirds of the film involves François's attempts to deal with the exploits of his wife and son, and the Arab narrative is manifestly a sub-plot. In contrast *True Lies* is primarily an action film, a film of spectacle; like the French production it is a comedy but it is a comedy of action, many of the comic moments arise from Harry's daring feats, for example as he chases the motor-cycle riding villain through a hotel lobby on horse-back. Here the Arab plot is given much more prominence, indeed the film opens as Harry breaks into a Swiss chateau on the trail of the villains and within five minutes an extended action sequence begins, involving a high speed car chase and escape on skis. Compare this to the opening of *La Totale* which centres on the family plot via a planned birthday party for the hero.

Material and aesthetic contextualisation

Whilst it would be quite wrong to see the comedy of either film as either purely physical or purely linguistic, these differences in emphasis do situate each work within the specific comic traditions outlined in the preceding section. Indeed each should be located within a particular 'national' cinematic trajectory; thus *La Totale* can be seen to intersect with a French tradition of 'social' comedy, films which mock social norms and hierarchies. Ginette Vincendeau identifies three features which she claims can justify the enduring popularity of domestic film comedy in France:

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[26]Arroyo, José: 'Cameron and the Comic', *Sight and Sound*, vol.4, issue 9, September 1994, pp.26-28.

> ... its overwhelming maleness, which has gone hand
> in hand with the hegemony of male stars at the box
> office [...]; the importance of language and word-
> play in French culture; and the taste for deriding
> social and regional types.[27]

La Totale can be seen to share each of these attributes; the narrative centres on Thierry Lhermitte, and the relationship he shares with his wife is to all intents and purposes equalled by the all-male relationship he shares with his buddy Albert (Eddy Mitchell). Much of the film's humour arises from language, and the narrative sets out to mock social types and institutions such as the petty-bourgeois *fonctionnaire* and the middle-class family, resident in the *banlieue parisienne*.

True Lies can also be seen to form part of a specific cinematic tradition, the Hollywood action blockbuster, or the cinema of spectacle. Big-budget action movies became an integral part of Hollywood production during the 1980s. Films such as *First Blood* (Ted Kotcheff, 1982), *Die Hard* (John McTiernan, 1988), *Lethal Weapon* (Richard Donner, 1987) and *RoboCop* (Paul Verhoeven, 1987) reaped huge profits at the box office, both in their country of production and on the international market. Indeed their commercial success was both demonstrated and entrenched by the various sequels and franchises to which they gave rise. The popularity of these films spawned a new type of star, the 'muscular' action hero exemplified by the likes of Jean-Claude Van Damme, Chuck Norris, Sylvester Stallone and, of course, Arnold Schwarzenegger. Achieving prominence through the action film, these stars then guaranteed the continuing success of the

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[27]Vincendeau, Ginette (ed.): *Encyclopedia of European Cinema* (London: Cassell/BFI, 1995), p.89.

genre as their star images and box-office appeal developed throughout the decade:

> 'Physical acting', the cinematic performance of the muscular male body that has been associated most directly with such stars as Arnold Schwarzenegger and Sylvester Stallone, achieved a new visibility during the 1980s. Stallone and Schwarzenegger vied for the position of top box-office male star, presiding over what could be seen as a renaissance of the action cinema.[28]

More recently the action cinema has become increasingly centred upon spectacle achieved through elaborate special effects, a shift which makes the presence of a star somewhat less vital to a film's commercial appeal. In a recent editorial in *Sight and Sound*, Philip Dodd stressed the growing prevalence of this 'spectacular cinema':

> As is now traditional, this summer climaxes with the release of a string of high-concept Hollywood blockbusters (*Mission Impossible*, *Independence Day*, *Twister* and *Eraser*), all finely orchestrated with marketing and promotion to ensure maximum box-office success, gauged mainly by the receipts of their opening weekend. (*Independence Day* just broke opening weekend records in the US with $50,288,264 over three days). In all of these films, spectacular action and effects-driven sequences are so integral they can no longer be considered mere punctuation, but the very motor of the film. Audiences respond to these as viscerally as they do to the rollercoasters these movies are so often compared with.[29]

True Lies evidently straddles the two genres; it is both muscular action cinema, played out in the presence of Schwarzenegger, and it is cinema of spectacle, as revealed by the film's multiple (and highly sophisticated) use of special effects. Thus this film can be situated in a recent tradition of action/spectacular cinema which can itself be located

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[28]Tasker (1993), p.91.

[29]Dodd, Philip: 'The Multiplex Future', *Sight and Sound*, vol.6, issue 8, August 1996, p.3.

within a long-standing Hollywood tradition of spectacle and 'attractions':

> One way to understand the recent strand of spectacular cinema is as a reassertion of an aesthetic of *early* cinema, with its emphasis on tricks, spectacles and views of the exotic and erotic. Cinema, a century old, seems to be insisting on its ability to present (literally) bigger pictures and more firepower than can the small, domesticated screens of television, video games and computers. [...] The earliest films had quite literally to compete with such attractions as vaudeville acts and carnival stalls. The very technology of cinema was considered an attraction in itself, while the 'views' it offered - of brides undressing and faraway countries and customs - had to compete with bearded ladies, trick cyclists and indeed the original rollercoasters.[30]

As Dodd's remarks suggest, the popularity and endurance of particular cinematic forms and genres will be closely bound up with the contemporary aesthetic and industrial context. Thus both films under discussion should be located in a national history of production *and* the contemporary conjuncture. *La Totale* can be seen as part of a series of French domestic/social comedies produced during the 1980s and 1990s which often had their roots in the *café-théâtre* of the 1970s. These comedies would tend to be set in recognisable, everyday locations, using an earthy, naturalistic language based upon contemporary slang. They were frequently more sexually explicit than their comic predecessors and they satirised social institutions and norms. Films such as *Les Bronzés* (1978, Patrice Leconte), *Le Père Noël est une ordure*[31] (1982, Jean-Marie Poiré), *Les Hommes préfèrent les grosses* (1981, Jean-Marie Poiré) and *Les Ripoux* (1984, Claude Zidi)

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[30]Dodd (1996), p.3. Italics author's own.

[31]This film was remade in 1994 as *Mixed Nuts,* starring Steve Martin.

proved successful at the domestic box-office, ensuring the continuing production of such comedies, often involving the same personnel. Clearly *La Totale* forms part of this particular comic conjuncture. As will be subsequently discussed in this chapter, the film is manifestly rooted in the *café-théâtre* tradition. Its parody of the spy genre is coupled with a satiric portrait of conventional petty-bourgeois lifestyles and its use of language and dialogue is both inventive and naturalistic.

The very fact that, unlike its remake, *La Totale* is *not* a spectacular film is also significant in terms of its production context. The film emerges from a French or European cinema industry which lacks the finance and the necessary material infrastructure for the type of special effects displayed in *True Lies* (whose budget reputedly reached $120 million):

> Watching *La Totale!* reminds us that *True Lies* is a type of cinema rarely feasible outside Hollywood. Smaller national cinemas cannot afford and do not have similar access to cutting-edge special effects technology (much less the opportunity to develop it with particular films in mind, as Cameron did for *The Abyss* and *Terminator 2*). Only Hollywood can maintain an infrastructure which keeps employed personnel skilled in a wide range of narrowly specialised areas of film-making.[32]

This material lack is reinforced by the fact that *La Totale* was co-produced by the television company TF1, clearly with an eventual televisual screening in mind[33]. The spectacular display of films such as *True Lies* is designed for widescreen

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[32]Arroyo (1994), p.26.

[33]This also reinforces the location of *La Totale* within its particular material and industrial context as television is now central to the financing of the French film industry, both through co-productions and via the *compte de soutien*.

cinema viewing with dolby stereo sound. Lacking finance, and in some ways circumscribed by its future televisual career, *La Totale* forsakes special effects in favour of concentration on narrative, character and dialogue.

As part of the action cinema/cinema of spectacle dominant in Hollywood throughout the 1980s and 1990s, *True Lies* can also be seen as an integral part of its specific production context. Indeed, the big-budget hit, the blockbuster, has become a staple feature of Hollywood's enduring success, in many respects the key to its survival in the face of the changes brought about by the demise of the big studios and the competition emanating from new media such as television, video and, more recently, information technology:

> In terms of budgets, production values, and market strategy, Hollywood has been increasingly hit-driven since the early 1950s. This marks a significant departure from the classical era, when the studios turned out a few "prestige" pictures each year and relished the occasional runaway box-office hit, but relied primarily on routine A-class features to generate revenues. The exceptional became the rule in postwar Hollywood, as the occasional hit gave way to the calculated blockbuster.[34]

The importance of the blockbuster has grown as the Hollywood studios have become part of large multi-media conglomerates, anxious to diversify the cinematic product across a range of media. This wide-scale 'synergy', described in Chapter Three, is predicated on the blockbuster, which necessitates significant financial investment both for production costs and intense marketing. Perhaps somewhat paradoxically, synergy developed through other media products or other films both helps to ensure a market for the expensive blockbuster and at

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[34]Schatz, Thomas: 'The New Hollywood' in Collins, J. et. al. (1993), pp.8-36.

the same time depends upon big-budget productions for its existence (low or medium budget films will not give rise to this sort of diversification). Not surprisingly then, film budgets rose steadily during the 1980s. The average cost of producing and marketing a film stood at $16 million in 1983 and had risen to $40 million by 1992; as the budget of *True Lies* indicates, these figures continue to escalate[35].

An important feature of these material and aesthetic developments was the increased power of the film star. Although many of the early 'New Hollywood' blockbusters (*Jaws*, 1975, *Star Wars*, 1977) were not star vehicles, the development of synergy and escalating budgets saw a dramatic rise in the role of the star:

> In the new Hollywood [...], where fewer films carry much wider commercial and cultural impact, and where personas are prone to multimedia reincarnation, the star's commercial value, cultural cache, and creative clout have increased enormously. The most obvious indication of this is the rampant escalation of star salaries during the 1980s – a phenomenon often traced to Sylvester Stallone's $15 million paycheck in 1983 for *Rocky IV*.[36]

Films began to be produced and marketed on the basis of the stars they involved, indeed stars became franchises in their own right. Thus *True Lies* was advertised as both a James Cameron film, drawing upon the success of his earlier films, *Terminator 2* and *Aliens*, and as an Arnold Schwarzenegger vehicle. Posters and the video cover featured a close-up still of the star's face in a 'tough' glare familiar from his previous roles. Significantly, the film was not marketed as a

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[35]Bordwell, D. & Thompson, K.: *Film History: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1994), p.701.

