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City of Darkness, City of Light

**The Representation of Paris in the
1930s French Films of the German
Emigrés**

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film
Studies

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Oxford, September 1999

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

ABSTRACT

Paris is one of the key sites of meaning regarding France's cinematic output. This thesis surveys the contribution German émigré filmmakers made to the French cinema of the 1930s through a series of case studies of their depiction of the nation's capital city. It argues that this contribution was both typical and singular. The émigrés engaged directly with traditions of Parisian representation, but they also played a distinctive role in the important debate over the direction early French sound filmmaking should take.

The body of the thesis contains detailed textual analysis of many émigré productions which have hitherto been ignored within film history. It contextualises this analysis with comparative discussion of films made by indigenous professionals and an examination of past and present intertextual aspects of Parisian culture. The thesis moves beyond aesthetic concerns to also consider the political, industrial and social significance of the work of the émigré filmmakers. The reception of their films is located within a history of the Franco-German relationship as a whole. By drawing widely upon supporting documentation in critical and trade journals of the time, the thesis provides a new history of a crucial transitional point in the development of European film culture.

Introduction

"With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear".

Italo Calvino, Invisible Cities.¹

In the early 1930s, a succession of European émigré filmmakers arrived in Paris from the internationally successful studios of Berlin. This thesis looks at the significance of that historical moment through a detailed exploration of the émigrés' on and off-screen relationship with their adopted home. Previous critical work on the culture of urban space has argued that the relationship between the cinema and the city is a complex one. Cities like Paris have been perceived as texts to be explored or deciphered in themselves. Donald (1992, 422), for example, has argued that "the city ... is above all a representation ... an imagined environment" whereas Williams (in Caws, 1991, 1) has even suggested, more broadly, that the "fictional method is the experience of the city". Coupled with these claims has come the suggestion that as "an imagined environment", the city is "shaped by the interaction of practices, events and relations so complex that they cannot easily be visualised" (Donald, 457). As a result, a preponderance of metaphors therefore exists to describe the various facets of urban experience. As Italo Calvino's quotation and my own title suggest, these metaphors can be positive and negative. The city, for instance, has been seen as a theatrical stage—a place of transformation and possibility, but it has also been seen as a corrupt and corrupting machine at odds with the rural certainties of the past.

If the city is a metaphorical text, it is unsurprising that much of the critical discussion about urban culture and its meanings centres around the fields of perception and subjectivity. As de Certeau (in Donald, 436) notes, one person can never grasp the full measure of the concept of a city. When we walk the city, "we adapt it to our own creative

¹Italo Calvino (1974) Invisible Cities. London: Martin Secker and Warburg, p. 44.

purposes; ... such negotiations produce a different space ... it is not a representation of space but a representational space". Instead of describing and analysing the complex "interaction of practices, events and relations" that make up the city as a tentative whole, what results is an interpretative practice which privileges the individual's perceptual encounter with the urban. The cinema, as the pre-eminent urban based visual medium of mass communication, fits in with this interest in sight and the city. There is a metaphorical analogy between one's viewing of the textual spaces of the cinematic narrative, and the walker's encounter with the created spaces of the built city environment. Indeed, Clarke (1997, 2) has written that "the city has undeniably been shaped by the cinematic form, just as the cinema owes much of its nature to the historical development of the city". Both concern a broken and fragmented mode of vision which disrupts an apparent pre-modern sense of the unity of space and time. In the case of the city walker, this way of seeing is achieved by the relationship of the moving body to the street and its attractions. With the cinematic spectator, it is achieved by means of the mobility of the camera and the fragmentation of space and time through editing.²

The problem with this line of enquiry is that by continuing to pursue chains of metaphorical association, one ends up negating the possibilities open within a more specifically grounded historical perspective. Fundamental to this perspective might be the way in which particular social, economic, political and cultural factors force one to consider not just how the city was seen, but by whom and when. This is one of the goals of my thesis—to move beyond the generalities of much that has been written on the cinematic city, and to rewrite one particular aspect of film history in a hitherto unexplored fashion. If one accepts that the city as a social space might be multi-layered and open to contradiction or disjunction, then so too might the ways in which it has been represented on the screen.

²For discussion of this analogy see, amongst others, Wolfgang Natter (1994) "The City as Cinematic Space: Modernism and Place in *Berlin, Symphony of a City*" in Aitken and Zonn (eds.) (1994); Giuliana Bruno (1993) Streetwalking on a Ruined Map. Princeton: Princeton University Press and Anne Friedburg Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern. Berkeley: University of California Press.

By making the deliberate shift from the city as text to the cinematic city as text, my project still aims to embrace the productive possibility of a set of tensions. The most significant of these will be concerned with the question concerned with the central question of what happens to the representation of one city, when film-makers from another urban film capital arrive and begin to take part in that city's film industry.

By looking at the cinematic representation of a major European city at this particular historical moment, the late silent to early sound era, and through the prism of a particular relationship, that between France and Germany, I will meet two important aims. Firstly, I want to examine how the émigré films made and set in Paris actually represented the capital. How, for example, did they engage with pre-existing modes of Parisian representation both on film and in other media such as photography, song, literature and performance? To what extent did they then refract these modes to produce a distinctive contribution to the picturing of the city? Secondly, by examining the history of the French engagement with Germany over this period in terms of production and personnel, I want to establish a clearer understanding of the historical complexities involved when talking of a national cinema within Europe. The answers to these two lines of enquiry will go some way towards a subsequent understanding of the place of cinema within the overall urban social experience of the time.

Paris of the 1930s was in many ways a divided city. As Augé (1996) demonstrates with evocative precision in his discussion of an anthology of Parisian photographs of the era, the city was marked strongly by currents of continuity and change. Now, with the hindsight of an historical perspective which sees the war to come as well as the war past, the city appears a site of various temporalities. Behind the aesthetic facade of the two international Parisian exhibitions of the decade—the Exposition Coloniale of 1931 and the Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques of 1937—lay a society uncertain of itself;

a society that kept one eye on the traumas of the First World War, and one eye on the gathering political problems in the rest of Europe. Marred by a succession of short-lived governments, the French capital was riven by political tensions which brought citizens onto the streets in riots, strikes and demonstrations throughout the decade. One indication of this insecurity was the way in which the vocal supporters of the French right laid claim to individual national pride, whilst at the same time genuflecting to an imported ideology from a former military enemy. Another was the way in which the French capital handled the progression of modernisation in terms of its built environment. Despite the growth of the greater Parisian region in the 1920s and early 1930s, with its expansion in housing, factories and railways, the city was still a place which took pride in traditional social mores. If Evenson (1979, 255) is right in suggesting that Paris lies at the crossroads in Europe between a Mediterranean and a Northern lifestyle, it appears that in this decade, at least within cultural discourse, the more Southern model of the Parisian *quartier* as family community was still dominant. This tradition was carried over into the spheres of popular entertainment—especially, as we shall see, within the cinematic representation of urban life.

These observations suggest a broader sense in which the title of this thesis may be understood. By referring in my title to Paris in terms of light and darkness, I am doing more than acknowledging the prevailing terms by which the French capital has conventionally been discussed. Paris became both the City of Light and the City of Darkness in the nineteenth century as rapid urbanisation and radical restructuring of the built environment produced new ways of viewing and new ways of understanding the city's social structure. This legacy was carried over into the twentieth century in various forms of cultural expression, including, of course, the nation's cinematic output. The example of the arrival of the German émigrés within the French film industry of the 1930s, however, provides new means of understanding this established dichotomy. Paris was also

the city of darkness and light for political reasons. Many of the émigrés were fleeing the darkness of a right-wing political regime in Berlin for the refuge of a European capital which had been seen, since the French Revolution, as a beacon of light for the continent's dispossessed. For various economic and ideological reasons, their reception was not unanimously favourable. It had a dark side embodied by the rising tide of French nationalism. Seeing Paris in terms of lightness and dark also involves various interchanges between the past and the present. Do the city films of the German émigrés suggest more than just a meeting point between Berlin and Paris? Do they also present new ways of understanding the important wider interaction between the past and the present in Parisian city culture of this period?

It remains surprising, despite the centrality of the French capital in terms of cinematic production, exhibition and representation, that there is so little sustained analytical writing about film and Paris. Art history has privileged Paris as a site of meaning—especially in the case of French nineteenth century painting—but film studies has yet to fully engage with the city. The French cinema of the 1930s, for instance, abounds with titles suggesting an affinity with the French capital. Many of these are now forgotten but they suggest a range of locations and genres. They include: Aux Portes de Paris (Barrois, 1935), Aventures de Paris (Allégret, 1936), Cendrillon de Paris (Hémard, 1930), Enfants de Paris (Roudès, 1936), Jeunes Filles de Paris (Vermorel, 1936), Ménilmontant (Guissart, 1936), Minuit Place Pigalle (Richebé, 1934), Moulin Rouge (Hugon, 1939), Paris mes amours (Blondeau, 1936), Quartier Latin (Colombier, 1939), Rendez-vous Champs-Élysées (Houssin, 1937), Rive-Gauche (Korda, 1931), Le Roi des Champs-Élysées (Nosseck, 1933), Tourbillon de Paris (Diamant-Berger, 1938), Trois Argentins à Montmartre (Hugon, 1939) Trois artilleurs à l'Opéra (Chotin, 1938) and La Vie Parisienne (Siodmak, 1936). Various anthologies have featured brief written pieces on Paris and the cinema, and writers like Adrian Rifkin (1995) have introduced film in their

discursive analysis of Parisian entertainment culture.³ The two books which specifically deal with the topic, Charles Ford and René Jeanne's Paris vu par le cinéma (1969) and Jean Douchet and Gilles Nadeau's Paris-une ville vue par le cinéma, de 1895 à nos jours (1987), remain insufficient. The former pursues the question of film adaptations from well known Parisian literary texts and provides scant textual or historical detail. The latter is more comprehensive, but it is primarily concerned with being a pictorial illustrated survey of what is still a field largely dominated by the canonical texts of poetic realism and the New Wave. One of my central goals in this thesis, therefore, is to provide the first sustained uncovering, in precise detail, of the actual workings of a number of filmic interpretations of the French capital. I have chosen to mainly look at previously ignored popular genres and none of the films which I mention have yet been discussed in any great detail. My original textual analysis will be contextualised on two fronts. Firstly, I will compare the émigré features with "indigenous" French films and then, in conjunction with this, I will place the texts within a broader historical analysis of contemporaneous modes of Parisian representation.

Thanks to the work of a number of scholars, we now have a detailed understanding of various facets of the French cinema of the 1930s. Survey texts such as Pierre Billard's L'Age classique du cinéma français. Du cinéma parlant à la Nouvelle Vague (1995), Raymond Chirat's Le cinéma français des années trente (1983) and Atmosphères: sourires, soupirs et délires du cinéma Français des années 30 (1987) and Jean Pierre Jeancolas's 15 ans d'années trente: le cinéma des français (1983) have documented key moments in the era's history by providing a descriptive analysis of indicative texts and individuals. Writers such as Courtade (1978), Crisp (1993) and Léglise (1970) have sought to examine the logistical economic, political and technological determinants of the

³See, for example, Jacques Belmans (1977) La Ville dans le cinéma de Fritz Lang à Alain Resnais; Catherine Boulegne et al (eds.) (1987) Cités-Cinés; Hillairet, Prosper et al (eds.) (1985) Paris vu par le cinéma de l'avant garde 1923-1983; François Niney, (ed.) (1994) Visions Urbaines and Michael Sheringham (ed.) (1996) Parisian Fields.

cinema as an industrial practice. Lagny, Ropars and Sorlin (1986) have investigated the character roles and narrative structures which dominated the decade's film output. For the purposes of my exploration of the cultural representation of Paris and the significance of the German émigrés, I have particularly drawn upon the recent work of Abel (1993), Andrew (1995) and Vincendeau (1985 et al). The former has provided a useful introduction to the many written debates circulating at the time about the nature of the French film industry and its place within the overall culture of the time. Andrew's rigorous and sustained analysis of one key facet of 1930s French cinema—poetic realism—has provided a serious example of how to write film history on the basis of what he terms "concrete cultural manifestations" (1995, xi). Andrew has sought to locate a historiography somewhere between the poles of the formation of an auteurist canon and a model of social analysis predicated on a mode of reductive social determinism. Borrowing from Barthes' term of *écriture*, he has suggested the analytical model of an *optique* which helps "make concrete the mysterious operations of the auteur (who chooses a particular aesthetic option before contributing personal style), while at the same time [specifying] the aesthetic and cultural fields within which artworks make their mark" (19). According to Andrew this always suggests "a limited set of possibilities alive at a given moment in a specific cinematic situation" (19). Whilst finding myself in broad agreement with many of his conclusions, it will become evident that I have also shifted the terrain of analysis. Several of the films which I discuss were projects which many of the filmmakers concerned were probably reluctant to make. Their outsider status dictated choices motivated by economic, as well as aesthetic, factors. Despite the fact that the émigrés "opened up stylistic options that would be crucial for poetic realism" (Andrew, 176), they also made, as we shall see, city-based musicals, operettas, caper movies and melodramas.⁴ These films should not be

⁴Many émigré films, of course, were not even set in Paris and thus fall out with the immediate concerns of this thesis. These titles include, for example, the body of work that Max Ophüls produced whilst in the French capital—On a volé un homme (1933); Divine (1935); La tendre ennemie (1936); Yoshiwara (1937); Le Roman de Werther and Sans lendemain (1940). Similarly I have not discussed the French émigré projects of G.W. Pabst such as Mademoiselle Docteur (1936) and Le Drame de Shanghai (1938).

seen as less interesting on account of this. Rather, as well as being suggestive evidence of the heterogeneity of popular French film culture of the time, they also provide valuable new perspectives on the depiction of the French capital. Finally, Vincendeau has kept one reminded of the dangers of "going back to a history of how French society of the 1930s [was] reflected in its films" (1985, 11). Her ongoing project of uncovering the intertextual nature of 1930s French film practice has allowed one, instead, to see how the category of the "socio-historical" was actually "inscribed within filmic texts" themselves (11). I have largely followed the example of this model and hope to have also shown that any history of the cinema of the period is, at least in part, also a history of that epoch's popular entertainment culture.

The early years of the 1930s were marked by the transition from silent to sound film production. As many have pointed out, the "introduction of speech, dialogue, and an actor's verbal performance reframed the question of how the French cinema could differ from and challenge the American cinema" (Abel 1993, 9). This notion of what a nationally specific French sound cinema means will be an ongoing reference point in my discussion of the émigrés, especially since I have chosen to examine their work through a discussion of the representation of the national capital. Paris was more than the émigrés' temporary home. It was also the symbol of the French nation and, as such, it became one of the key sites where definitions of the era's cinematic production became determined. The arrival of so many filmmakers from another European capital provides a fascinating historical opportunity to contextualise this process. How, for example, were apparently stable notions of national identity in relation to the city troubled or refracted by the arrival of the émigrés? Were they seen negatively because they were not French enough, or were they welcomed, in part, because as fellow Europeans they could contribute to the ongoing trade battle with the economic hegemony of the United States?

The waves of émigré filmmakers from Berlin in the 1930s must be understood within the overall context of the twentieth century rise in immigration into France. This rise had primarily been necessitated by the depletion in the male workforce after World War One, but it was also linked to the previously mentioned modernisation of the Paris region. In his study of France and its non-indigenous population, Noiriel (1996, 151) has argued that because of the "myth of origin that was built upon the events of the Revolution ... French immigration [has] always [been] approached as a question extrinsic to the country's history. It [has been] seen as a fleeting phenomenon, something fleeting and marginal". This has certainly been the case regarding the ways in which the Parisian work of the German émigrés has been discussed. Conventional film history has tended to bypass the passage of German exiles and émigrés in France in favour of providing an account of their subsequent work in Hollywood.⁵ Recent books such as Heilbut's Exiled in Paradise (1997) and Barron's Exiles and Emigrés (1997), which also look at the broader dimensions of European artists' exile to United States, largely do so from a high cultural perspective. Work on the German émigrés in Paris (Badia 1979, 1982, 1984 and Palmier 1988) tends as well to only consider such fields as literature, political philosophy and journalism. There is still a paucity of critical material on the time filmmakers spent in the French capital. In an important early article, Elsaesser (1983a, 1) has argued persuasively that this is due to three factors: "the apparent lack of success [of the films made in Paris], the provisional aspect of the stay and the prestige of the final destination".

Elsaesser has been one of the pioneers in readjusting the focus of study of this neglected aspect of film history. His documentation with Vincendeau (1983) provided the

⁵Books which discuss the Hollywood work of the German émigrés include: John Baxter (1976) The Hollywood Exiles. New York: Taplinger; Anthony Heilbut (1997) Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America From the 1930s to the Present; Graham Petrie Hollywood Destinies. European Directors in America, 1922-1931. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; Gene D. Phillips (1998) Exiles in Hollywood: Major European Film Directors in America. Lehigh: Lehigh University Press and John Russell Taylor (1983) Strangers in Paradise: The Hollywood Emigres 1933-1950. London: Faber and Faber.

valuable corrective to the notion that the Berlin émigrés were a uniform grouping. As I shall show as well, it is important to distinguish between the political phase of emigration after the Reichstag fire in 1933, and the previous wave of economically and technically related emigration. Much that has subsequently been written on the émigrés has tended, understandably, to privilege the difference of their work from conventional French film practice (Elsaesser 1984a; and various essays in Aumont and Païni 1992; Gassen and Hurst 1991; Sturm and Wohlgemuth 1996). Nonetheless, by reiterating this difference and linking it to the émigrés' prior work in Berlin, these accounts still contribute to the problematic assertion that the émigrés failed whilst in the French capital. The considerable importance of the place of the émigrés in French film culture of the 1930s has yet to be fully documented. Whilst I am not interested in the inadvisable task of measuring the relative greatnesses of the émigré French films, I do, nonetheless, believe that it is essential to also account for how successful the émigrés were in "fitting in". To this extent, I agree with Noiriel (1996, 169) who argues that if the "collective memory" of immigrant communities can be analysed, it can only be done so according to an ongoing sense of contestation. This involves what he calls "a never ending struggle between what Emile Durkheim called "native dispositions", which impel the individual to turn back to his native traditions; and everyday life in a foreign land, which requires some form of adaptation, that is, a sacrifice of the past for the sake of the present and future".

This thesis has been divided into four chapters. The first chapter, The City in Context, examines the social, political, economic and cultural backgrounds which inform my subsequent analysis of the films made by the émigrés. It proposes a complex and mutually informing set of contexts which, taken as a whole, present a fruitful way of situating the cinematic relationship between France and Germany over the period in question. The nature of my analysis, the result of synthesising existing research with new readings of primary source material, varies according to the questions which I ask. At

times, I provide a wide-ranging and chronological perspective; elsewhere I have found it useful to home in on a particular moment or individual in order to illustrate some of the broader themes under discussion. Throughout, my aim has been to conceive the term "cinema" not as a freestanding concept but, rather, as a set of social practices which must be understood within a concrete historical framework.

I begin by going back to the nineteenth century to situate a general discussion of the shifting permutations of Franco-German relations. I then move to the specific question of the different ways in which France and Germany made sense of the crucial inter-relationship between the city and modernity. If one of the key features of modern urban experience was a disruptive perceptual encounter with the new, does an understanding of the specific intertwining of place and memory in the capitals of Berlin and Paris result in new ways of understanding the discussion and representation of urban life within the cities' respective film cultures? How, in particular, did the defining moment of World War One affect these matters? The war also left a significant material legacy in terms of the future directions of the European film industry. I go on to uncover how links and rivalries between the Franco-German film industries over this period, helped pave the way for the subsequent patterns of emigration from Berlin to Paris in the late 1920s and early to mid-1930s. As well as fully drawing upon relevant trade sources and personal memoirs to provide the general picture, I will also present a number of more biographically detailed and discursive case studies. These serve a secondary purpose in that they introduce specific aesthetic and political themes which develop later in the course of my film analyses. The chapter ends with a discussion of the matter of the émigrés' arrival and reception in France. I shall consider their place within 1930s French film culture in the light of their ethnicity and cultural identity. By seeing how apparent outsiders translated the symbolically important site of the national capital, we will gain a fuller understanding of the complexities

surrounding the notion of a homogenous national film culture at a time when, in many quarters, that very notion had such political and economic significance.

In Chapter Two, City of Light, I begin my discussion of the films made by the German émigrés by examining, in detail, three hitherto neglected examples of émigré film making. I will contextualise this close textual analysis by privileging the way that the films intersect with many of the cultural conventions by which "light Paris" has historically been understood. How, for example, did the émigrés negotiate the entertainment milieu of "light Paris" and its sense of spectacular pleasure? Did the émigrés conform to a way of viewing the capital which was in itself spectacular? How did the émigrés foreground existing city mythologies in their use of Parisian stardom and performance? I will draw upon a wide range of written source material to understand not just the textual processes of the films, but the subsequent ways in which the films were then discussed.

Chapter Three, City of Darkness, deals with three other case studies of émigré city films which concern themselves with prevalent mythologies of the French capital. I will consider the obverse of the notion that the city was the centre of spectacular pleasure, by engaging with three ways in which we may understand Paris as a place associated with the dark. Firstly, I look at the Parisian street as a site of literal, metaphorical and moral darkness to discuss how we may understand nationally specific concerns about both French sound cinema and the wider progress of urban modernity. By placing the work of the émigrés at the heart of these debates, we will see more clearly why their representation of Paris mattered, and how it related to a broader intertextual history. This history shall be crucial to my related discussion of the ways in which the émigrés contributed to the picturing of Paris as the geographical heart of poetic realism. Secondly, I shall examine the significance of the Parisian night; especially in terms of its associations with urban entertainment and crime. Through detailed textual analysis, I will consider how the émigrés

mediated various representational tropes relating to the spaces of the city where crime and pleasure occurred—notably the Parisian *café*, the *bal musette* and the nightclub. Finally, I will return to some of the concerns introduced in Chapter One by re-examining the inter-relationship between place and memory in the context of the past itself as dark. How did the arrival of the émigrés matter to the ways French cinema of the 1930s remembered Paris? How did this relate to broader questions facing French society of the time?

My final chapter, *Divided City*, consolidates the previous chapters' discussion of the representation of Paris by means of a detailed microanalytical case-study of the way two specific émigré films pictured the city in terms of both light and darkness. I will begin with an extensive production and reception history of the films which will examine how they are split—like so much émigré work—between seeing Paris as the centre of domestic film production, and Paris as the place of temporary exile. I will go on to examine how this sense of division is consolidated by the way the films employ, and then play with, two conventional male Parisian star personas. I will suggest that this instability in male identity actually foregrounds the overall representational instability inherent in the films' narratives. Finally, I shall conclude by turning to the way in which the dominant theme of mobility in émigré city narratives is reconfigured in both texts to shed new light on Parisian representational myths of gender and place.