[36]Schatz (1993), p.31.

remake. *La Totale* was not distributed in the United States and would have thus been unknown to the vast majority of the remake's audience. As a result *True Lies* could be inserted unproblematically into a specifically Hollywood tradition of action/spectacle films and Schwarzenegger vehicles; its status as a remake, without being actively denied, became irrelevant.

Neither one thing nor the other: intertextuality and bricolage

Despite their clear location in specific temporal, material and aesthetic conjunctures, neither film can be straightforwardly described in terms of a single genre. Certainly *La Totale* is essentially a domestic/social comedy and *True Lies* is primarily a comedy of action/spectacle, however their generic identities are highly complex. As quoted above, José Arroyo describes each film as combining different genres in varying ways. Thus each features elements of the domestic comedy (the family narrative), the spy genre (the hero's identity as secret agent), the action film (the hero's exploits as he attempts to thwart the terrorists) and the buddy movie (the hero's relationship with his male partner). This *bricolage* or combination of different genres is an increasingly common feature of contemporary popular cinema, both in Hollywood and elsewhere. Clearly the synergy discussed above is an important part of this process; blockbusters are no longer considered to be discreet entities but rather as elements of an extended media process involving sequels and related multmedia products. Yvonne Tasker perceives this hybridity as a central feature of the New Hollywood, claiming that repetition is now at the very heart of narrative

significance and pleasure[37], 'Hybridity [...] allows films to both draw on and redefine a range of genres, through the forging of new associations between them'[38].

This intertextuality is especially knowing in *True Lies*. Although both films incorporate elements of various genres, this process is repeatedly stressed in the American production in a manner that is not apparent in the French source. For example, both films draw upon the James Bond cinema cycle; the hero is shown to be a suit-wearing secret agent, attractive to women and in possession of various ingenious gadgets. However, this reference is stressed in *True Lies* during the opening sequence as Harry enters a Swiss chateau dressed in a dinner jacket, demonstrates his ability to speak various languages, tangos with the beautiful (and 'exotic') villainess and is then chased by villains on skis:

> There are so many Bond references, one might have thought that longtime Bond producer Albert Broccoli was behind *True Lies*. There are Harry's tongue-in-cheek asides after doing something spectacularly daring. There are larger-than-life, meaner-than-life and crazier-than-life villains who are involved in a Bond-ish Mideast terrorist plot revolving around a cache of nuclear bombs hidden on a tropical island. There are fast cars and a treacherous female who's behind the nuclear hanky-panky. There are elaborate spy gadgets, like sunglasses that receive TV images from a tiny camera inside a cigarette pack. There are even machinegunners on skis! [39]

This insistent intertextuality is not restricted to Bond films alone. *True Lies* also makes frequent references to other action movies, particularly those starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. Thus towards the end of the film, as the

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[37]Tasker (1993), p.60.

[38]Tasker (1993), p.61.

[39]Janusonis, Michael: *Providence Journal*, September 1994.

Secret Service helicopter arrives at the terrorists' hideout, Harry emerges from a mass of burning buildings, framed by a red sky in a scene strongly reminiscent of the apocalyptic landscape of *Terminator*. 'I thought this would be your work', says Albert (Tom Arnold), Harry's colleague; it is the work of the Terminator, the action hero. Similarly the transformation of Helen (Jamie Lee Curtis) is resonant of previous action films; as she is transformed from dowdy housewife to 'sexy' accomplice so she echoes the strong heroines of Cameron's previous films (Sigourney Weaver in *Aliens* and Linda Hamilton in *Terminator* and *Terminator 2*) as well as her own roles in films such as *Blue Steel*[40].

Evidently this hybridity is highly relevant in terms of the film's status as a remake. *True Lies* is not a separate artefact, entire unto itself. Rather it deliberately sets out to draw upon and rework the codes and conventions of popular Hollywood cinema. As such it will be consumed in a thoroughly intertextual fashion; depending upon their position and cultural capital, different audiences will view the film in terms of its references to other films, other artefacts: this is a built-in feature of its identity. However, unfamiliar with *La Totale*, American audiences will read *True Lies* in terms of its references to other Hollywood films rather than through a linear relationship to its French source. As such, condemnations of this film as a mere 'copy' must surely be

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[40]This is significant in terms of the films' representations of the female characters. Miou-Miou's transformation does not have the same resonance as there is no equivalent French tradition of 'action' heroines or 'women with guns'. This perhaps contributed to the tendency in France to describe *Nikita*, which did indeed depict its female lead in terms of action/violence, as an 'American' film.

undermined.

Stars and masculinity

Many of the differences described above are inscribed within the bodies and the personas of the films' male stars, and through their particular constructions and representations of masculinity.

The cinematic star is a highly unstable signifying structure. A star image is not restricted to the body on screen, but must also incorporate the body 'off screen' as constructed by a huge variety of media texts (photographs, interviews, fanzines, critical pieces and so on). In his seminal work on stars, Richard Dyer groups these texts under four separate headings: promotion, publicity, films, and commentaries and criticisms. Clearly the image on screen is only one part of the total star identity[41]. The star is then a polysemic signifying system, made up of multiple texts and both visual, verbal and aural codes; Dyer describes this multiplicity as 'structured polysemy', numerous codes which come together (but are not necessarily reconciled) within the screen body of the individual star[42]. This polysemy is reinforced by the inherent paradox of the star, the fact that he or she is always both ordinary *and* special. Star publicity will invariably stress both their extraordinary qualities (beauty, talent, glamour) and their normality (they are just like us):

> This seems to be the case both for male and for
> female stars, but sexual difference inevitably

[41]Dyer, Richard: *Stars* (London: BFI, 1979), p.68.

[42]Dyer (1979), p.72.

> colours what kind of roles are shown. Thus we have
> Bette Davis's recipes but Tyrone Power's baseball
> achievements; Audrey Hepburn's affinity for Givenchy
> clothes but Errol Flynn's big game hunting.
> Photographs similarly will show stars in the most
> mundane of postures, feeding babies or just relaxing
> in old clothes; and then in the most exotic,
> performing stunts at a lavish party or meeting the
> King of England.[43]

This polysemy means that the star image can never be entirely fixed or complete. Indeed the star image offered by promotion and publicity offers us fragments of the star (a photograph, some information about his or her private life) which invite us to view the star on screen:

> It offers only the face, only the voice, only the
> still photo, where cinema offers the synthesis of
> voice, body and motion. The star image is
> paradoxical and incomplete so that it functions as
> an invitation to cinema, like the narrative image.
> It proposes cinema as the completion of its lacks,
> the synthesis of its separate fragments.[44]

However this synthesis is in many ways illusory. Certainly the star's performance can simply contain and reconcile the disparate elements of the star image, yet the performance can also play upon the very impossibility of reconciling these polysemic features, perhaps making a deliberate attempt to extend, transform, or transgress the received identity.

This polysemy and instability is an equally central feature of cinematic constructions of masculinity. Just as star images, based upon performance and spectacle, must subsume contradictory features, constantly open to shifts in signification, so masculinity in the cinema should be seen in

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[43]Ellis, John: *Visible Fictions* 2nd edn, rev (London: Routledge, 1992), pp.94-95.

[44]Ellis (1992), p.93.

terms of an unstable performativity[45]. Drawing upon Barthes's

work on photography[46], John Ellis describes cinema in terms of

the 'photo effect'. Spectators know that films are

photographed and edited together long before they are actually

projected and viewed by the cinema audience, yet they offer an

experience of immediacy:

> The cinema image is marked by a particular half-magic feat in that it makes present something that is absent. The moment shown on the screen is passed and gone when it is called back into being as illusion. The figures and places shown are not present in the same space as the viewer. The cinema makes present the absent: this is the irreducible separation that cinema maintains (and attempts to abolish), the fact that objects and people are conjured up yet known not to be present. Cinema is present absence: it says 'This is was'.[47]

In just the same way, the star performance is defined by

presence (the figure on screen) and absence (the knowledge

that this figure is always already 'not there'). Clearly this

reinforces the instability of the star image, the inability of

the filmic representation to fully circumscribe its multiple

meanings. Cinematic constructions of masculinity can also be

seen to fall into this particular double bind. The masculine

is defined by presence, by what we actually see on the screen

(the male body and the male star's actions) and by absence, by

what it is not; in other words, by the feminine or the

unsuccessful masculine.

This presence/absence binary constitutes the essential

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[45]Tasker, Yvonne: 'Dumb Movies for Dumb People: Masculinity, the Body and the Voice in Contemporary Action Cinema', in Cohan, Stephen & Hark, Ina Rae (eds.) (1993), pp.230-244.

[46]Barthes, Roland: *Chambre claire: note sur la photographie* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980).

[47]Ellis (1992), pp.58-59.

paradox of hegemonic representations of masculinity. Following Laura Mulvey's positing of the male gaze and the female object (male 'looker' and female 'to be looked at')[48], Steve Neale explores the extremely problematic nature of the very act of representing the masculine[49]. To construct the masculine on screen the male body must be displayed but, if the gaze is (heterosexual) male, this body can not be the object of this gaze. Neale claims that this dilemma is overcome by representing the male body as never merely the object of the gaze; its display is both justified and masculinised (or heterosexualised) through action, or it is mediated through the looks of other on-screen characters.

The cinematic gaze can involve either a voyeuristic look or a fetishistic look. The latter implies the direct participation of the object of the look, the knowledge that s/he is being looked at. Thus the look of the character towards the spectator, the acknowledgment of the look, is a central feature. In contrast the voyeuristic look posits a clear separation between the looker and the looked at:

> This sense of separation permits the spectator to maintain a particular relation of power over what he or she sees, and constructs the need for a continuous change and development in what is seen. The characteristic voyeuristic attitude in cinema is that of wanting to see what happens, to see things unrolling. It demands that these things take place for the spectator, are offered or dedicated to the spectator, and in that sense implies a consent by the representation (and the figures in it) to the act of being watched. The voyeuristic activity is

[48]Mulvey, Laura: 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' *Screen*, vol.16, no.3, Autumn 1975, pp.6-18.