In my conclusion, which draws together the various textual and contextual issues explored in this thesis, I hope to end by summarising the specificity and importance of the German émigrés' representation of the French capital.



Chapter One

The City in Context

I: INTRODUCTION

In 1931, the painter Maurice Vlaminck wrote that he tended now to "avoid going to Paris. It has become for me like a train station, a kind of Western Constantinople, a junction [and] a bazaar" (qtd. in Golan 1995, 88). Vlaminck's somewhat acerbic use of the popular metaphor of the train station to describe the bustling and cosmopolitan nature of Parisian life in the 1930s reminds us of the fact that, over this period, the city had indeed become a terminus or junction point for various groups of émigrés drawn to the possibilities of the "City of Light". In his article on the German émigré filmmakers, Elsaesser extends the railway analogy by arguing that Paris had turned into a "waiting room" (1984, 278)—a place of temporary exile before the move to more rewarding terrain. After the first decade of the twentieth century, France was the leading host country in the world for newly arrived migrants. In 1930, exceeding its nearest rival, the United States, France had a foreign-born population of 515 out of every 100, 000 people.¹ This chapter will examine some of the social, economic, political and aesthetic contexts for this complex pattern of departures and arrivals. In particular, it will focus on the shifting permutations of the Franco-German film relationship and its marked effect on the nascent Parisian based French sound cinema. It will suggest that the ambivalences of this relationship informed both the ways in which the German film émigrés of the period first came to Paris, and the ways in which they then contributed to the cinematic representation of their new home.

Before moving to the specificities of the film culture of the period, I will contextualise the connections between the Berlin and Paris film industries of the late silent and early sound period on two fronts. Firstly, I want to consider the broader historical dimension of Franco-German relations to suggest that their mutually sustained elements of admiration and antipathy significantly affected the way that the German film émigrés were

¹Figure qtd. from Noiré (1996, 146).

then perceived in France. I will argue that this is particularly true in the case of the still under-rated aftershock of the First World War. Secondly, I want to consider the distinctive ways in which different perceptions of modernity and the city affected the two countries. Was there any continuity between this and the subsequent ways in which Berlin and then Paris were depicted in the films of the time? In what ways may this inform my subsequent discussion of the émigrés' cinematic representations of the French capital in Chapters Two to Four? By looking particularly at the inter-relationship between urban place and memory, I will suggest that we may find new ways of formulating questions about film and national identity of the time.

The early years of the sound period in the European film industry saw a reshaping of the relationship between the capitals of Berlin and Paris as the French and Germans sought to counteract the increasing hegemony of the integrated production and distribution systems of Hollywood. I will move on in this chapter to examine the economic and industrial contexts for these trade relations and discuss the ways in which they informed the dimensions of exile that are the central concern of the thesis. It will become apparent that the émigré representations of Paris throughout the decade were far from being the result of a clean break with the past. Instead, they must be viewed in terms of an ongoing engagement between the two industries and a keen awareness of the need to produce culturally distinctive representations of urban life which could match those emanating from the American "dream factories". Paris, as is well known, had long been considered a beacon of light for those facing persecution and turmoil in their home countries. But as I will show, the film-making émigrés who arrived in the French capital in the 1930s did not all do so out of political considerations. Paris was more than just a place of refuge, it was also a natural place in which to take economic advantage of the existing network of inter-relationships that had grown up between France and Germany. This muddies an easy picture of the differences between the two countries and, in turn, it also points to one of the

guiding themes of this thesis—the complexities of talking about a homogenous notion of national film culture.

With the arrival of the Nazi party in a position of power in the early years of 1933, ties between Berlin and Paris changed and a significant wave of Jewish film personnel entered France along with numbers of other migrants facing religious and political persecution. I will move on to consider the reception of these personnel within the French film industry. Many faced hostile criticism on two fronts. Firstly, their arrival coincided with a significant downturn in the fortunes of many French production companies and a consequent wave of economic unrest and unemployment. Then, secondly, this fuelled an existing anxiety about the place of the Jew within French culture which continued to be manifest up to and after the outbreak of war at the end of the decade. I will contextualise this anti-Semitism by examining the historical place of Jewish emigration within Paris itself. It will thus become evident that the relationship towards Jews in Paris also becomes an important dimension of the debate that colours the bulk of this thesis—that is the crucial question in the 1930s of how to manage a filmic version of city life which would also concur with contemporaneous governing notions of what constituted French national identity.

II: THE FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONSHIP IN CONTEXT

AN HISTORICAL AMBIVALENCE

In his evocative and modestly tempered account of the complex nature of the relationships formed between Parisians and their German occupiers during the years of the Second World War, Richard Cobb rightly seeks to demonstrate the range of feelings available within the framework of this situation. Instead of painting a picture which conveys an unambiguous clash between the values of lightness and dark; he argues that, certainly at the metropolitan level, "relations between *occupants* and *occupés* were obscured, twisted and complicated by all sorts of nuances of personal relations, ranging from mutual trust to a jarring acrimony" (Cobb, 1983, 60). This question of cultural ambivalence frames the history of the encounters between the two countries. If one goes back to the beginning of the nineteenth century, for example, Napoleon formally banned Madame de Staël's enthusiastic collected writings on the literary and philosophical culture of the German states entitled De l'Allemagne (1810). An interest in German intellectual life persisted though with the founding of the Nouvelle Revue Germanique in 1829 by the marquis Edouard de Lagrange. Meanwhile, for many German cultural figures such as Heinrich Heine who first moved to the city in 1831, Paris represented a beacon of free intellectual and literary expression. In his writings, he referred to its "gracious and civilised air" (qtd. in Kruse and Werner (eds.), 1981, 97). Like many others, Heine saw the city as more than just the capital of one nation. For him, Paris, then the largest city in Europe, also stood as the capital of the enlightened values of the European world. Throughout the nineteenth century, admiration within the Parisian intelligentsia for the liberating currents of German idealist philosophy was consistently tempered by a sense of trepidation regarding the military strengths of their near neighbour. Michelet wrote of "my Germany, the scientific power that alone has made me study questions deeply, and given me Kant,

Beethoven and a new faith" (qtd. in Zeldin, 1993, 116); yet it was this same national culture that fought with such vigour and animosity during the campaign of the 1870 war to annex Alsace-Lorraine. France's divided perception of the German nation became, by the end of the nineteenth century, split in two once more. This time it was along the lines of political allegiance. As Zeldin has argued, while "the left admired liberal, intellectual, anticlerical Germany, and regretted only that this was unfortunately balanced by the Hohenzollern, despotic Germany; [t]he right admired its monarchist power, and regretted that it was materialist and Protestant" (121).

Despite these guarded feelings and geo-political resentments, relations in the spheres of culture, finance and commerce continued to prosper well into the twentieth century. The 1900 Paris Universal Exhibition was attended by more German citizens than the total of all other foreigners put together and Paris was an obligatory destination for any poet or painter wishing to cultivate themselves. In Berlin, those working in visual culture were keen to keep abreast of developments in the French capital. In 1911, for example, Kandinsky invited Robert Delaunay to exhibit at the first Blaue Reiter exhibition. Afterwards, the German painter commented on what he saw as a clear difference between the two artists. Interestingly, Kandinsky points to an abiding set of criteria recognisable, to some extent, in the later perceived differences between German and French filmic depictions of the city. Whilst Delaunay was interested in the multi-faceted play of light on surface conceptions of the texture of modern, everyday urban life, Kandinsky instead saw himself drawn inwards to the complexities of picturing the life of the mind. We shall return to this psychologically informed apprehension of the city later in the course of this chapter. In the field of literature, the success of Romain Rolland's lengthy saga of German-French relations, Jean Christophe (1904-12), helped to underscore the material nature of contact between the two nations. (In the period leading up to World War One, for instance, Germany was France's main supplier of coke whilst at the same time it provided a

significant export market for France's own raw materials and agricultural produce). Even during the onset of war, elements of Germanophilia were still apparent amongst sections of France's aristocracy. Gilberte, for example, in Proust's *Le Temps retrouvé* praises the "perfect breeding of the staff officers" (Proust, 1981 edition, 774) and approving mentions are made by several characters in the novel of the work of Wagner and Nietzsche.

The bitter legacy of the German occupation of the northern swathes of France and the years of traumatic struggle during World War One colour the affective history of the period which is the main focus of this thesis. One only has to consider the brute statistics of the conflict fought on French soil to recall the lasting impact it must have had on the nation. 1.4 million French soldiers were killed amounting to over ten per cent of the active male population. Three million others were wounded with a third of these suffering from permanent disablement.² The additional loss of the lives of all those who were then never born remains incalculable. In the post World War One period, few ordinary Germans and French met each other—exchanges were limited to the spheres of culture and commerce. Business relations continued to be clouded by the issue of war reparations which failed to heal despite the United States instigation of the Dawes Plan of 1924 to invigorate the German economy and thus allow it to pay its dues along the terms of the May 1919 Treaty of Versailles. In the world of the visual arts things were different, particularly in the case of the exchanges between the Surrealists. The catalogue to Paul Klee's first exhibition in Paris, for example, had a forward by the French surrealist writer Louis Aragon. Many French intellectuals also took a keen interest in the satirical, urban caricatural work of the Berliner Georg Grosz.

²Figures qtd. from Zeldin (1993, 1084).

ILLUSTRATION ONE—GEORG GROSZ—"EARLY MORNING AT 5" (1921)



For the writer Pierre MacOrlan, who wrote a preface to the Parisian Grosz exhibition of 1924, Grosz's work spoke of the common situation that the city-dwellers of France and Germany now found themselves in. "The social classes who ten years ago possessed respective traditions, which differentiated them from each other, are now merging in new combinations under the lights of the street", he wrote. "If people since the war can be distinguished from those that preceded them, it is by their passive obedience to the laws of speed. ... The whole of the street and its intermediaries are animated in the magical, dirty and brutal frenzy of everyday life" (qtd. in Metken, 1992, 47).³ Along with the architectural and design links between Le Corbusier and Mallet-Stevens and their German counterparts, there was a gradual renewal of interest in German literature with the founding of La Revue d'Allemagne in 1927. Erich Maria Remarque's All Quiet on the Western Front was a phenomenal bestseller. It had sold nearly half a million copies within six months of publication in 1929.⁴ Amongst popular film audiences, the emotional reckoning of Verdun, Vision d'histoire (Léon Poirier, 1928) enjoyed enormous success. The following quotation from the French film trade press of the time gives, however, a flavour of the still simmering antagonisms. The journalist has noted how Poirier's film has been generally praised in Germany but no mention has been made of national culpability. In fact, a Frankfurt newspaper has even gone as far as criticising the French attitude towards the war. It is quoted as saying "If there were no French politicians and no French newspapers the Frenchman would be the most honest man in the world". "Well!" sniffs the French

³Pierre Mac Orlan (1882-1970) was a novelist, screenwriter (L'Inhumaine (Marcel L'Herbier, 1924)), poet and journalist whose written work widely circulated in the periodicals and literary texts of the period. Two of his novels (both Prix Goncourt winners) were adapted for the screen: La Bandera by Julien Duvivier in 1935 and Quai des brumes by Marcel Carné in 1937. The latter relied on émigré cinematographer Eugen Schüfftan for many of its atmospheric effects. Mac Orlan had a keen interest in Parisian visual culture. For Rifkin (1995, 99), his way of seeing the urban decor in his writings on photography "resembles the metonymising viewpoint of the detective, from the startling initiatives of Poe and Gaboriau to the popular currency of Mac Orlan's own time—the atmosphere-swilling figure of Inspector Maigret". Grosz illustrated MacOrlan's stories Port d'Eaux-Mortes (1926).