[49]Neale, Steve: 'Masculinity as Spectacle: Reflections on Men and Mainstream Cinema', *Screen*, vol.24, no.6, Winter 1983, pp.2-16.

active and inquiring when defined in this way.[50]

This sense of activity, of 'wanting to see things unrolling', suggests that the male figure is generally subjected to a voyeuristic look. The male body in mainstream cinema will rarely acknowledge its display; as described above, its presence will be mediated and justified by onscreen looking and action.

Cuts from moments of bodily display to moments of action reveal the anxiety inherent to mainstream representations of masculinity, the need to displace the possibility of a homoerotic gaze. This double bind is carried through to the male star himself who must submit his body to a process of grooming or 'beautification', subsequently becoming the object of the gaze, whilst at the same time resisting connotations of homosexuality or femininity[51]. This is especially true of the muscular stars of the 1980s action cinema. Stars such as Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger constructed star identities around developed muscular bodies, frequently revealed in well-oiled semi-nudity. This muscularity was emphasised in the case of Schwarzenegger by his early career as a body-builder: his star image incorporated knowledge that he was a former Mr. Universe. The feminine implications of this bodily presence were denied by a near hysterical heterosexual masculinity displayed in the innumerable action sequences of the films in which these stars appeared. However, the built bodies of these stars revealed another instability

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[50]Ellis (1992), p.45.

[51]Kirkham, Pat & Thumin, Janet (eds.): *You Tarzan: Masculinity, Movies and Men* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1993), p.25.

in the construction of masculinity. As Richard Dyer explains, the displayed male body, exemplified by the pin-up, contains an inherent contradiction between passivity and activity. As pin-up (or object of the cinematic gaze) the male body is passive, is there to be looked at. Dyer complicates this passivity, claiming:

> Thus to look at is thought of as active; whereas to be looked at is passive. In reality, this is not true. The model prepares her- or himself to be looked at, the artist or the photographer constructs the image to be looked at; and, on the other hand, the image that the viewer looks at is not summoned up by his or her act of looking but in collaboration with those who have put the image there. Most of us probably experience looking and being looked at, in life as in art, somewhere among these shifting relations of activity and passivity.[52]

Nevertheless, it remains the case that most mainstream displays of the male body attempt to deny suggestions of passivity, either through action (in cinematic works), or through objects which connote action and hence heterosexual masculinity such as weapons and sporting implements, or through a tightening of muscles which reveals the body's potential for action (in photographs). Moreover, the depiction of the muscular body contains a paradox in that developed muscles are both a sign of natural phallic power and hence an unproblematic patriarchal masculinity *and* evidence of the labour that has produced such a body:

> The 'naturalness' of muscles legitimizes male power and domination. However, developed muscularity - muscles that *show* - is not in truth natural at all, but is rather achieved. The muscle man is the end product of his own activity of muscle-building. As always, the comparison with the female body beautiful is revealing. Rationally, we know that the beauty queen has dieted, exercised, used cleansing

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[52]Dyer, Richard: 'Don't Look Now: The Male Pin-up', *Screen*, vol.23, nos.3-4, September-October 1982, pp.61-73.

> creams, solariums and cosmetics – but none of this really shows in her appearance, and is anyway generally constructed as something that has been *done* to the woman. Conversely, a man's muscles constantly bespeak this achievement of his beauty/power.[53]

Thus the very display of the muscular body, the excess of the built physique, reveals the performative nature of masculinity so causing the vacillation of any attempt to define a straightforward 'masculine' clearly distinguished from a posited 'feminine'. It would seem that masculinity, like femininity, is a multiple, shifting masquerade[54].

La Totale: Thierry Lhermitte as masculine star

Thierry Lhermitte emerged from the *café-théâtre* of the 1970s and is essentially a comic star. As previously discussed, the *café-théâtre* tended to involve comic plays which set out to mock the habits and the social mores of the French petty-bourgeoisie. The derision of social types and institutions was a key element of this type of drama. Certainly a French audience would perceive Lhermitte as part of this tradition; the very success of many of the stars of the *café-théâtre* (Coluche, Michel Blanc, Miou-Miou and Josiane Balasko for example) means that their theatrical origins have become an integral part of their star identities, and this aspect of Lhermitte's persona will by reinforced by the presence onscreen of Miou-Miou and Michel Boujenah, and the involvement

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[53]Dyer (1982), p.72. Italics author's own.

[54]See Riviere, Joan: 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', in Rvitenbeek, Hendrik M. (ed.): *Psychoanalysis and Female Sexuality* (New Haven: College and University Press, 1966). Doane, Mary Ann: 'Film and the Masquerade', *Screen*, vol.23, nos.3-4, September-October 1982, pp.74-87.

of scriptwriter Didier Kaminka, all of whom began their careers in the *café-théâtre*.

Lhermitte was specifically part of *Le Splendid*, a theatre which Pierre Merle, in his work on *café-théâtre*, describes as more *'franche-rigolade'*, more comic and less political, than many of the other groups[55]. Indeed, Merle points out that although a myth of marginality grew up around the *café-théâtre* (it was often seen as a product of the events of May 1968 when in fact its roots can be traced back to turn of the century caberets and some of its leading exponents were already established by the mid-1960s), this vision was often misplaced. Indeed this may be particularly true of *Le Splendid*, many of whose participants became the *nouvelles stars* of French cinema during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (Lhermitte, Balasko, Blanc, Christian Clavier and Gérard Jugnot for example). Their careers flourished as they starred in *café-cinéma*, films based on the successes of the *café-théâtre*. These films were hugely popular, translating the derisive comedy of the source plays whilst toning down their non-conformism or political potential. Thus these films would draw upon the traditions of French popular comedy whilst at the same time presenting the social derision and naturalistic use of language outlined earlier in the chapter. As a result the very presence of Lhermitte in *La Totale* will suggest a comedy centred on social derision, a suggestion born out by the film's parody of both the secret services and cinematic representations of the spy, and the petty-bourgeois family.

Lhermitte's physique is quite significant in terms of

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[55]Merle, Pierre: *Le Café-théâtre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de la France, 1985), p.29.

this trajectory. Pierre Merle claims that to have a non- or anti-heroic physique was practically a *sine qua non* of the *Splendid* (he cites Balasko as an example)[56]. However, Lhermitte was the exception to this rule (or as Merle states, the exception that *proved* this rule). Certainly Lhermitte does possess a form of matinée-idol good-looks; in *La Totale* he is shown to be slim-hipped, elegantly dressed and debonair, in many ways a Bond-like figure. His handsome physique is revealed by the contrasting presence of his side-kick Albert (Eddy Mitchell) whose irregular features, overweight body and unkempt clothes serve to reinforce the charm of Lhermitte. This is also emphasised by the sequence in which Lhermitte is sent to visit a prostitute; he removes his own garments, marked as staid and unfashionable, typical of the *fonctionnaire* he is pretending to be, and dons an elegant suit. He becomes an archetypal cinematic hero and thus completes a successful mission by planting a bug on the prostitute's television (and subsequently sleeping with her). Nevertheless, despite these markers of a conventionally attractive or heroic physique, Lhermitte's identity as a comic star, the 'handsome' member of the *Splendid*, prevents the spectator from taking him entirely seriously. His comic trajectory reinforces the film's parodic qualities: he may be handsome but he is not a true cinematic hero.

Lhermitte's rather slight body also marks him as a non-action hero in distinct contrast to Arnold Schwarzenegger. Significantly, in *True Lies* Harry is shown to defeat the villains and rescue his family through a combination of

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[56]Merle (1985), p.79.

cunning and a majority brute strength and action. In contrast,
François's victories arise almost entirely through cunning
and/or chance. For example, in the first sequence to reveal
François as a spy, he is chased by a group of villains. He
flees into a sewer only to arrive at a sharp drop at which he
hesitates. This somewhat non-heroic hesitation forms a
striking contrast to Harry's unceasing pursuit of the motor-
cycle riding terrorist in *True Lies,* and his immediate attempt
to follow his prey on a death-defying horse-back leap from one
New York sky-scraper to another. As François hesitates, so he
turns and finds himself face to face with his pursuer. He
announces his imminent death to Albert over his microphone but
is saved as the villain has run out of bullets. Thus, in
contrast to Harry, François achieves victory through luck
rather than strength or ability. He is clearly not a
conventional hero, a fact figured by Lhermitte's star persona.

As previously stated, *La Totale* is essentially a domestic
comedy and this is surely reinforced by Lhermitte's non-heroic
image. This emphasis is stressed by the initial presentation
of François as a family man; we see him quietly working with
Albert when his wife phones him to ask him at what time he
will be home. At this point we have no knowledge of his true
identity. Much of the film is devoted to the family narrative:
François's attempts to save his marriage and rectify the
behaviour of his recalcitrant son. Many scenes take place
around the family meal table, revealing an archetypal
bourgeois French family with mother, father, son and daughter,

and mother-in-law busy in the kitchen[57]. Moreover, a great deal of the film's comedy arises from the disparity between this narrative and the spy plot, from the incongruity of a secret agent who is entirely unaware of the events going on in his own household. This is reinforced by the deliberate cross-over between the two narratives; for example, as François enters his darkened house he shows clear anxiety, grabbing a tennis racket and entering the room slowly only to be met with a surprise birthday party. Similarly, as the family awaits his return, Julien, his son, surveys the street with a pair of binoculars in an act of looking clearly more common to the spy genre than the domestic comedy.