⁴Figure qtd. from Weber (1995, 18).

journalist, "if there hadn't been the «Deutschland über alles» mentality, perhaps the same could be said of a German!".⁵

Across the films of the 1930s such as Raymond Bernard's Les Croix de bois (1931), mention of the war surfaces directly and indirectly.⁶ Amongst the films discussed in detail in this thesis, it actually forms the core narrative impulse of Carrefour (Kurt Bernhardt, 1938) since the central character is an amnesiac war veteran. War widows feature in the same film and also in Dans les rues (Victor Trivas, 1933); signalling the fact that by the middle of the decade, women in the age group between twenty and forty years old outnumbered their male counterparts by more than one million.⁷ In his account of the French nation in the 1930s, Eugen Weber even argues that the decade began in August 1914 with the time frame in question simply being divided between mainly a sense of "*après guerre*" and "*avant guerre*". Although this formulation might be seen as overtly determinist and certainly benefitting from the privilege of hindsight, there is some truth to the notion that the effect of war, whether it be remembered or anticipated, significantly affected the dealings of the French with the Germans over this period. As we shall see, it is as true to say this about the particularities of the German/French film relationship as it is about the general intercourse between the nations.

⁵Cinématographie Française 19th January 1929, p. 12.

⁶As Abel (1988, 12) points out, Bernard's film, like so many others of the time, divided Parisian critics along political fault lines. For Paul Reboux (qtd. in Abel, 94), the film didn't go far enough in condemning the "monstrous absurdities" of war. It only served "to confirm world opinion as it currently exists on the subject of France: an isolated country ... imposing harsh economic measures and regulations on its neighbours". On the other hand, for the right-wing journalist Lucien Rebabet (qtd. in Abel, 95), the film demonstrated "the vitality of the masculine virtues of our race".

⁷Figure qtd. from Weber (14).

MODERNITY AND THE CITY

The period leading up to the various departures of the émigrés from the German film industry to Paris saw the continued rapid expansion of the two national capitals. The post World War One era in France was the time that the nation went from being a predominately agrarian society to one in which the majority of its members could count themselves as urban based. By 1930, 66 per cent of the population lived in towns.⁸ Similarly, the population of Berlin went from 2 million residents to almost 4 million between 1910 and 1925.⁹ In both cases, the cities swelled their ranks through migration from rural provinces and beyond the borders of the state from, for example, the Jewish communities of central Europe who were then escaping violent waves of persecution. Many of the most important filmmakers of Weimar Germany actually came to Berlin from elsewhere: Fritz Lang from Vienna, Murnau from the Ruhr District and Pabst from Bohemia. Berlin and Paris were, therefore, homes to exiles and migrants of many different sorts before the history of the particular trajectory which is the central topic of this thesis. Perhaps the crucial difference between the two cities though was the relationship between the timing of this expansion and its location within the overall history of the place. In the case of Paris, modernity already had a set of nineteenth century connotations going back to the official expansion of the city boundaries during the Second Empire and the work of Haussmann in redesigning the appearance of the capital's built environment. The city, even then, already possessed a political, cultural and, of course, architectural history as the capital of the French nation and the City of the Revolution which, in turn, informed any change. Berlin, on the other hand, only became the metropolitan centre of Germany in 1871 and thus this particular "turn to the city" was always going to signify something different. Whereas Paris had expanded in a piecemeal fashion, or even literally uncoiled, if

⁸Figure qtd. from Weber (37).

⁹Figure qtd. from Kaes (1998, 184).

one looks at the metaphoric possibilities suggested by the circular pattern of the *arrondisements* on the map; Berlin's growth was more linear, seamless and rapid. Its very reason for being was to suggest the possibilities of the industrial age. "Berlin has not grown; rather it has undergone a transformation. Chicago on the Spree is emerging", wrote Walter Rathenau in 1899 (qtd. in Müller, 1990, 40). As Kaes (1998, 186) has suggested, the consequence of this was that by the mid to late 1920s, Berlin "was considered the paragon of modern living—both intriguing and terrifying in its tempo, diversity and moral laxity".¹⁰

For many cultural observers, including Siegfried Kracauer, there was an inherent correlation between the characteristics of the modern city and the features of its most contemporary form of entertainment—the cinema. Both signified a sense of "continuous mobility, rootlessness, nervousness, loss of concentration, and the resulting relativity and meaninglessness of traditional values" (Kaes, 186).¹¹ For the Berliner Tristan Tzara, the city was becoming like "a serial film. ... Events are unravelling so rapidly that I have the impression that the whole of Germany is acting in front of an enormous lens", he wrote (qtd. in Metken, 1992, 29).

¹⁰See also Georg Simmel's earlier influential comments on the inter-relationship between nervous stimulation and the regulation and exchange of money in contemporary city life in his 1903 essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life" in David Frisby and Mike Featherstone (eds.) (1997) Simmel on Culture, 174-185.

¹¹There is now a significant body of literature drawing upon the correlations between urban Weimar society and the cinema culture of the period. See, in particular, Sabine Hake (1993) The Cinema's Third Machine: Writing on Film in Germany 1907-1933; Patrice Petro (1989) Joyless Streets; Bruce Murray Film and the German Left in the Weimar Republic and the various articles collected in New German Critique 40 (Winter 1987). The following is a selection of the vast number of texts which treat the Weimar republic more broadly: Keith Bullivant (1977) Culture and Society in the Weimar Republic; Peter Gay (1974) Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider; John Willett (1978) The New Sobriety: Art and Politics in the Weimar Period and Edward Dimendberg et al (eds.) (1994) The Weimar Republic Sourcebook. For a cultural study of Berlin see Haxthausen and Heidrun (eds.) (1991) Berlin: Culture and Metropolis.

ILLUSTRATION TWO—THE BERLIN STREET AS FILM—"BERLINER STRÄBENSZENE" (1921) BY NIKLAUS BRAUN



In his review of a key Berlin *Straßenfilm* of the 1920s, *Die Straße* (Karl Grune, 1923), Kracauer (qtd. in Kaes, 187) specifically noted how the film conveyed a "wordless and soulless coexistence of directed automobiles and undirected desires".¹² It is not surprising then that debates about the nature of the representation of social life, and the means by which it should be achieved, inform a central difference between the German and the French film cultures of the period. In the internationally successful German cinema of the 1920s, the city was largely seen in negative or positive terms as the locus for a whole set of questions about work, leisure and modernity. Munby (1996) has argued, for example, that Siodmak's appropriation of the *Kammerspielfilm* in his early pre-Paris Berlin work such as *Stürme der Leidenschaft/Tumultes* (1931), was the result of a search for "an aesthetic appropriate to the intimate and interior crises brought on by modern urban life" (Munby, 78).¹³ In what can be seen as a variant on the way Expressionist film-making externalised the disturbances of the inner psyche through heightened set design and lighting features, the overtly subjective mobility of the camera in the *Kammerspielfilm* "projected the intimate psychology of individuals onto a world of external objects" (79). Settings were more naturalistic, less abstracted than the Expressionist model but "in the context of Weimar Berlin, this externalised subconscious was hemmed-in by the milieu of run-down apartments, producing a characteristically pessimistic, sparse, dark, and claustrophobic

¹²The *Straßenfilm*, according to Elsaesser (in Vincendeau (ed.) 1995, 409), was a "German film genre ... describing a particular German urban melodrama made between 1923 and 1930, in which a middle class (generally male) protagonist strays onto "the street" seeking relief from the *ennui* and the moral confinement of bourgeois existence, while a lower class (generally female) protagonist tries to escape the underworld milieu. Typically, the protagonists are chastised or destroyed by the experience of the city's darker or licentious side (personified in the figure of the prostitute). While testifying to the iniquities of modern urban life ... [they] tended to end up deterministically reaffirming existing class divisions and the primacy of middle class values." See also Anton Kaes, "Sites of Desire: The Weimar Street Film" in *Film Architecture: From Metropolis to Blade Runner* Neumann (ed.) (1996), 26-32.

¹³The *Kammerspielfilm*, again according to Elsaesser (in Vincendeau (ed.) 1995, 235), was "a German genre designating films produced during the early 1920's which drew on the conventions of contemporary German theatre. The scriptwriter Carl Mayer created the genre's narrative model in his screenplays for *Scherben/Shattered* (1921), *Hinterstrophe* (1921), *Sylvester—Tragödie einer Nacht* (1923) and *Der letzte Mann/The Last Laugh* (1924). Characteristically, the plot is a realist drama portraying servants or members of the lower middle class who meet with a tragic end through murder or suicide. Most *Kammerspielfilme* were set indoors and drew on innovative cinematic techniques ... exemplified in ... minimal use of titles and expressive camera movements."

effect" (79). The result, therefore, is a practice of film-making which, crucially, sees the city not as a site of social documentation but as an oppressive state of mind. The physical "body" of the city becomes the embodiment of the protagonist's imagined relationship to it. This idea of a very individualised entanglement regarding urban life is present also in the afore-mentioned *Straßenfilm*, but the way the city is read and experienced may actually appear to be less pessimistic. Morgan (1996) has, in fact, suggested that in the *Straßenfilm* "the street is posited as a liberating "other" place, the scene of random encounters, excitement, spontaneity" (33). "The claustrophobia of the bourgeois household [is contrasted with the] deep shadows, rushing traffic, circulating bodies, and flashing lights" of the city at night.

Again and again, it seems though that the city is pictured at night. Even if it presents something to be desired, the nature or identity of the object of desire can only be read as an expression of the extremities of a subjective consciousness. In the case of the *Straßenfilm*, the city becomes the site of transposition for all the protagonist wants to succumb to, but ultimately renounces. It is important to remember that in both of these instances which view the street as either imprisoning or liberating, the gender of the implied subject is universalised as male. Both of these views read the city as a male domain. Petro (1989) has rightly cautioned that by assuming "the narrative clash of bourgeois and criminal elements becomes an allegory for [Weimar male] subjectivity" (xxi), one is forgetting the place of women in both the urban melodramatic narratives and, in turn, the contemporary audience. In *Dirmentragödie* (Bruno Rahn, 1927), just to give one example, the street can also be read as a new site for women, albeit one which is an expression of "the precariousness of Weimar's much vaunted economic and sexual liberation" (164).¹⁴

¹⁴Other work on the inter-relationship between femininity, modernity and the city includes: Andreas Huyssen (1986) "Mass Culture as Woman. Modernism's Other" in Tania Modleski (ed.) (1986), 188-207; Janet Woolf (1990) *Feminine Sentences. Essays on Women and Culture*; Elizabeth Wilson (1991) *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life and the Control and Disorder of Women*; Anne Friedburg (1992) *Window Shopping* and Elizabeth Wilson (1992) "The Invisible Flaneur" in *New Left Review* no. 191 (January/February 1992), 90-110.

A fruitful way of exploring Berlin and Paris relations and the differences between the two cities, leading up to the era of exile and emigration in question, lies in the matter of the inter-relationship between place and memory. Berlin was seen at home and abroad as the European city at the edge of contemporary urban development. Its architecture, wholesale residential redevelopment and concentration of industrial and commercial innovation led many observers to bemoan the way its relationship with the past was changing. For Kracauer, Berlin was the place "where one quickly forgets". "Indeed", he wrote, "it appears as if this city has a magical means of wiping out all memories. It is the present and puts its ambition into being absolutely present ... Elsewhere, too, the appearance of squares, company names, and store names change; but only in Berlin these transformations tear the past so radically from memory" (qtd. in Hansen, 1995, 385). This emphasis on an equation between the materiality of the moment and the loss of a spiritually informed sense of landscape fuelled the critique made by German anti-modernists. This thinking had its origins in the almost metaphysical associations between the rural landscape, individual subjectivity and national identity found in the tradition of German Romanticism. They coined the term "asphalt culture" to describe the ill-effects of urban life and the forgetting of the past that the modern city meant. According to Wilhelm Stapel, editor of Deutsches Volkstum, for example, "Today's battle cry must be "The resistance of the landscape against Berlin"" (qtd. in Natter, 1994, 215). Nowhere was this disapproving emphasis on the moment more true than in the field of Berlin cabaret entertainment where songs and performances made witty reference to the multitudinous phenomena of modernity such as the city's transport system, cinemas and open-air amusement parks. Its "secret" was summed up by Der Blaue Engel's composer, Friedrich Hollaender. The pithy and topical scepticism of the Berlin cabaret meant, for him, a "two-minute song of our times, the sweetness of love, the heartbeat of unemployment, the bewilderment of politics [and] the standard-issue uniform of cheap amusement" (qtd. in Dimendberg et al (eds.), 1994, 566). Erich Kästner, the author of Emil und die Detektive (1927), meanwhile,

complained that it was natural that the cabaret made Berlin its home. In an astonishingly negative rebuke of its pleasures, he commented that "[t]he metropolis in its natural form is an inhumane place to be and inhumane means are required for it to be endured. ... Such dreams purify people for their doings by the light of day" (qtd. in Dimendberg et al (eds.), 1994, 562-3).¹⁵

Looking at Paris, on the other hand, means taking on board an already complex and very different representational history. Because of the lack of the intense emotions of "blood and soil" Romanticism in French culture, the idea of the city is also less partisan than in the German example. In relation to the metaphorical and literal darkness of the backward provinces, Paris has, in history, stood for the pleasures of display, sophistication and progressive social change.¹⁶ The French capital from Balzac to Flaubert has always meant an escape from the stifling boredom of provincial life. There was a thread of misgiving about the ill-effects of urban life, in a number of French nineteenth century literary accounts of the city and industrial change, for example; but Paris, unlike Berlin, had, by then, a stable tradition of being seen as an approved symbol for the nation. The 1789 revolution was central in consecrating the French capital as the unified centre of liberty and the values of the Enlightenment. The centuries of commerce, learning and infrastructure, not to say the heterogeneous influx of residents from different regions, had all produced a sense of a map which through its distinctive areas, could also serve as a metonymic map for the country as a whole. Thus we find in the writings of the likes of Benjamin and Kracauer, as well as the French surrealists, an actual enthusiasm for the modulated temporal layerings of Parisian existence, albeit one with an acute awareness of the processes of change.¹⁷ This fascination with the passing of time and the fleeting nature

¹⁵For a further discussion of this relationship between mass entertainment, modernity and "Americanisation" see Peter Wollen "Cinema/Americanism/the Robot" in Brantlinger and Naremore (eds.) (1991), 42-69.

¹⁶See Alain Corbin "Paris-Province" in Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman (eds.) (1996) Realms of Memory, Rethinking the French Past, 426-464.

¹⁷For Benjamin on Paris and Berlin, see in particular: "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" in Illuminations

of the modern urban moment goes back to Baudelaire's seminal thoughts on the "ephemeral, the fugitive [and] the contingent" quality of Parisian modernity in The Painter of Modern Life (1995 edition, 12). It also fuels Louis Aragon's and André Breton's detailed interlinking of subjective memory and urban space in their surrealist novels Paris Peasant (1926) and Nadia (1926). In his fascinating essay, "Analysis of a City Map", also dated 1926, Kracauer evocatively describes the accumulated sense of social inheritance found in the archetypal Parisian *faubourg*: "Some of the Parisian faubourgs are giant shelters for all sorts of ordinary people", he wrote. "... The way in which they have cohabited over the centuries is expressed in the form of these shelters, which is certainly not bourgeois but is not proletarian either, to the extent that the latter term evokes smokestacks, tenements and highways. It is impoverished and humane at the same time" (1995, 41). As we shall see in Chapter Three, Kracauer could as well be writing of films such as Coeur de lilas (Anatole Litvak, 1931) and Dans les rues.

These comparisons have fascinating repercussions which relate directly to the concerns of this thesis. The different cultural inheritance of the town and country dichotomy meant that the ambivalent image of the city, apparent in so many German films, did not seem to translate to the French cinema of the 1930s. There is simply not the same intrinsic disappointment regarding a sense of the loss of national purity. Instead, the rural regions seemed to sit, at least to some extent, with the metropolitan. Indeed, for Paul Morand who returned from the United States in 1930 in horror at the impersonal, mechanised and streamlined character of American city life, the talent of the French was to combine the two. "In the past, I wished Paris looked like New York", he wrote. "This is no longer true. ... While I wrote a few years ago: "France has no choice but to become either American or Bolshevik", I now believe that we must avoid with all our strength these two precipices. ... The genius of Paris is precisely that of the meticulous peasant" (qtd. in

(1992 edition), 152-196 and "A Berlin Chronicle" in One-Way Street (1997 edition), 293-348.

Golan, 1995, 81).¹⁸ That is no to say that there was not a perceived set of differences between the city and the country in French cultural discourse over the period in question. Golan notes a complex vein of tradition and regionalism running in tandem with more progressive tendencies in the fields of public architecture, design and visual representation. Her argument rests on the results of the war between France and Germany. "Whilst the Germans", she suggests, "had no choice but to confront the consequences of war, victory gave France the luxury of a *rappel à l'ordre* whose political and cultural agenda was largely aimed at repressing the trauma of war. ... [There was] a collective ethos driven toward the restoration of what had been before: a world stilled and a vision infused by nostalgia and memory" (ix). Golan notes a turn to depictions of rural life in painting of the period which was mirrored in the regionalism of writers such as Maurice Barrès and François Mauriac and the influential appointment of the architectural historian Paul Léon as Chef des Services d'Architecture au Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux Arts who disliked modern German design because it was too "internationalist" (qtd. in Golan, 27). There is even a preponderance of painterly depictions of the French capital, by Maurice Utrillo, for example, who instead of seeing Paris in terms of danger and instability (à la Berlin) portrayed the city in terms of a communal village much in the manner of the filmmaker René Clair in films such as *Sous les toits de Paris* (1930). Indeed, the French early sound cinema may be seen as a crucial site for the visualisation of a certain set of depictions of the capital which rely on past notions of Paris. In this sense, instead of being a place of confrontation with the shock and disturbances of modernity, as in Berlin, the cinema auditorium, instead, became an important site of remembering. The French cinema,

¹⁸Paul Morand was a novelist who also specialised in travel and short story writing. He prospered as an international diplomat under the patronage of the cultural annex of the French Foreign Ministry which was established in the immediate post-World War One period. His novel *L'Europe galante* (1925) surveyed the corrupt nature of European high society whilst the impressionistic stories published in *Ouvert la nuit* centred on a series of short-lived entanglements between the narrator and a succession of foreigners. Morand tried his hand at scriptwriting for the equally international Paramount outlet in France but only his script based on the afore-mentioned short-story collection was accepted and made into a film. He became increasingly outspoken against the influx of foreigners entering France after 1933, and after his duties as Vichy ambassador to Rumania and Switzerland during World War Two, his reputation became permanently compromised.

crucially, had no real need for the "blood and soil" mannerisms of the likes of the German "mountain film" genre to act in sharp contrast to the depiction of modern life. Paris always meant a different sort of home. Throughout the course of this thesis, we shall be returning to the ways in which Parisian representation relied on this sense of the "small people" dwelling in an enduring world of communal values and what sort of "home" Paris became in the films made by the German émigrés. The question will be to what extent incoming film-makers from the "organised" and "instinctual" Berlin film studios shifted the parameters of what was possible in the depiction of the French capital throughout the early years of the sound cinema. In other words, how did the "past of Berlin" serve to mediate an ongoing French cinematic negotiation between the Parisian past and the Parisian present?

III: NATIONAL BOUNDARIES AND EARLY EUROPEAN SOUND CINEMA

THE COMING OF SOUND

One of the critical ways in which French and German interests met and intersected with the industrial model of the United States was over the issue of the conversion to sound. Indeed, this triangular cultural and economic relationship, as we shall see, continued to haunt the paths of the émigrés throughout the decade. As Icart (1974), Andrew (1983, 1995) and Crisp (1993) have noted, linguistic frontiers which were formerly of small difference during the silent era suddenly became significant stumbling blocks to industrial expansion in the late 1920s. These blocks, in turn, "radically modified the power relations of the national production systems" (Crisp, 10). The power relations in question became codified along the lines of a battle campaign with the respective sides, the Americans and the Germans, using the terrain of France as a key staging post in the struggle for control of the lucrative market of Europe and its ancillary territories. The reasons the French film industry found itself in a position of subordination are complex. In part, it was a matter of simple economics. Most of the major French studios had only just recently depleted their reserves of financial capital because of the electrification of their infrastructure. Then, there was the simple issue that none of the major French companies had any formal links to any of the sound patent holders which were principally Western Electric and R.C.A. for the Americans and the newly merged Tobis Klangfilm conglomerate for the Germans.¹⁹ P.A. Harlé wrote in the Cinématographie Française that the French found themselves "at ground zero" regarding "creation and distribution of sound equipment".²⁰ In the words of Andrew (1983, 57), "France was there for the taking." But

¹⁹Tobis-Klangfilm came into being on the 13th August 1929 as the result of an accord between the two most significant German sound patent holders: Tonbild-Syndicat A.G. (Tobis) who held the Tri-Ergon patent and Klangfilm G.m.b.H. The bulk of the finance for the Klangfilm organisation came from the German electrical concerns Siemens and A.G.E. (See Icart, 1974, 47-48).

²⁰Cinématographie Française 23rd February 1929, p. 11.

another factor must also be taken into account, one which would also colour the nature of the French film industry's subsequent relationship with the German émigrés. A key component of the debate over the control of the production, distribution and exhibition of sound feature films was also to be the issue of cultural identity—the matter of what version of modern life, what kind of nationally specific popular pleasures were to be represented on the screens for audiences enthralled at this new form of entertainment.

The matter of the inter-relationship between technology, economics and the formation of a specifically European film-related cultural identity goes back, of course, to the silent period. During the 1920s, several initiatives were formed between Germany and France in an effort to counteract the hegemony of the Hollywood system. In 1925, the alliance of Westi, Ciné-France and Pathé-Consortium (along with Films Abel Gance) produced the monumental and avowedly European minded *Napoléon* (Abel Gance) whilst, the previous year, Aubert had entered into an alliance with the German film giant U.F.A. (Universum Film Aktiengesellschaft). These measures followed the League of Nations trade conference of 1924 which had stressed the need for European film co-operation as one of the means to heal the remaining bitterness following World War One. In 1926, the League of Nations actually sponsored the first of the Franco-German led International Film Congresses in Paris.²¹ These congresses were an important part of the so-called "Film Europe" strategy of creating a pan-European film industrial structure to counteract the perceived hegemony of the American organisations. Two more meetings followed—in Geneva in 1927 and in Berlin in 1928. At the latter, Charles Dulac, vice-president of the Film Board of Trade of France, summed up the prevailing view. In his mind, there were "but two possibilities for Europe—either we must form a European bloc working jointly among ourselves or we will gradually but surely be colonised by America" (qtd. in Gomery and Staiger, 1979, 40). Although the term "Film Europe" was more "a set of rhetorical

²¹See the forthcoming *"Film Europe" and "Film America": Cinema, Commerce and Cultural Exchange, 1920-1939* edited by Andrew Higson and Richard Maltby (Exeter University Press, 1999).

principles rather than a co-ordinated strategy"²², networks between producers, directors, technicians and performers were established over this period which continued to influence the nature of Franco-German film relations throughout the 1930s. Jacques Feyder, for example, had a contract with DEFU—Deutsche First National to direct a French and German cast in a Berlin studio production of Thérèse Raquin (1928) whilst Ciné-Romans financed La Duchesse des Folies-Bergère (1927) directed by Robert Wiene and shot in Berlin, Vienna and Paris.²³ Extremely influential in fostering cross-border relationships was the overseas arm of U.F.A.— Alliance Cinématographique Européenne (A.C.E.). Established in the Spring of 1926, and based in Paris, it served as more than the main conduit for German export features in the French language markets; it was also, as we shall see, under Raoul Ploquin, to be part of the German financed French language film production phenomenon of the 1930s.