This emphasis on the domestic comedy is both necessitated and extended by Lhermitte's comic star persona. *La Totale* sets out, far more vociferously than *True Lies*, to mock the family and petty-bourgeois life-styles. The film's opening scenes show François discussing his birthday with Albert; he states that he knows exactly what his wife has organised for his birthday as she has done the same thing for the past eighteen years. François's acknowledgment of the routine nature of his marriage is matched by Hélène who not only seeks excitement through her liaison with Simon, but also tentatively suggests to her husband that he may like to give up his job in the public sector and try his chances in private enterprise. It is significant that François's assumed occupation should be as a *fonctionnaire* with *France Télécom*; as an employee of a large public company he possesses what can be seen to be the

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[57]Consider Henri Mendras's description of the meal (the bourgeois dinner party and the barbecue) as an indicator of social structures (described in Chapter Three).

archetypal, conventional French petty-bourgeois post. This post becomes a salesman in *True Lies*, a profession whose particular resonance in American culture is exemplified by Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Nevertheless, the film does not seem to offer the private sector as a solution; although we are told that François's friends have achieved financial success in this domain they are also depicted as overweight and bespectacled, in sharp contrast to François's slim physique (and true identity). François does ultimately save his family, restoring excitement into his marriage and disciplining his son. Thus in many ways he represents a patriarchal masculinity, mobilised through both activity and paternity. However he also transgresses the codes of bourgeois family life by sleeping with a prostitute and finally mocking marriage as he and Hélène masquerade as a married couple celebrating their tenth wedding anniversary at the close of the film. This image of the conventionally married couple (both reassume the dull clothing they have discarded since Hélène has become a spy), enjoying the vicarious sexual pleasures of the *Folies Bérgères*, forms a marked contrast to the real pleasures afforded by the renewed marriage of François and Hélène. Thus the film both derides marriage and yet at the same time underwrites it. This limited subversion is, as already stated, a common feature of many French comic films of the 1980s and 1990s. However, it is also made possible by Lhermitte's identity as both conventional romantic hero (his good looks) and potentially subversive comic.

Although both films set out to mock the monotony of suburban family life, *La Totale* is both more biting in its satire and more successful, partly due to the very bodily

presence of the two male stars. Both François and Harry assume a different identity according to the particular persona they are performing at any given moment in the film. This is figured by their dress; they wear a suit at work, black overalls and masks when on a mission, and a shirt and cardigan at home with the family. However, whereas Lhermitte's physique and identity as comic star allow him to don a cardigan and thus become the typical suburban family man, Schwarzenegger's muscular body bulges beneath the cardigan; he clearly is still Schwarzenegger, the action hero, masquerading as husband and father.

This difference serves to demonstrate the fundamental distinction between Lhermitte and Schwarzenegger; the latter is clearly a star with a well defined persona whereas Lhermitte can perhaps be best described as an actor. In other words, despite possessing certain connotations (comedy, derision), his identity is not fixed, he is able to perform a variety of roles. Thus the incongruity of François as either spy or dull family man ultimately depends upon Lhermitte's performance within the film rather than his wider image. Similarly Lhermitte does not carry connotations of a particular construction of masculinity. Unlike Schwarzenegger, whose identity has been defined by action films and focus on the built body, Lhermitte has played a variety of comic roles which develop no specific masculinity. This fluidity is carried through to *La Totale* where masculinity is shown to be quite multifarious; François is both cinematic hero and comic star, family man and adulterer. The film seems to both offer and, through comedy and satire, question an idealised version of active masculinity *and* caring paternity. This is ultimately

reconciled and reinforced as François saves his marriage through the revelation of the plurality of his identity and a display of active masculinity: despite the film's derision of both the petty-bourgeois male and the action hero, it is finally a combination of both that wins the day.

Arnold Schwarzenegger: remaking the star

True Lies is perhaps a more interesting film in terms of its mobilisation of its male star for the simple reason that Schwarzenegger has a far more clearly defined identity than Lhermitte. Moreover, the film can be seen as an explicit attempt to renegotiate and extend this identity and the particular construction of masculinity it implies.

As previously discussed, Schwarzenegger began his career as a body-builder, subsequently performing in a series of muscular, Hollywood action films (for example *Conan the Barbarian,* 1981, John Milius, *Commando*, 1985, Mark L. Lester, and *Predator*, 1987, John McTiernan), hence his star image has been constantly defined through the body[58]. Towards the end of the 1980s, he tried to remake his image, largely through the use of humour and the revelation of a gentler side (often figured through paternity). This process can be perceived in the one-liners of his action roles, yet it became more explicit as Schwarzenegger undertook comic performances in films such as *Twins* (1988), *Kindergarten Cop* (1990) and *Junior* (1994). This transformation is played out in *True Lies*; Schwarzenegger is both action hero (and thus marks the film as part of the action/spectacle genre) and family man.

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[58]Tasker (1993), p.82.

True Lies initially presents Schwarzenegger as an action hero thus stressing the film's status as primarily action/spectacular movie. Indeed the film opens with an extended sequence (lasting over thirteen minutes) depicting Harry's attempts to both enter, and subsequently escape from, a Swiss chateau inhabited by the villains. The sequence demonstrates both Harry's cunning and charm (his command of various languages and his attractiveness to the opposite sex, embodied in the film's female villain, Juno Skinner, played by Tia Carrere) and his physical strength and agility (his defeat of his pursuers and eventual escape). Thus he is marked as both tough action hero and intelligent, witty Bondesque hero; to borrow Yvonne Tasker's terminology, he is both 'wise guy and tough guy'[59].

This dual identity is continued throughout the film and is resonant of Schwarzenegger's earlier roles in films such as *Terminator*, in which displays of action were accompanied by black humour. However, there is a significant difference between the action hero depicted in *True Lies* and that revealed in Schwarzenegger's earlier 'muscular' films. Discussing the emphasis on the body in films such as *Rambo III* (1988, Peter MacDonald), Yvonne Tasker claims that it is this emphasis that distinguishes muscular cinema from other action films[60]. Thus in the *Conan* and *Terminator* films, Schwarzenegger's body is displayed, his muscularity affirmed. In contrast, *True Lies* never reveals his body, he remains dressed throughout the film. As he embraces Helen, having

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[59]Tasker (1993), p.73.

[60]Tasker (1993), p.79.

single-handedly defeated the terrorists and seemingly thwarted their planned nuclear attack, his biceps are revealed through a tear in his shirt. Clearly this slight revelation of his developed body recalls his identity as muscular hero, an identity which is coupled with his status as husband and family man.

Indeed the film plays constantly on Harry's identity as both action hero and family man. He is shown to have a wife and child, and part of the narrative is devoted to his attempts to save his marriage and family. His distress at his wife's apparent infidelity and his concern for his daughter are clearly part of a process to humanise Schwarzenegger's star identity, to transform him from the one-dimensional muscular hero to a more complex performer. However, the film devotes less time to the family narrative than does its French source. Moreover, the performative nature of Harry's role as husband and father is stressed. As he arrives home after the opening action sequence and we learn of his identity as family man, Albert (Tom Arnold), his colleague, gives him a present for his daughter and reminds him to put on his wedding ring; in other words, he teaches him how to behave like a father and husband. Similarly, upon discovery that Dana (Harry's daughter) is stealing from her father, Albert advises Harry on how to deal with this problem. Albert is portrayed as an unsuccessful husband (his wife is having an affair and he has no children) yet even he is able to tell Harry how to be a family man. Clearly this underlines our knowledge that Harry is not really a family man, both in narrative terms and in terms of Schwarzenegger's star persona.

This knowing performativity is a constant feature of *True*

Lies. Although the film explicitly sets out to extend and redefine Schwarzenegger's star identity, it makes frequent reference to his earlier image. Thus the film contains a number of close-ups on Harry's face set in a narrow-eyed glare. This is the glare of the Terminator, of the muscular hero, and as such the audience knows it will precede or accompany a display of action on Harry's part. For example, as he chases the villain, Salim Aziz (Art Malik), each in a glass lift, we see Aziz's point of view shot of this type of close-up. The scene then cuts to Aziz's look of terror: like the audience, he has realised that he is not dealing with Harry Tasker but with the Terminator. This glare is perhaps used to most effect in a domestic scene in which Helen lies to Harry about her activities in order to cover up her liaison with Simon. As she speaks the scene cuts to a close-up on Harry's face set in this familiar glare; the juxtaposition of the domestic scene and this reference to Schwarzenegger's earlier identity once again underlines the process of transformation that is at work in the film.

A similar knowingness is displayed towards the end of the sequence depicting Harry's destruction of the villain's hide-out. As previously mentioned, he emerges from the battle framed by a red sky and an apocalyptic landscape highly resonant of the post-nuclear future of the *Terminator* films. Moreover, during the course of the battle, Helen, amazed by Harry's prowess, cries 'I've married Rambo'. This intertextual reference manifestly serves to underline Schwarzenegger's incorporation of his former identity in this film. Indeed, this very play upon Schwarzenegger's star persona creates a *mise en abîme* humour; the duality of Harry's narrative

identity is both reflected and constructed by this mobilisation of Schwarzenegger's identity as both 'new' softer hero and 'old' muscular hero. This intertextual play, absent from *La Totale* due to Lhermitte's very different persona, perhaps makes the treatment of the narrative theme of dual identities and deceit more interesting in the American production than in its French counterpart.

Schwarzenegger's star image is evidently not constructed by his cinematic performances alone. As an Austrian national and a bodybuilder, Schwarzenegger risked connoting suggestions of 'otherness' and fascism. As a result his identity has been built around an emphasis on his 'Americanness'. Thus magazine articles and press releases reveal that he is married to a member of the Kennedy family (and hence the American establishment), that he was appointed head of the President's Council on Fitness by George Bush in 1990, and that he recently appeared on stage at the Olympic Games in Atlanta. The result of these efforts is that Schwarzenegger is now widely perceived by audiences as 'American as apple pie'[61], despite his strong Austrian accent. Thus, whereas in earlier films he would either play a foreigner or a mythical figure and his dialogue would be limited, he is now able to unproblematically represent the all-American hero. This assumed ethnicity is reinforced by *True Lies*. Yvonne Tasker points out that many muscular action films of the 1980s were set in non-specific locations:

> There is a defining sense of placelessness informing
> both the muscular action cinema and its articulation
> of the heroic figure. This is partly a function of
> the need to sell to international markets, but also

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[61]Arroyo (1994), p.28.

serves the mythic (that is, generalised, universal) status to which the narratives aspire.[62]

In contrast, despite its opening sequence in a Swiss Chateau, the narrative of *True Lies* is clearly located within the United States. Indeed the film represents Harry's pursuit of, and ultimate triumph over, a group of terrorists intent on exploding nuclear missiles in various American cities. The terrorists are described as Arab fundamentalists engaged in *jihad*. Their exact nationality is not revealed (thus the film demonstrates the homogenisation of the 'other' central to attempts to reinforce the 'nation') yet it is surely significant that they should be portrayed as Middle-Eastern terrorists. By defeating these villains, Schwarzenegger defeats America's principal contemporary 'enemy' and hence underwrites his own assumed nationality. It is surely also significant that his initial victory takes place on the Florida Keys, whose very landscape and proximity to Cuba makes it an important symbol of invasion and liminality in the United States[63].