Despite these efforts to produce a pan-European (or more specifically Franco-German) counterbalance to Hollywood, the fact remains that many of the previously mentioned collaborations were short-lived. This was due to the precarious financial position of many French film companies as well as the use of American capital to bolster German film interests, at the short-term expense of the French, following the terms of the Dawes plan. One only has to look at the following sets of production statistics to see the picture of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the two industries at the end of the 1920s.

²²Qtd. from lecture given by Andrew Higson at the Maison Française Oxford, 5th June 1999.

²³Feyder was also one of a number of French directors and performers employed by Hollywood in the early sound period to make French language version films actually in the United States. These included M.G.M.'s popular successes Le Spectre vert (Jacques Feyder, 1929) with André Luguet and Big House (Paul Féjos, 1930) with Charles Boyer.

FILM PRODUCTION

FRANCE	GERMANY
1926—84 films	1926—202 films
1927—88 films	1927—241 films
1928—94 films	1928—221 films
1929—52 films	1929—185 films

FILM EXPORTS²⁴

FRANCE TO GERMANY	GERMANY TO FRANCE
1926—23 films	1926—33 films
1927—28 films	1927—91 films
1928—23 films	1928—122 films
1929—15 films	1929—130 films

The Paris studios were themselves, somewhat symbolically, also divided between looking to America and looking to Germany in terms of the slow transfer to sound technology. A company such as Natan epitomises the split with its Epinay studios being equipped by Tobis and its rue Francoeur studio in Montmartre being equipped by R.C.A.²⁵ On the other

²⁴Film production figures from *Cinématographie Française* 4th January 1930. Film export figures from *Cinématographie Française* 2nd May 1931, p. 15. It should be noted, however, that the relative weakness of the French export position to Germany was not solely due to the faults of the French film industry. Throughout the early sound era, French film exports were placed in a disadvantageous position vis à vis the Germans because of a strictly enforced system of export licence payments. French exporters continued, despite vigorous negotiations between the two countries, to pay between 200, 000 and 300, 000 French francs per film to the German authorities (source: *Cinématographie Française* 2nd May 1931, p. 15). C.F. Tavano wrote in the same issue of *Cinématographie Française* that "reciprocal between France and Germany has only been a trompe l'oeil, almost a bluff. The colonisation of our screens ... is a danger as serious as that of a war" (11). From the point of view of the Germans, however, they were put in this invidious position by the significant downturn in receipts and the collapse of many small businesses and corporations following the onslaught of the Depression.

²⁵German and American representatives met in Paris in June 1930 to agree on terms upon which to divide up the world market according to their mutual interests. France was the most significant European market

hand, despite these problems and despite the material legacy of French pre-eminence in European film production before World War One, the relative economic weaknesses of the French domestic infrastructure may have indeed actually helped to facilitate specific patterns of creative-inter-relationships between Berlin and Paris. These modes of exchange then served as a crucial formative context for the subsequent ways in which the French capital was soon to be pictured by foreign as well as French artistic talents. The centrality of Paris here also points to the far-reaching way in which the inter-relationship between European and Hollywood film production and distribution would inform the arrival and departure of the film-makers who made the city their temporary home throughout the course of the 1930s. In his article on the German émigrés in Paris, Elsaesser (1984) points out, correctly, that the passage of the film-makers to the French capital must be seen, at least partly, in terms of a trade war "in which Germany reacted to Hollywood's attempted colonisation of European markets by pursuing similar tactics towards its European neighbours, notably France" (281). Andrew (172) points out that "Variety is full of notices from 1928 to 1931 accusing the French of making exchange deals with Berlin that violated the quotas they had set up to protect their industry against Hollywood". Certainly, the Germans were prepared to counteract the aspirations of the Americans which were embodied in the likes of the following article published in Film Mercury in March 1930. "We will arrive at our goal no matter what the cost", it says. "[T]he foreign market is from now on just as important as our internal market. It will bring in receipts doubled compared to those at home, and it is for this reason that day and night our businessmen work with tenacity to get the reins of control in hand everywhere" (qtd. in Andrew, 1995, 94). At the 1930 U.F.A. convention, Ludwig Klitzsch, the Director General, noted the advantages of geographical and cultural proximity in combatting the aims of Hollywood. "Since the coming of sound, the American film industry has almost entirely lost its non-English

left to the forces of open competition. The "Paris Agreement" was never formally ratified and despite the efforts of a second conference held in 1932, it was not until 1935 that the matter was formally resolved (see Crisp, 99).

speaking territories", he remarked. "... On the other hand, U.F.A. finds itself in an excellent situation ...thanks to the central geographical situation which Germany occupies in Europe which allows it to work in common with those countries who are in need of sound films in their own country but don't possess the means to create and maintain a national film industry" (qtd. in Icart, 48). The most significant feature of this trade war was the development of the multi-language version (MLV) film phenomenon and it is to its role in forging the links central to the subsequent phenomenon of the migration of personnel that I shall now turn.

PARIS AS STAGING GROUND FOR THE EARLY SOUND WARS

In 1929, the German company Tobis established an outlet in Paris as a subsidiary to its central operations in Berlin (See Appendix 1). It had three main components: the production company "Société des films sonores Tobis" which specialised ostensibly in French language film production, the distribution agency "Filmsonor" and the former Menchen studios at Epinay which were subsequently equipped with Klangfilm sound recording facilities. In an interview with the French trade press early that year²⁶, Docteur Henkel, the director of Tobis's German division went to great pains to stress the co-operative nature of the project and the degree to which it would benefit France's incipient sound film industry. "It is not at all a question ... of an intrusion into France by our Berlin company", he said, before going to detail how a group of French, Dutch, Swiss and German financiers had purchased the Tobis patents and were planning to lease them to an independent French company which was in the course of being constituted. Henkel also explained that the studios would be equipped by machinery made in France. Tobis's plans seemed to chime with the words of German producer Erich Pommer who around the same time reminded the French film industry that the way to compete with America in Europe

²⁶Cinématographie Française 23rd February 1929, p. 14.

was not to take the path of the "false international film".²⁷ "A director shouldn't imitate the things which are better done by the directors of other countries", he claimed. "Each country must preserve its national character with elements which represent the best it has to offer.

... A director should never forget his nationality". This was also the point of view of the second Congress of the International Federation of Cinema Directors (3rd-7th June 1929) which at the same time stressed the need for co-operative foundations for the battle to resist the onslaught of American-led competition.²⁸ So it was that in the absence of significant domestically financed sound conversion and production, Tobis in Paris was seen as French film culture's best hope in stabilising a sense of nationally specific norms of sound film representation. The influential trade voice of P.A. Harlé called Tobis in Epinay "our European champion". "Let's hope", he said, "that this brilliant outsider will be ready quickly enough to lock horns with the efforts of the Americans and allow us (my emphasis) to produce ... the first fine French language films".²⁹ This must have been the thinking behind the recruitment of René Clair who started work for Tobis on September 15th having failed to complete the early MLV Prix de beauté.³⁰ Clair developed prestige level productions such as the hugely successful and influential Sous les toits de Paris which is itself an interesting instance of the complexity of Franco-German film relations in the early sound period. Despite the fact that Sous les toits de Paris was evidently a top-level project, with superbly designed sets of the city by the Russian set designer Lazarre Meerson to showcase the world of the ordinary citizens of Paris, it originally failed at the box-office in its country of production. It was, ironically, only after a gala presentation in Berlin and positive critical reception from the Germans that it then re-opened in Paris to subsequent

²⁷Cinématographie Française 23rd March 1929, p. 35.

²⁸The actor, playwright and film director Sacha Guitry was still making the same point in his 1932 article "Pour le théâtre et contre le cinéma". In it he declared that he did not like current French films "because they [were] not deservedly French. When they make a film in France, they do everything to make it international. ... If the French cinema is to exist one day, it must stand clear of the American formulas; it must absolutely be itself" (qtd. in Abel, 1988, 101).

²⁹Cinématographie Française 22nd June 1929, p. 22.

³⁰The film, based on material developed by G.W. Pabst and starring Louise Brooks, was eventually released directed by Augusto Genina.

success. What is also fascinating, reading the contemporary reports of this phenomenon, is the way that the success of the film was seen as due to a combination of factors. It was not just the design and character of the reconstruction of Paris that apparently mattered. What was equally significant was the way that this then showcased the perceived splendours and "gentle sweetness"³¹ of the French language itself.

Tobis was not the only foreign company to recognise the financial potential of the chance for audiences of hearing the cadences of their native tongue matched to the moving image. Between 1929 and 1930, Paramount spent \$10 million equipping the Joinville complex in Paris that had been owned by Ciné-Romans with six sound studios ready for the production of MLV sound versions. The company Production started in April 1930 under the supervision of Robert T. Kane. As Vincendeau (1988) and Courtade (1991) have argued, MLVs were a significant, early but briefly lived method of overcoming the cultural and economic barriers presented by the arrival of sound in the global film marketplace. Usually shot simultaneously in different languages, such as at Paramount, MLVs also consisted of projects which were "made from the same source material, but with a short time gap" (Vincendeau, 26) or even "polyglot" films such as Julien Duvivier's Berlin based Tobis production, Allô Berlin! Ici Paris (1931) and Pabst's Kameradschaft (1931), in which each speaking actor conversed in his or her native tongue.³² To some extent, Paramount was well aware of national sensitivities in setting up MLV production in the French capital. It set up a French language committee which included Sacha Guitry, Paul Morand and Edouard Bourdet. At its 9th International Conference, it reminded French trade

³¹Cinématographic Française 30th August 1930, p. 36. For further commentary on this crucial question of the specific potential of early 1930s French language sound cinema see also Richard Abel (1998) French Film Theory and Criticism 1907-1939 Vol. II, 9; Ginette Vincendeau "In the name of the father: Marcel Pagnol's 'trilogy' *Marius* (1931), *Fanny* (1932), *César* (1936)" in Hayward and Vincendeau (eds.) (1990), 67-82; and Christopher Faulkner "René Clair, Marcel Pagnol and the Social Dimension of Speech" in Screen Vol. 35 no. 2 (Summer 1984), 157-70.

³²The first actual German/French sound production had been La Nuit est à nous/Die Nacht gehört uns (1929) which was directed respectively by Henry Roussel and Carl Froelich in Berlin for U.F.A.. Marie Bell, Henry Roussel and Jean Murat starred in the French language version whilst Hans Albers and Charlotte Ander were the stars of the German. The sound for the film was recorded on both disc and film.

concerns that its "sound films made for France, even made for Paris, would mean that French theatrical and film-making genius could now be employed on its home turf without the sterilising effect of transplantation".³³ The fact remains, however, that as Courtade (1978) has argued, "[t]he Paramount Studios at Joinville represented the most significant effort at colonisation ever attempted in the field of film-making. It wasn't only a question of conquering the French market; through multiple versions the entire European market was involved" (63).