The remaking of Schwarzenegger's star identity described above is clearly significant in terms of representations of

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[62]Tasker (1993), p.94.

[63]This representation of location is perhaps one of the key features in any definition of the narratives of *True Lies* and *La Totale* as 'national' artefacts; just as the former is located within and around the United States, so the spatial construction of *La Totale* is built around Paris. Moreover, whereas the threat to the 'nation' in *True Lies* comes from outside, in *La Totale* it is both internal and external. The villains are also 'Arabs' yet the 'Arab' country to which François and Hélène are taken turns out to be Barbès, in the very heart of Paris. This depiction of the 'other' as both within and without the nation can be seen to articulate constructions of French identity as both coloniser and colonised, and concerns about the new plurality in French society in which the immigrant is both French and other.

masculinity. Certainly it begs the question as to why there would be a need to soften his image as muscular hero at this point in his career. It is worth remarking that Schwarzenegger was not alone amongst the muscular heroes of the 1980s in his endeavours (consider Sylvester Stallone's spectacle-wearing and professed interest in fine art). Susan Jeffords sees this transformation of the muscular hero as the result of the particular American socio-historical conjuncture. She claims that whereas the action films of 1980s' Hollywood addressed a perceived deterioration in masculine forms of power in the wake of the advances of the feminist movement, the renegotiation of these identities in the late 1980s and early 1990s demonstrated a shifting construction of masculinity which would enable men to 'discover' their 'inner selves, to become 'whole'[64]. This development of a more introspective masculinity was exemplified by the appearance of a 'men's movement' in the United States, largely instigated by the activities and texts of figures such as Robert Bly and Sam Keen, which set out to reassess traditional 'masculine' roles[65]. This renegotiation was made apparent by the displacement in Hollywood films of the muscular hero in favour of a more gentle, sensitive male. These nurturing qualities were frequently figured through representations of paternity. Thus in *Kindergarten Cop*, *Junior*, and even *Terminator 2*, Schwarzenegger's identity is redefined through his relationship with a child (a relationship constructed in terms

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[64]Jeffords, Susan: 'Can Masculinity be Terminated?' in Neale, Steve & Hark, Ina Rae (1993), pp.245-262.

[65]See Bly, Robert: *Iron John: A Book About Men* (New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing, 1990) & Keen, Sam: *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man* (New York: Bantam, 1991).

of fatherhood). This process is evidently extended in *True Lies* as Harry is shown to be both a loving husband and a caring father. The action hero does not disappear (Harry does after all rescue his daughter by storming a building in a Harrier jump jet) yet he is both humanised and extended by demonstrations of affection towards his family[66].

This redefinition of masculinity, the displacement of the action hero in favour of the father and the husband should not necessarily be perceived as progressive in terms of mainstream gender constructions. In her discussion of popular American representations of the Vietnam War, Susan Jeffords states:

> In order to insure that the value of the masculine bonds is maintained, women must be effectively and finally eliminated from the masculine realm. [...] Vietnam representation narrates the masculine appropriation of reproduction, projecting men as necessary and sufficient parents and birth figures. Whether as medical personnel who intervene in the birth process or as paternal figures who act as guides for society, (male) Vietnam soldiers/veterans are portrayed as taking over what is presented as the single remaining feature to distinguish women from men - reproduction. In this way, the self-sufficient community of the masculine bond can be carried over from war to society, from the battlefield to the home, and the men who constitute it can survive and thrive without women. [...] The import of these narratives is that men are able not simply to exclude women from their arena, but to take over from their functions as well, effectively eliminating them altogether from considerations of value.[67]

Thus Jeffords sees masculine appropriation of typically 'feminine' activities (parenting, caring) as fundamentally

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[66]This articulation of the family and paternity is indeed a central concern of many of the remakes of the 1980s/1990s. Consider for example, *Un moment d'égarement* and *Blame it on Rio*, *Le Grand Chemin* and *Paradise*, *Neuf mois* and *Nine Months*, and of course, *Mon Père ce héros* and *My Father the Hero*.

[67]Jeffords, Susan: *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p.xiv.

non-progressive, as an effacement and usurpation of women. These remarks are interesting in terms of the representations of masculinity constructed by *True Lies*. Harry is shown to be a parent, ultimately the more caring and effectual parent as he rescues his daughter from the terrorists. However it would be clearly wrong to claim that 'woman' is eliminated from the film. Rather Helen is confined to a stereotypical feminine role as mother and housewife. She is shown to go out to work but significantly it is through so doing that she meets Simon and her marriage is threatened. Helen does eventually become Harry's accomplice, suggesting that the film creates a space for women within the 'masculine' world of action and power. However, this interpretation is problematic as Helen becomes involved entirely through Harry's agency and remains clearly marked as non-masculine as she screams hysterically, drops her gun and finally has to be rescued by her husband. The film's rather problematic gender positions are best illustrated in the sequences depicting Helen's interrogation and her strip-tease in front of her husband. Harry and Albert hide behind a two-way mirror and question Helen as to her involvement with Simon. The sequence cuts between shots of Helen and Harry, and Harry and Albert, occasionally switching to close-ups on a featureless video image of Helen which functions as a lie detector. Helen is being interrogated for her attempts to penetrate the domain of the masculine, to seek action and thus power through her liaison with Simon. Her powerlessness is stressed as she becomes the object of this interrogation. This process is then furthered as Helen is ordered to a hotel room and forced to strip and dance 'sexy' for an invisible onlooker (her husband, although she is unaware of this fact). By

performing this dance Helen becomes the object of the fetishised gaze and thus firmly gendered as feminine. This scene also perhaps seeks to displace anxieties about Schwarzenegger's possible identity as object of the gaze. As previously discussed, the depiction of the masculine in mainstream cinema necessitates the disavowal of its status as mere object of the gaze; by thus fetishising Curtis, Schwarzenegger is firmly marked as powerful subject of the gaze and thus non-problematic masculinity is confirmed. It is perhaps significant that although *La Totale* does depict a similar interrogation sequence, it does not include either the faceless video image or the bedroom performance; instead Miou-Miou simply lies on the bed in a darkened room until Lhermitte enters. The film does not need to insist upon this fetishisation of the woman as it is not engaged in the same interrogation and redefinition of masculinity.

Thus it can be seen that *True Lies* engages in both a remaking and an extension of Arnold Schwarzenegger's star identity and a concomitant renegotiation of masculinity. This clearly locates the film within its particular context of production; the intertextuality of its representation of Schwarzenegger's image reinforces its position within the hybrid genre films outlined previously, and its construction of a new masculinity, comprising both action and affection figured through the family, situates it within other paternal/family narratives produced in Hollywood in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

In Conclusion

Ultimately, both of these films can be seen to reveal the polysemy and the performativity of both the masculine and star identities. This is revealed by the specific mobilisations of their male stars and by the narratives themselves, which are after all centred upon a depiction of men performing dual identities. This is particularly evident in *True Lies* where the very attempts to redefine Schwarzenegger's persona display the non-immanent nature of both stardom and gender constructions. In some ways these films can then be seen to play out anxieties about the binary logic of gender, as in differing ways they depict masculinity as masquerade. However, they ultimately re-affirm traditional gender roles through the reconstruction of the nuclear family; this locus of clearly defined gender roles is mocked (in *La Totale*) and threatened (in both films, albeit most threateningly in *True Lies*) but it is finally saved and thus gender binaries are not subverted. Both Lhermitte and Schwarzenegger are defined in relation to Simon (Michel Boujenah/Bill Paxton), would-be lover of Hélène/Helen. He too is engaged in performance, pretending to be a spy in order to attract women. However, unlike the films' heroes, his performance is unsuccessful and this failure, coupled with his cowardice in the face of François/Harry, serves to reinforce the masculinity of the heroes, to negate the vacillation suggested by their own performativity. This is made particularly clear in *True Lies* as Simon cowers in fright, his cringing demeanour contrasting with Harry's impressive stature. 'I'm nothing' he cries, 'I have a small penis'. The scene cuts to a close-up on a bemused looking Schwarzenegger; clearly he does not have the same problem. Despite the film's negotiations he remains the site of phallic

authority.

Finally, this analysis of constructions of stars and masculinity provides yet more evidence of the complex process of transformation that is the remake. Despite clear similarities, *La Totale* and *True Lies*, through their different stars, their contrasting mobilisations of these stars, and their varying constructions of masculinity, can be seen to be entirely separate artefacts, emerging from very different cultural, economic, and industrial contexts. That both films are ultimately conservative perhaps says something about a tendency to reinstate the patriarch and the family in both French and American popular culture of the post-1960s, post-women's movement, 1990s. Republican discourses stressing the importance of the family point to its role as a hegemonic ideological construct in contemporary American society. The crisis in legitimacy of both the traditional family (witness the decline in marriage and the birth rate in France throughout the last decade) and the French democratic model, suggest a possible need to reinvoke grand narratives and models of patriarchal stability. However, as the above analysis demonstrates, how each film arrives at this affirmation is quite different.

Conclusions

The attempt to draw conclusions is always a somewhat perilous enterprise. This thesis began by describing the reductive accounts of the remake practice of the 1980s and 1990s. It questioned the straightforward linear trajectories established by this critique, going on to posit in their place a genealogical approach which would replace the vertical routes which lead from authentic 'original' to debased 'copy' with the circles and bifurcations of intertextuality and hybridity. To end such an approach with an affirmation of conclusions may seem to negate its very identity, closing the circles and streamlining the broken pathways. Nevertheless, whilst eschewing attempts at completion or closure, it is possible to suggest plural conclusions which are themselves bound up with the notions of contingency, polysemy, and difference so intrinsic to this work.

Condemning the Remake ... Defense of the Nation?

It is clear that the remake is not a recent phenomenon. Indeed, it has played an important role in cinematic production since the early days of film. Despite this endurance, contemporary accounts of the numerous remakes of

recent years have tended to condemn the practice and to deny its own history in order to lend it increased significance as a very *real* and very *current* manifestation of American cultural imperialism. Such negativity does sometimes seem somewhat excessive. Remakes are not always particularly enjoyable, nor do they necessarily achieve great profit at the box-office, yet although they share these attributes with many other cultural artefacts, they are subjected to a uniform hostility rarely levelled at the latter.

By locating such critique within a specific socio-historical conjuncture, it becomes apparent that it is perhaps not really about *the films* at all. Indeed, as the various remarks cited in the preceding chapters demonstrate, the majority of these negative accounts tell us very little about the filmic texts, revealing instead a great deal about reactions to the changes in French society experienced throughout the 1980s. The dissemination of a discrete French identity via post-colonialism, decentralisation and shifts from citizenship to the tropes of consumerism, enabled a plurality and acknowledgment of difference previously absent from the Jacobin tradition of the French State. This in turn provoked an anxiety which led to a shoring up of a uniquely 'French' identity, principally through the discourses and products of culture. Central to these changes, and the attendant anxiety, was the apparently unstoppable spread of a globalised economy and the marginalisation of France it seemed to threaten. As a dominant player in this 'new world order', the United States epitomised this threat and the fears it caused, hence the re-invocation of the anti-American discourses so prominent in the Cold War period. By condemning

the remake as *vampirisation*, the draining of the life-blood of French culture by powerful Hollywood producers, French commentators underlined their fear at France's precarious position in the global economy. Both the condemnation of the remake and French reactions to the GATT can be seen as manifestations of these particular concerns; as they defend the French audiovisual product against American competition, so they defend longstanding constructions of the nation and of cultural identity, destabilised by the political and economic changes of recent years.

Just as the remake can be located within an enduring history of similar transposition, so these anxieties should be perceived as a contemporary articulation of persistent French antagonism towards the United States, rooted in the incommensurability of the two countries' democratic traditions. They emerge both from the specific contemporary conjuncture and from a macro context of similar fears and similar defense. Moreover, the mobilisation of the audiovisual industry as both a site of potential threat and a means of bolstering up the 'nation', should not be abstracted from its particular past. As the reception of the Blum-Byrnes agreements in France shows only too clearly, audiovisual production has long been seen as an exceptionally powerful tool in the construction of a 'national' identity (or indeed a 'transnational' identity, as European audiovisual policy demonstrates). However, as Hollywood became established as the dominant cinematic producer, so the audiovisual industry also became a site for struggle *against* an American imposed hegemony (and subsequently, a globalised non-differentiation), and *for* the maintenance of individual cinemas and identities.

This mobilisation of the audiovisual demonstrates the location of this dialectic within wider discourses about cultural reproduction and the effects of mass culture. The United States' *cultural* (as opposed to political or economic) threat to France went hand in hand with the emergence of the culture industries and their perceived attack upon 'authentic' artistic creation. Thus Hollywood menaced French cultural identity not merely through its economic might but because it epitomised the mass production which was anathema to the defenders of a French tradition of 'great' art. The result of this has been an enduring attempt to differentiate French cultural identity via the tropes of 'high' culture and authenticity, and an ensuing denial of the mass/popular production so central to the French cinema industry. Condemnation of the remake emerges from, and reinforces, these critical discourses, establishing as it does a distinct opposition between the authentic French 'original' and the 'debased' American 'copy'.

The endurance of these Manichean discourses belies their problematic nature. As the preceding chapters have demonstrated, any attempt to define a cinematic work as uniquely French or American, as a product of 'high' or 'popular' culture, must always acknowledge the mutability of such definitions. These identities are constructed (and disseminated) by the film's contexts of production and reception. Whether or not a film is perceived as 'French', or as part of 'high' culture, will depend on where and when it is produced and where and when it is consumed. As films shift across space and time so they become something other, their identities can never be fixed. This is perhaps one of the

great paradoxes of the binary oppositions constructed around the remake. This very process of spatial and temporal transformation reveals the polysemy and instability of the filmic text and yet it is appropriated by the French critical establishment and inscribed within a linear trajectory of immanence and fixity.

Discarding the Original ... Remakes Everywhere?

Ultimately, the sterility of these accounts of the remake is revealed by the very identity of the practice as a form of *cinematic* production. The repetition and reproduction which transpire as a film is remade in Hollywood, and which provoke such outrage amongst so many French critics, are an intrinsic part of the cinematic text and the cinematic apparatus. This is particularly true of contemporary production. The bricolage and intertextuality of postmodernism have become a built-in feature of numerous cultural artefacts, as manifested by their knowing references to previous texts, both cinematic and other. This process is extended by the synergy of Hollywood production, the deliberate marketing of individual films across a wide range of products which necessitates open-ended, plural texts able to generate a variety of images. This plurality in production is matched by a similar diffusion in terms of consumption. Any attempt to describe the act of cinema viewing as a unified, unbroken process was always already extremely problematic. As discussed in Chapter Four, spectatorship could never be defined as a single gesture as it altered according to the moment and space of consumption, and the age, gender, race, sexuality, and class of the individual

viewer. Nevertheless, the notion of an audience 'community' was enabled by the location of cinematic spectatorship within a movie theatre; the collective nature of this viewing process was called upon to support descriptions of an undifferentiated 'mass' or 'national' audience. However, even this tenuous attempt at establishing a totalised concept of spectatorship must clearly be discarded as the movie theatre gives way to the fragmentation of video cassettes, satellite and digital television, and the internet.

However, this identity, constructed through repetition and fragmentation, is not confined to contemporary cinematic production alone. The filmic text, and the industry from which it emerges, has always been inextricably bound up with these very terms. As described in Chapter One, the centrality of fragmentation is evidenced by the filming process itself, as scenes are shot in a non-linear fashion and edited together to form an 'entire' artefact at a later date. The distribution and exhibition of films is also based upon repetition and reproduction as films are made to be copied, to be viewed and re-viewed across space and time. Indeed, the notion of seeking difference through the 'same' is a key concept in this description of cinematic practices. The establishment of genre conventions in 1930s Hollywood underlines the early mobilisation of this search for novelty through repetition as well-defined generic traits were constantly re-articulated via differing narratives, stars, and *mise en scène*. The numerous action films of 1980s Hollywood described in Chapter Five, and the various negotiations of paternity, reveal that this is an enduring feature of cinema. It should also be stressed that this is not true of Hollywood production alone. The generic

conventions of French cinema, and its repeated re-articulation of similar themes, demonstrate the centrality of this search for difference through the same in non-Hollywood production. Furthermore, the very attempt to define a 'national' cinema via the tropes of 'high culture' and 'Frenchness' can be seen as part of this same process as a distinct identity is only enabled through relationship to Hollywood cinema; in other words, a film is defined as 'French' because it is *not* an American production, as a 'high' cultural artefact because it is *not* identical to the 'mass' production of Hollywood. Thus distinction is enabled by forming a space within the dominant production context; French cinema and Hollywood cinema are both different *and* the same.

To posit the inherent repetition and intertextuality of cinematic production ultimately reveals the sterility of condemnation of the remake practice. How can it be possible to criticise the remake as non-original, as a copy, when all films can in some way be seen as copies? Moreover, why condemn the remake, which may well be consumed as an 'original' film, and accept other productions which set out to underline their relationships to other texts and elicit thoroughly intertextual readings? Clearly the remake is one aspect of a much wider process of cinematic reproduction and to condemn it is, in many ways, to condemn cinema itself. Indeed, the very term 'remake' is perhaps redundant. If all films can be seen as diffuse, hybrid, signifying systems then surely all films can be seen as 'remakes', or as equally 'original'. Moreover, to describe a film as a remake is to establish a binary relationship between a French film and a subsequent American production. However, as films become increasingly intertextual

and production increasingly globalised, such pairings appear highly problematic, leading us to wonder if the 'true' remake of *Le Salaire de la peur* is indeed *The Sorcerer* or *Speed* (Jan De Bont, USA, 1994)? Is the 'true' adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma* the film of the same title or the 1995 production *Clueless* (Amy Heckerling, USA)? Why should *The Assassin* be perceived as a more serious 'threat' to the identity of *Nikita* than Luc Besson's later film, *Léon* (France, 1994), which was set in New York, filmed in English and borrowed many of the features of Hollywood action thrillers?

Rather than express outrage at this particular form of cinematic production, let us then see the remake as an addition, an extension of an always already plural and open-ended signifying system. The remake both creates material profit for the French cinematic industry (through the sale of rights) and establishes the afterlife of the French text through its rewriting in another context. Clearly this is part of a cinematic industry in which the production of Hollywood plays a dominant role and thus the negative implications of the process should not be ignored; the remake is symptomatic of a cinematic culture in which the international distribution and exhibition of non-Hollywood products is extremely limited. Thus it can be seen as a 'fluent' rewriting which effaces the presence of other cinemas and other cultures. Yet it must be stressed that this is only one aspect of a highly complex process of adaptation, dissemination, and extension. The remake creates new texts which are both the same and other. In so doing it establishes new audiences both for the remake itself and for the source film. Finally it is a process which reveals much about the particular contexts of production and

reception of individual films and about the nature of 'cinema' itself. As the preceding study has demonstrated, an analysis of all forms of adaptation in terms of their relations to specific socio-historical conjunctures, and the ways in which they quote, incorporate, and yet differ from other texts, can tell us much about cross-cultural transposition and transformation and the various circumstances from which these texts emerge. Thus rather than ask which is the 'better' text, the source film or the remake, let us examine the ways in which these films construct and articulate their shared identities and their difference. Let us see them as both separate artefacts and as the hybrid exemplars of an endlessly repeating, and endlessly repeatable, signifying system.