Although short films were also produced at Joinville, at the beginning of 1930, Paramount announced a production slate of 51 feature productions. These included a series based on Poulbot's sentimental illustrations of Parisian street urchins. Only two films were made, Les Rois mages (1931) and Sur le tas de sable (1931), but these indicate a keen interest in fitting in with an established, popular iconography of a timeless version of the French capital. Unlike Tobis at Epinay which specialised in prestige ventures, Paramount signed up all manner of entertainment properties which included in the words of its 1930 press release "dramas and comedies, operettas and police plays, [as well as] epics of the Far West".³⁴ Films were shot in as many as eight principal languages which were French, German, Spanish, Italian, Hungarian, Swedish, Polish, Czech and Rumanian. In her memoirs, the script-girl Jeanne Witta-Montrobert paints an evocative picture of the phenomenal, international bustle and exchange of life on set at Joinville in the early 1930s. "[O]peretta matelots and fishwives rubbed shoulders with elegant couples in smoking jackets and silk dresses", she wrote; "each person waiting for the time to rejoin their team. As for those who organised these people—the scriptwriters, directors and assistants coming from all corners of the world—they formed a veritable Tower of Babel which had to be united by someone like me who was in charge of scripts" (Witta-Montrobert, 1980,

³³Cinématographie Française 14th March 1930, p. 7.

³⁴Cinématographie Française 8th February 1930, p. 15.

35). The same biblical phrase was used in Roger Régent's press report in Pour Vous on "Joinville, Babel Moderne".³⁵

One of the important and unexpected consequences of Paramount's project was a certain consolidation in relations between French film professionals and their German counterparts. This was a phase in the Franco-German film relationship which pre-figured the later wave of previously Berlin based film-makers who came to work in Paris after 1933. As well as the expected numbers of German sound technicians who were coming to work in many French studios at the time, Joinville also meant a good deal of on the ground co-operation between other sorts of film professionals. A report from the Berlin based Paramount conference of 1931, confirms that only 60 per cent of personnel working on German language productions were German.³⁶ It follows then that there must have been significant contact between French and German practitioners. Witta-Montrobert notes how the Germans, in particular "were preoccupied with matters of technique" (36). This supports Andrew's argument that "the chief long-term effect of [Tobis and Paramount] ... was the opportunity and training they provided for hundreds of French artisans to learn a craft that they could carry with them to the numerous feeble but native production companies that inevitably sprouted on the newly bulldozed terrain [of the French film industry] (1995, 99). In any case, however, the experiment was, in fact, short-lived. Tobis almost ceased production after 1933 and Paramount wound down operations the same year due to the trade depression following the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the rise in popularity of dubbing.

³⁵Pour Vous 31st July 1930, p. 14.

³⁶Cinématographie Française 4th July 1931.

BERLIN AS PRESTIGE MODEL AND PLACE OF WORK FOR FRENCH FILM INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS

In 1929, Le Courier cinématographique commented that "all films that are produced in Paris bear the hallmark of that indefinable thing that none can imitate—"The City of Light", capital of the world!"³⁷ Yet, at the same time, in Berlin, both the U.F.A. studios and Tobis were already starting out to make French sound fictional features, many of which were also, ostensibly, set in Paris, as part of the MLV phenomenon. In 1934, A.C.E. even decided, under the auspices of Raoul Ploquin, to establish a department at the Berlin Neubabelsberg studios specialising in films made by 100 per cent French personnel. At first, these were to be MLVs but from 1936 they included exclusively French only single-language productions such as Gueule d'amour (Jean Grémillon, 1937) and L'Enraîneuse (Albert Valentin, 1938). The speed with which the U.F.A. Neubabelsberg studios had converted to multi-language sound film production had impressed French film professionals. Gregor Rabinowitsch who had come to Paris in 1923 as "the disciple of Franco-German collaboration", and was co-director of Ciné-Alliance with Noë Bloch, noted how directors in Berlin now "had at their disposition an instrument of great beauty—the studios of U.F.A. ... which in just six months have been completely transformed and equipped for the talking picture. ... To write off the costs of a full-length sound film it will be necessary to shoot the same version in 3 or 4 different languages. And for that, it will be necessary to hire foreign personnel".³⁸ So it was that there was soon to be a steady flow of French speaking personnel, such as Albert Préjean and Annabella, who arrived on short contracts in the Berlin studios to produce French language versions of German productions or German versions of French scripts. Throughout this period, the Cinématographie Française had a regular section noting the new arrivals to Berlin from Paris. On 19th

³⁷ Le Courier cinématographique no. 18 (4th May 1929), (qtd. in Courtade (1978, 65).

³⁸ Cinématographie Française 30th November 1929, p. 14.

September 1931, for example, the trade weekly noted that Yves Mirande and Charles Boyer were staying in the Hôtel Eden, Jacques Chomette was staying at the Hôtel Alhambra and Florelle and Robert Arnoux were in the Pension Impériale. It was widely acknowledged in the French film press of the early sound period, that the German cinema industry continued to be worthy of the same critical respect and admiration that it had won through the impact of the prestige projects of U.F.A. during the 1920s such as Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1927) and Die Büchse der Pandora (G.W. Pabst, 1929). In a production report from Berlin on the set of the French MLV Coup de feu à l'aube (1932), Antonin Artaud was typical in praising the systematic facility with which the U.F.A. production system could engage in producing high quality popular cinematic entertainment. "The Germans make commercial films in the best sense of the word", he commented. "Their films are of a high technical and artistic quality and being also very human they naturally sell very easily."³⁹ This account is substantiated by André Beucler's impression that "the Berlin workshops do things well: the photography is clever and precise, the sound excellent, the editing sophisticated ... In all technical matters, our neighbours make no compromises; near enough is not good enough" (qtd. in Crisp, 179). The music-hall star Florelle, whose first films were shot in the German capital, also commented that the reason working in the Berlin studios was so agreeable was "because everything is organised there in such a precise fashion". She refused, however, to go further and claim, like many did, that actual German technical prowess outshone the work of their French counterparts. "I can't really say, in my opinion, that German directors or camera operators are superior to ours", she suggested. "The superiority of certain German films lies principally with German organisation which knows how to make the best of the same means that we, in fact, possess ourselves".⁴⁰ For the novelist and screenwriter Joseph Kessel, a frequent commentator on Berlin affairs in the French press, German organisation even spread to the representation of the social order. In his review of Tumultes, he claimed that "what gives

³⁹ Pour Vous 26th July 1932, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Le Radical 11th February 1932.

the underworld [in the film] a unique and obsessive character is the cohesion with which its members are placed in a network ... [there is] a total discipline which creates a unit of all these ex-convicts and strong-heads."⁴¹

Whilst this discipline was discussed in largely admiring terms, it was also, nonetheless, the source of a certain amount of tension during production. Cultural differences were reported over meal times. As Alexandre Arnoux pointed out in a report from Neubabelsburg, the Germans considered eating as a subsidiary activity to the practicalities of solving of a particular task at hand. The French, on the other hand, saw lunch as an important opportunity to share and discuss ideas over the commonality of food preparation and consumption.⁴² There was also the matter of different modes of performance. In an interesting commentary on the distinctiveness of both German and French acting styles, a critic from the Berlin-based Der Kinematograph, noticed how French acting talents in the German capital tended to perform in a "more theatrical and complicated manner" than their German counterparts. Their style was "less naturalistic".⁴³ His comments point to the obvious differences in professional backgrounds. Many of the French stars working in Germany were also engaged in the transition from the music-hall to the cinema. But these remarks also suggest a certain difference in the conception of the representation of everyday life. "We should take into account the differences in the delivery of words, in the expression of a gesture", the article continued. "Romance actors sometimes tend to pathos where we tend to a form of sober objectivity".⁴⁴

Importantly for this thesis, these differences extended to the problems regarding the representation of the city. The journalist and cartoonist Pol Rab, in a report on the French MLV Mon Coeur incognito (Mandref Nos and André-Paul Antoine, 1930), couldn't help

⁴¹L'Intransigeant 24th April 1932.

⁴²Pour Vous 15th January, 1931, p.3.

⁴³qtd. in Cinématographie Française, 13th September 1930, p. 24.

⁴⁴Ibid.

describing Berlin as a "grey and provincial town" which despite the best intentions was unable to conceive cinematically the character and elusive atmosphere of Paris on screen. "A Parisian interior just isn't a Berlin interior", he declared. "The experienced set designer would notice a thousand differences between the two of them."⁴⁵ Whilst it is true that this kind of tension seemed to focus on certain issues of national pride, the key point remains that the governing discourse regarding German cinema was the acuity with which German cinema professionals—be they actors or camera operators—could render a psychological intensity to the depiction of the ordinary realities of city life. If one returns to Artaud's comments on Coup de feu à l'aube, which as the name suggests was a police thriller, the actor's most significant observation was the existence of a group of camera operators who were "without equal" in their talents. "They research the logical effects of light", he noticed. "They try to create a kind of luminous psychological ambiance which matches the state of mind of the scene. ... You wouldn't be able to imagine the extent of the care they take to achieve picturesque detail and revealing psychology." For some, this rendering of light ill-suited modes of performance. Florelle commented that she would have preferred her work on Pabst's L'Opéra de quat'sous (1931) to be lit by a French cameraman. "Certain passages of the film, I find, are not really to my taste", she noted.⁴⁶ But, as we shall see, it was this psychologically motivated, aesthetic manipulation of light for sophisticated narrative purposes that was to be one of the most significant contributions of the émigrés when it came to the picturing of Paris. I shall now turn to examine these various interlinking narratives of emigration to Paris over the period in question, beginning with the Russians who were to play an important part in the exchanges between the German and French film industries.

⁴⁵ Pour Vous 23rd October 1930, p.6.

⁴⁶ Le Radical 11th February 1932.

ERATUM

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IV: PATTERNS OF EXILE AND EMIGRATION IN THE PRE-NAZI ERA

THE RUSSIANS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO PARIS AND BERLIN

Even before the tenets of the French Revolution enshrined the notion of France as the country of human liberties, Paris had been the site of exile for many of the dispossessed of Europe. As Schor (1989) has suggested, this search for liberty involved many variations of the word ranging from the material to the moral; from the intellectual and artistic to the political. In cinema industry terms, the wave of emigration from the U.S.S.R. encompassed all of these definitions. In our discussion of the importance of pre-1933 emigrations to Paris it is important to recognise the contribution of the Russians. These émigrés may have preceded the different journeys from Berlin that took place in the early 1930s, but the two passages can not be seen in isolation. Each developed networks which inform the overall tangled processes of émigré film production during the late silent and early sound period. Victor Trivas, for example, who was one of the original White Russian émigrés in the 1920s, came back to Paris via Germany in 1933. He ended up directing the key early Poetic Realist melodrama Dans les rues which, as I have said, will form part of the basis of discussion in Chapter Three. The Russian producer Michael Safra, after working in Berlin, also emerged in Paris to produce features for Berlin émigré Robert Siodmak and Gregor Rabinovitch, another key Russian producer, went to Germany but returned to France in 1933 and oversaw Quai des brumes (Marcel Carné, 1938), among others, with émigré Eugen Schüfftan as cinematographer.