Appendix: List of Remakes, 1930-1996

The Road to Glory 1936
Howard Hawks
Twentieth Century Fox

Les Croix de bois 1931
Raymond Bernard
Pathé-Natan

One Rainy Afternoon 1936
Rowland V. Lee
Pickford-Lasky/United
Artists

Monsieur Sans-Gêne 1935
Karl Anton
Amora Films

The Woman I Love 1937
Anatole Litvak
RKO

L'Équipage 1935
Anatole Litvak
Pathé-Natan

The Soldier and the Lady
1937, George Nicholls
RKO

Michel Strogoff 1935
Richard Eichberg
Ermolieff

Algiers 1938
John Cromwell
UA/Walter Wanger

Pépé le Moko 1937
Julien Duvivier
Paris Films Prods

Port of Seven Seas 1938
James Whale
MGM

Marius, Fanny, César, 1931-
6, Korda, Allégret, Pagnol
Paramount, Auteurs Associés

Prisons without Bars 1938
Brian Desmond Hurst
Columbia/London Film Prods

Prisons sans barreaux 1936
Arnold Pressburger
Cipra

The Lady in Question 1940
Charles Vidor
Columbia

Gribouille 1939
Marc Allégret
Lauer et Compagnie

Lucky Partners 1940
Lewis Milestone
RKO

Bonne Chance 1935
Sacha Guitry
Distributeurs français

Forty Little Mothers 1940
Busby Berkely
MGM

Le Mioche 1936
Léonide Moguy
Gray Film

I Was an Adventuress 1940
Gregory Ratoff
Twentieth Century Fox

J'étais une aventurière
1938, Raymond Bernard
Ciné Alliance

Lydia 1941
Julien Duvivier
Korda/London Film Prods.

Un Carnet de bal 1937
Julien Duvivier
Prods Sigma/Lévy/Strauss

Scarlet Street 1945
Fritz Lang
Universal/Diana Prods

La Chienne 1931
Jean Renoir
Braunberger-Richebé

The Postman Always Rings Twice 1946 Tay Garnett Loews/MGM	*Le Dernier Tournant* 1939 Pierre Chenal Lux
Heartbeat 1946 Sam Wood RKO	*Battement de coeur* 1940 Henri Decoin Ciné Alliance
Lured 1947 Douglas Sirk UA/Oakmount	*Pièges* 1939 Robert Siodmak Speva Films
The Long Night 1947 Anatole Litvak RKO	*Le Jour se lève* 1939 Marcel Carné Sigma
Casbah 1948 John Berry Universal	*Pépé le Moko* 1937 Julien Duvivier Paris Film Prods
The Man on the Eiffel Tower 1949, US/France Burgess Meredith A&T Films/Gray Film	*La Tête d'un homme* 1932 Julien Duvivier
The Thirteenth Letter 1951 Otto Preminger Twentieth Century Fox	*Le Corbeau* 1943 H.G.Clouzot, Atelier français/Continental Films
The Blue Veil 1951 Curtis Bernhardt Wald-Krasna/RKO	*Le Voile bleu* 1942 Jean Stelli, Comp. Générale Cinématographie
Taxi 1953 Gregory Ratoff Twentieth Century Fox	*Sans laisser d'adresse* 1951 Jean-Paul Le Chanois Films Raoul Ploquin
Human Desire 1954 Fritz Lang Columbia	*La Bête humaine* 1938 Jean Renoir R&R Hakim/Paris Film
Fanny 1960 Joshua Logan Mansfield Prods	*Marius,Fanny,César* 1931-6 Korda,Allégret,Pagnol Auteurs Associés,Paramount
Paris When it Sizzles 1964 Richard Quine Paramount	*La Fête à Henriette* 1952 Julien Duvivier Régina/Filmsonor
The Sorcerer (*Wages of Fear*) 1977 William Friedkin Universal/Film Properties International	*Le Salaire de la peur* 1953 H.G.Clouzot, Fr./Italy CICC/Véra Films/Filmsonor/ Fonorama
Willie and Phil 1980 Paul Mazursky & Tony Ray Twentieth Century Fox	*Jules et Jim* 1962 François Truffaut Films du Carrosse/SEDIF

Buddy Buddy 1981
Billy Wilder
MGM

L'Emmerdeur 1973
Edouard Molinaro, Fr/Italy
Films Ariane/Mondex/OPIC

The Postman Always Rings Twice 1981
Bob Rafelson
Lorimar Prods/Northstar

Le Dernier Tournant 1939
Pierre Chenal
Lux

The Toy 1982
Richard Donner
Rastar Prods/Columbia

Le Jouet 1976
Francis Veber
Renn Prods/Fideline/EFVE

Breathless 1983
Jim McBride
Breathless Associates/
Greenberg Brothers

A bout de souffle 1960
Jean-Luc Godard
Georges de Beauregard/
Société nouvelle de cinéma

The Man who Loved Women
1983, Blake Edwards
Columbia/Delphi/Edwards

L'Homme qui aimait les femmes 1977, Truffaut
Films du Carrosse/ AA

The Woman in Red 1984
Gene Wilder
Orion

Un éléphant ça trompe énormément 1976, Yves Robert, Gaumont/Guéville

Blame it on Rio 1983
Stanley Donen
Sherwood Productions

Un moment d'égarement 1977
Claude Berri
Gala/Renn Prods.

The Man with One Red Shoe
1985, Stan Dragoti
Victor Drai Productions

Le Grand blond avec une chaussure noire 1972
Yves Robert, Gaumont/
Guéville/Madeleine

Down and Out in Beverly Hills 1986
Paul Mazursky
Touchstone/Silver Screen II

Boudu sauvé des eaux 1932
Jean Renoir
Films Michel Simon

Happy New Year 1987
John G. Avildsen
Columbia/Weintraub/Delphi IV

La Bonne Année 1973
Claude Lelouch, Fr/Italy
Films 13/Rizzoli

And God Created Woman 1987
Roger Vadim
Vestran Pictures/Crow

Et Dieu créa la femme 1956
Roger Vadim
Iéna/UCIL/Corinor

Three Men and a Baby 1987
Leonard Nimoy
Touchstone/Silver Screen III

Trois Hommes et un couffin
1985, Coline Serreau, Flach Film/Soprofilms/TFI Films

Cousins 1989
Joel Schumacher
Paramount

Cousin, Cousine 1975
Jean-Charles Tacchella
Pomereu/Gaumont

Three Fugitives 1989
Francis Veber, Touchstone/

Les Fugitifs 1986
Francis Veber

Warner/Silver Screen IV

Fideline/EFVE/Orly/DD Films

Men Don't Leave 1990
Paul Brickman
Warner

La Vie continue 1981
Moshe Mizrahi
Cinéproduction

Quick Change 1990
Bill Murray, H. Franklin
Devoted Prods/Warner

Hold-up 1985
Alexandre Arcady, FR/Canada
Cerito/Ariane/Cinévideo

Paradise 1991
Mary Agnes Donoghue
T o u c h s t o n e / B u e n a
Vista/Interscope/Lepetit

Le Grand Chemin 1987
Jean-Loup Hubert
Flach Film/Séléna/TFI

Oscar 1991
John Landis
Touchstone/Silver Screen IV
Ponti Vecchio/Landis
Belzberg

Oscar 1967
Edouard Molinaro
Gaumont International

Pure Luck 1991
Nadia Tass
Silver Lion Films/Sean
Daniel Company

La Chèvre 1981
Francis Veber
Gaumont/Fideline/Conacine

Sommersby 1993
Jon Amiel
Regency Enterprises/
Alcor Films/Canal +

Le Retour de Martin Guerre
1982, Daniel Vigne
Société française de
cinéma/FR3

*Point of No Return (The
Assassin)* 1993
John Badham
Warner

Nikita 1990
Luc Besson, Fr/Italy
Gaumont/Cecchi Gori/Tiger

Intersection 1994
Mark Rydell
Paramount

Les Choses de la vie 1969
Claude Sautet, Fr/Italy
Fida Cinematografica

My Father the Hero 1994
Steve Miner
Touchstone/Film par film/
Cité Films

Mon Père ce héros 1991
Gérard Lauzier
Film par film/Orly/TF1

True Lies 1994
James Cameron
Lightstorm Entertainment

La Totale 1991
Claude Zidi, Films 7/Film
par film/MDG Prods/TF1

Mixed Nuts 1994
Nora Ephron
TriStar

Le Père Noël est une ordure
1982, Jean-Marie Poiré

Nine Months 1995
Chris Columbus
Twentieth Century Fox/1492
Productions

Neuf Mois 1994
Patrick Braoudé
AFCI Prods/France 2 Cinéma/
UGC Images

Birdcage 1996
Mike Nicholls
United Artists

Diabolique 1996
Jeremiah Chechik
Morgan Creek Prods/James
G. Robinson/Marvin Worth
Prods/ABC Prods

La Cage aux folles 1978
Edouard Molinaro, Fr/Italy
United Artists/PAA/Da Ma

Les Diaboliques 1954
H.G.Clouzot
Filmsonor

Filmography

A bout de souffle (France, 1960, Jean-Luc Godard, Georges de Beauregard/Société nouvelle de cinéma).

The Abyss (USA, 1989, James Cameron, Twentieth Century Fox).

Algiers (France, 1938, John Cromwell, United Artists/Walter Wanger).

Aliens (USA, 1986, James Cameron, Twentieth Century Fox/Brandywine).

All Quiet on the Western Front (USA, 1930, Lewis Milestone, Universal).

All the President's Men (USA, 1976, Alan J. Pakula, Warner/Wildwood).

Bande à part (France, 1964, Jean-Luc Godard, Anouchka films/Orsay).

Basic Instinct (USA, 1991, Paul Verhoeven, Guild/Carolco/Canal Plus).

La Belle Équipe (France, 1936, Julian Duvivier, Ciné Arts France).

Birdcage (USA, 1996, Mike Nicholls, United Artists).

Blame it on Rio (USA, 1983, Stanley Donen, Sherwood Productions).

Blind Date (USA, 1987, Norman Jewison, Patrick Palmer/Norman Jewison).

Blue Steel (USA, 1990, Kathryn Bigelow, Vestron/Lightning Pictures/Precision Films/Mack-Taylor Productions).

Bob le flambeur (France, 1956, Jean-Pierre Melville, Jenner/Cyme/Play Art/OGC).

Borsalino (France, 1969, Jacques Deray, Adel/Marianne/Mars).

Breathless (USA, 1983, Jim McBride, Breathless Associates/Greenberg Brothers).

The Brinks Job (USA, 1978, William Friedkin, Universal/Dino de Laurentiis).

Les Bronzés (France, 1978, Patrice Leconte, Yves Rouset Rovard/Trinacra).

La Cage aux folles (France/Italy, 1978, Edouard Molinaro, United Artists/PAA/Da Ma).

The Celluloid Closet (USA, 1995, Rob Epstein & Jeffrey

Friedman, Reflective Image/Telling Pictures/Home Box Office/Channel 4/ZDF Arte).

La Chienne (France, 1931, Jean Renoir, Braunberger-Richebé).

Citizen Kane (USA, 1941, Orson Welles RKO/Mercury Productions).

Clueless (USA, 1995, Amy Heckerling, Paramount).

Commando (USA, 1985, Mark L. Lester, Twentieth Century Fox).

Conan the Barbarian (USA, 1981, John Milius, Dino de Laurentiis/Edward R. Pressman).

Cousin Cousine (France, 1975, Jean-Charles Tacchella, Pomereu/Gaumont).

Cousins (USA, 1989, Joel Schumacher, Paramount).

Les Croix de bois (France, 1931, Raymond Bernard, Pathé-Natan).

David Holzman's Diary (USA, 1967, Jim McBride, Jim McBride).

Die Hard (USA, 1988, John McTiernan, Twentieth Century Fox/Gordon/Silver Pictures).

Down and Out in Beverly Hills (USA, 1986, Paul Mazursky, Touchstone/Silver Screen II).

Un éléphant ça trompe enormément (France, 1976, Yves Robert, Gaumont/Guéville).

Emma (USA, 1996, Douglas McGrath, Matchmaker Films/Miramax/Haft Entertainment).

Eraser (USA,1996, Charles Russell, Warner Brothers).

The Exorcist (USA, 1973, William Friedkin, Warner Brothers/Hoya).

Fatal Attraction (USA, 1987, Adrian Lyne, Paramount/Jaffe-Lansing).

First Blood (USA, 1982, Ted Kotcheff, Carolco).

A Fish Called Wanda (USA, 1988, Charles Crichton, MGM).

The French Connection (USA, 1971, William Friedkin, Twentieth Century Fox/Philip d'Antoni).

Les Fugitifs (France, 1986, Francis Veber, Fideline/EFVE/Orly/DD Films).

Gandhi (Britain, 1982, Richard Attenborough, Columbia/Goldcrest/Indo-British/Institute of Film Investors/ National Film Development Corporation of India).

Gazon Maudit (France, 1995, Josiane Balasko, Renn Productions/TF1 Films/Les Films Flam).

Germinal (France/Belgium, 1993, Claude Berri, Renn Productions/Films A2).

The Godfather (USA, 1972, Francis Ford Coppola, Paramount/Alfran).

Gone with the Wind (USA, 1939, Victor Fleming, MGM/Selznick International).

Le Grand Blond avec une chaussure noire (France, 1972, Yves Robert, Gaumont/Guéville/Madeleine).

Le Grand Chemin (France, 1987, Jean-Loup Hubert, Flach Film/Séléna/TF1).

La Grande Vadrouille (France/Britain, 1966, Gérard Oury, Les Film Corona).

Gun Crazy (USA, 1950, Joseph H. Lewis, King Brothers/Universal International).

The Harder They Fall (USA, 1956, Mark Robson, Columbia).

Heaven's Gate (USA, 1980, Michael Cimino, United Artists).

Hiroshima mon amour (France/Japan, 1959, Alain Resnais, Argos/Comei/Pathé/Daiei).

Les Hommes préférent les grosses (France, 1981, Jean-Marie Poiré, Ciné productions/SFPC)

Human Desire (USA, 1954, Fritz Lang, Columbia).

Le Hussard sur le toit (France, 1995, Jean-Paul Rappeneau, Hachette Première/France 2 Cinéma/CEC Rhône Alpes).

Independence Day (USA, 1996, Roland Emmerich, Twentieth Century Fox/Centropolis Entertainment).

Un Indien dans la ville (France, 1994, Hervé Palud, Ice Films/TF1 Films).

Jaws (USA, 1975, Steven Spielberg, Universal/Zanuck Brown).

Jean de Florette (France, 1986, Claude Berri, Renn Productions/Films A2/RA12/DD Films).

Junior (USA, 1994, Ivan Reitman, Northern Lights Enterprises).

Jurassic Park (USA, 1993, Steven Spielberg, Amblin Entertainment).

The Killing (USA, 1956, Stanley Kubrick, United Artists/Harris-Kubrick).

Kindergarten Cop (USA, 1990, Ivan Reitman, Universal).

Land and Freedom (Britain/Spain/Germany, 1995, Ken Loach, Parallax/Messidor Films/Road Movies Dritte).

Léon (France, 1994, Luc Besson, Gaumont/Les Films du Dauphin).

Lethal Weapon (USA, 1987, Richard Donner, Warner Brothers/Richard Donner Pictures).

The Long Night (USA, 1947, Anatole Litvak, RKO).

Lydia (USA, 1941, Julien Duvivier, Korda/London Film Productions).

M (Germany, 1931, Fritz Lang, Nero Films).

M (USA, 1951, Joseph Losey, Columbia).

Manhattan Murder Mystery (USA, 1993, Woody Allen, TriStar Pictures/Jack Rollins-Charles H. Joffe).

Man of the West (USA, 1958, Anthony Mann, United Artists/Ashton).

The Man Who Knew too Much (Britain, 1934, Alfred Hitchcock, GFD/Gaumont British).

The Man Who Knew too Much (USA, 1956, Alfred Hitchcock, Paramount/Hitchcock).

The Man with One Red Shoe (USA, 1985, Stan Dragoti, Victor Drai Productions).

Michel Strogoff (France, 1935, Richard Eichberg, Ermolieff).

Les Misérables (France, 1934, Raymond Bernard, Pathé-Natan).

Les Misérables (USA, 1952, Lewis Milestone, Twentieth Century Fox).

Les Misérables (France/Italy, 1958, Jean-Paul Le Chanois, Pathé/PAC).

Les Misérables (France, 1995, Claude Lelouch, Les Films 13/TF1 Films/Columbia).

Miserabili (Italy, 1947, Riccardo Freda, Carlo Ponti).

Mission Impossible (USA, 1996, Brian de Palma, Paramount).

Mixed Nuts (USA, 1994, Nora Ephron, TriStar).

Moi, Pierre Rivière (France, 1976, Réné Allio, Films Arquebuse).

Un moment d'égarement (France, 1977, Claude Berri, Gala/Renn Productions).

Mon Père ce héros (France, 1991, Gérard Lauzier, Film par film/Orly/TF1).

Moonstruck (USA, 1987, Norman Jewison, Patrick Palmer/Norman Jewison).

Mr Smith Goes to Washington (USA, 1939, Frank Capra, Columbia).

My Father the Hero (USA, 1994, Steve Miner, Touchstone/Film par film/Cité Films).

Neuf mois (France, 1994, Patrick Braoudé, AFCI Productions/France 2 Cinéma/UGC Images).

Nikita (France/Italy, 1990, Luc Besson, Gaumont/Cecchi Gori/Tiger).

Nine Months (USA, 1995, Chris Columbus, Twentieth Century Fox/1492 Productions).

Oscar (USA, 1991, John Landis, Touchstone/Silver Screen IV/Ponti Vecchio/Landis Belzberg).

Paradise (USA, 1991, Mary Agnes Donoghue, Touchstone/Buena Vista/Interscope/Lepetit).

Pépé le Moko (France, 1937, Julien Duvivier, Paris Films Productions).

Le Père Noël est une ordure (France, 1982, Jean-Marie Poiré, Trinacra/Films A2/La Troupe du Splendid).

Pillow Talk (USA, 1959, Michael Gordon, Universal/Arwin).

Point of No Return (*The Assassin*) (USA, 1993, John Badham, Warner Brothers).

Predator (USA, 1987, John McTiernan, Twentieth Century Fox/Lawrence Gordon/Joel Silver/John Davis).

Pulp Fiction (USA, 1994, Quentin Tarantino, Miramax/A Band Apart/Jersey Films).

Les 400 Coups (France, 1959, François Truffaut, Films du Carrosse/SEDIF).

Quo Vadis (USA, 1951, Mervyn Le Roy, MGM).

Rambo III (USA, 1988, Peter MacDonald, Columbia/ TriStar/Carolco).

La Reine Margot (France/Italy/Germany, 1995, Patrice Chéreau, Renn Productions/France 2 Cinéma/DA Films/NEF Filmproduktion).

Reservoir Dogs (USA, 1991, Quentin Tarantino, Rank/Live America/Dog Eat Dog).

Le Retour de Martin Guerre (France, 1982, Daniel Vigne, Société française de cinéma).

The Road to Glory (USA, 1936, Howard Hawks, Twentieth Century

Fox).

RoboCop (USA, 1987, Paul Verhoeven, Rank/Orion).

Rocky IV (USA, 1985, Sylvester Stallone, MGM/United Artists/Winkler-Chartoff).

Romancing the Stone (USA, 1984, Robert Zemeckis, Twentieth Century Fox/El Corazon).

Les Ripoux (France, 1984, Claude Zidi, Film 7).

Sabrina (USA, 1954, Billy Wilder, Paramount).

Sabrina (USA, 1996, Sydney Pollack, Paramount/Constellation Films).

Le Salaire de la peur (France/Italy, 1953, H.G.Clouzot, CICC/Véra Films/Filmsonor/Fonorama).

Scarlet Street (USA, 1945, Fritz Lang, Universal/Diana Productions/Walter Wanger).

Sense and Sensibility (USA, 1995, Ang Lee, Columbia).

The Seven Year Itch (USA, 1955, Billy Wilder, Twentieth Century Fox).

Sex and the Single Girl (USA, 1964, Richard Quine, Warner Brothers/Richard Quine/Reynard).

The Soldier and the Lady (USA, 1937, George Nicholls, RKO).

Something Wild (USA, 1986, Jonathan Demme, Orion/Religioso Primativa du Art).

Sommersby (USA, 1993, Jon Amiel, Regency Enterprises/Alcor Films/Canal Plus).

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