The Russian immigrants of the 1920s were fleeing the Russian Revolution. In this sense, their arrival in the French capital was fuelled by a different set of political priorities than those film-makers who left Germany after the rise of Hitler in 1933. Just as the waves of emigration from Berlin were enabled by various pre-existing structures of exchange and

co-operation between France and Germany, so the Russians were assisted by the fact that the French film industry had long-standing links to that part of the world. Gaumont was well established in Russia before the beginning of World War One and Joseph Ermolieff (later Ermolieff) had begun work as a technical assistant at Pathé's Moscow branch. The departure of Ermolieff and fellow film-makers such as Alexandre Volkoff, Ivan Mosjoukine, Nicolas Toporkoff, Alexandre Lochakoff and Nathalie Lissenko was not sudden. Many had worked in Yalta in the Crimea between 1918-1919 after leaving Moscow, and although they fled Odessa when the city was captured by the Bolsheviks early in 1920, they knew, thanks to Ermolieff's preparatory visits to the French capital, that opportunities awaited them on arrival in Paris. Ermolieff set up La Société Ermolieff-Cinéma, based in the former Pathé studios at Montreuil, with partners Alexandre Kamenka and Noë Bloch but in 1922, he moved to Berlin leaving Kamenka and Bloch to establish Les Films Albatros. What followed is an indication of the close proximity between the French and German film industries in this period of intense competition with the increasingly hegemonic model of the United States. Two years later, Vladimir Wengeroff, from the German based film consortium Westi, lured Bloch and many of his personnel to set up a subsidiary of Westi to be based in Paris called Ciné-France-Film. Westi, however, faced financial collapse in the late summer of 1925. Bloch, therefore, moved to set up an internationally minded Franco-German production outlet, Ciné-Alliance, with his former colleague Gregor Rabinovitch, now in Berlin, and the French production company Société des Cinéromans. Kamenka's Les Films Albatros continued to make features through to the 1930s. Many of these films were by prominent directors of the period and include such titles as Un Chapeau de paille d'Italie (René Clair, 1927) and Les Bas-fonds (Jean Renoir, 1936).⁴⁷ In much the same manner as the succeeding émigrés from Germany, the Russians

⁴⁷The story of the Russians in France is told, in much greater detail, in the following: François Albera (1995) Albatros: des Russes à Paris 1919-1929; Lenny Borger (1989) "From Moscow to Montreuil: the Russian Émigrés in Paris 1920-1929" in Griffithiana no. 35-36 (October 1989), pp. 28-39 and Kristin Thompson (1989) "The Ermolieff Group in Paris: Exile, Impressionism, Internationalism" in Griffithiana no. 35-36 (October 1989), pp. 50-57.

actually concentrated on making "French" films despite continued nods to their national heritage. As Albera (1995, 80) notes, "[t]he general attitude of the Russians concerned both the desire to integrate themselves, to be the guarantee of modernity, and the wish to meet the wishes of the society that welcomed them. In other words, to legitimate the stereotypical folkloric and exotic image that France had of Russia". Although one can see traces of the Russian traditional cultural heritage in the continuing vogue for Slavic melodramas of the 1930s, the Russian émigrés should also be remembered for their ability to adapt to contemporaneous norms of French cultural representation. Russian set and costume designers, such as Lazarre Meerson and Boris Bilinsky, worked with the likes of Marcel L'Herbier and Jacques Feyder on French-based productions, which then went on to be well received on the export market as models of French excellence. The German trade weekly Lichtbildbühne's Paris correspondent believed, for example, that Albatros's Feu Mathias Pascal (Marcel L'Herbier, 1925)] "definitely belong[ed] among the few films of French origin which deserve to be placed in the same class with the best American and German productions" (qtd. in Thompson 1989, 55). For many, the work of Lazarre Meerson, in particular, was a central influence on the dominant mode of 1930s French urban representation which saw Paris as an intimate village. Andrew (1995) claims that Meerson, particularly in Tobis's Sous les toits de Paris, "downsized the picturesque vistas of the city of light by constructing its more picturesque back alleys" (179). A production report, from the set of the film, comments on the same thing. "Special facilities have been installed to allow René Clair to both take up the panoramic view and comb each of the houses to study more closely the lives of their inhabitants".⁴⁸ This sense of scale concurs with the previously noted French aversion to the dominant Weimar German model of urban representation which saw the city as "everyone's nightmare" (Andrew, 180). We shall return to these ideas in Chapter Three when the work of fellow Russians, Andre Andrejew

⁴⁸Cinématographie Française 8th February 1930, p. 16.

and Serge Pimenov (later Pimenoff), will be discussed in relation to the previously mentioned key Parisian émigré films Cœur de lilas and Dans les rues.

TRADE AND ECONOMIC EMIGRATION FROM BERLIN TO PARIS BEFORE 1933

In a chauvinistic article published in the German film periodical Kinematograph towards the end of 1931, it was noted that "the German cinema incontestably dominates Europe. ... The French film industry owes 80 percent of its success to German efforts".⁴⁹ The journalist went on to complain that whilst the French "certainly possess remarkable resources from the point of view of actors and directors, they lack one principal thing: precise organisation or what we call in Germany "business sense". ... It is disarming to hear a French director of production, charged with directing a German language film version, shout to the German actor "It's impossible to faire solche petites ici"". This intemperate tone, which also neatly captures the linguistic and cultural ferment of MLV production at the time, must be seen in the context of the increasingly political, problematic trade relationship between the two countries. Editorials in the French trade press of the time were constantly lambasting the German film industry for its perceived inequalities regarding the granting of import licences and other matters of financial co-operation. France, again, saw itself as the losing partner in the triangular competitive relationship between itself, Germany and the United States. It was apparent that the Germans seemed to be keen on substituting the word "European" for "German" only when it suited them. Colin Reval noted, for example, that French directors were not allowed to bring French technicians to Berlin to make French MLVs but the French openly accepted the use of German crews in Paris to make equivalent German MLVs.⁵⁰ The German position was

⁴⁹Qtd. in Cinématographie Française 17th October 1931, p. 11.

⁵⁰Cinématographie Française 31st October 1931, p. 15.

informed by more than a need to make off-hand cultural comparisons. The Berlin film industry was facing real economic pressures of its own. Firstly, there was the increasingly predatory nature of the Hollywood studios who were opening outlets in many of the European capitals. As Vincendeau (1988, 30) notes, " [b]y September 1931, all major US studios had established a presence (in terms of production, that is, since most of them were already present as distributors) in Europe: Warner Brothers, Universal, RKO, Paramount, United Artists and MGM in London; Paramount, United Artists and Fox in Paris; Fox and United Artists in Berlin." Then, secondly, the effects of the Great Depression were still being felt with a noticeable downturn in receipts leading to the closure of a number of cinemas. It was no wonder then that a number of important German-based film-makers decided to take the opportunity to move and work with their non "business sense" minded French contemporaries in Paris.

Many of those who made the journey to the French capital took advantage of the pre-existing network of links between the two countries. One of the key staging posts, apart from Paramount and Tobis, was the newly established production company owned by Adolphe Osso called Société des Films Osso (**See Appendix Two**). Osso had resigned from his influential position as Chief Administrator of Paramount Pictures in the United States at the beginning of the decade and returned to France where, for a few years, his company sustained an ambitious programme of sound features, many of which were developed by émigré personnel. In May 1931, Noë Bloch was named Director of Production and his links with the German film industry, via his previous partnership with Gregor Rabinovitch, must surely have come into use with the recruitment of such names as Carl Lamac, Heinz Hilpert and Max Neufeld. Bloch was also able to make use of family connections and, the same year, put his nephew, Anatol (later Anatole) Litvak, under contract. Looking at the Osso filmography, one also notes the names of other key Russians such as Victor Tourjansky. By the end of 1931, the Cinématographie française was able to

note a significant number of foreign film-makers who were now operative in France. As well as the German names already mentioned, these included the Italians Carmine Gallone, the Swiss Robert Wyler, the Czech Karel Anton and the Hungarians Alexander Korda and Paul Féjos.⁵¹ The number of overseas personnel working on French language film production in France was seen with consternation in some quarters. A shrill editorial in the Cinématographie française entitled "No More Foreigners in Our Country!" argued the case that although foreign film-makers were providing an "indispensable" service, there must be stricter regulation of the number of native French personnel working on any one production.⁵² For others, it was a case of the preservation of the right of French film-makers to make films based on cultural properties of French origin. In his memoirs, Marcel L'Herbier recalls his indignation that "French literature should exercise so powerful an attraction on foreign directors that a Tourjansky should direct L'Aiglon, Korda Marius, Litvak Coeur de lilas [and] Fejos Fantomas" (qtd. in Crisp, 178). Yet, as we shall see, the service that many of these filmmakers provided was "indispensable" precisely because as foreigners they could enhance rather than subvert the needs of the French industry at a crucial period of transition. In order to examine more closely the interaction of industrial and national-based factors in this phenomenon of pre-1933 emigration, I will now turn to two individual studies—Anatole Litvak and Kurt Courant.

⁵¹ Cinématographie Française 19th December 1931, p. 115.

⁵² Cinématographie Française 10th October 1931, p. 11. The following year, in an article in the Cinématographie Française (25th June 1932, p. 47), Lucie Derain suggested that "films shot with more than 20 per cent foreign personnel ... shouldn't be called "French" but "Franco-German", "Franco-Russian", "Franco-American" etc."

CASE STUDY I: ANATOLE LITVAK

Anatole Litvak (**See Appendix Three**) stands as an under-explored but nonetheless exemplary example of the wave of émigré filmmakers who arrived in Paris in the early 1930s prior to 1933. His particular importance rests in the way that, despite his evident outsider status, he was able to participate in contemporary debates over the direction a specifically French sound cinema should take. It was probably market logic that dictated Litvak's decision to come and work in the French capital. He already knew the city having briefly worked there after deciding to leave ^{the} USSR in the mid 1920s. Litvak had been an assistant, albeit in a minor role, on Gance's *Napoléon*, for example. Although on contract to Société des films Osso, he was lent, in the first instance, to Fifra—a production company owned by Dorothy Farnum and Maurice Barber which had recently purchased the rights to the 1920s stage play *Coeur de lisas*. Originally Maurice de Canonge was going to direct the film version, but Litvak's success with *Calais-Douvres/Nie wieder Liebe* (1931) had persuaded the French that he was a marketable asset. Litvak was something of a cultural chameleon. Indeed, he has actually been described as "the most Parisian of foreign directors" for the number of features that he made set in Paris.⁵³ In an interview accompanying his subsequent French feature *Cette vieille canaille* (1933), based on the play by Fernand Nozière, he claimed that Paris was the place that he worked the best. "Perhaps there is something in the air, in the way that the spontaneous spirit of all the collaborators suits my temperament", he said. "The French do the work in an instant that the English, who are nonetheless charming, take two hours to do with solemn slowness; or the Germans can only carry out with the most precise orders. The French may grumble but they do it so well!"⁵⁴

⁵³ *France-Soir* 17th December 1974.

⁵⁴ *Pour Vous* 22nd June 1933, p. 11.

Litvak was born and educated in Russia. After a doctorate in philosophy and involvement in the theatre and cinema in St Petersburg, he came to Paris in the mid-1920s to work with Ciné Alliance and Albatros Films. He continued to pursue his connections with the pool of Russian émigré film-makers and moved to Berlin where he was involved with Alexander Volkoff on features such as Casanova. He worked with his uncle, Noë Bloch, and with Gregor Rabinowitch on the U.F.A. funded Sheherezade and The White Devil which necessitated journeying to the Victorine Studios in Nice. Later, he was an editor on Pabst's Die freudlose Gasse in Berlin where he also directed his first feature Dolly macht Karriere (1930). After Coeur de lilas, he worked in Vienna briefly to shoot Das Lied einer Nacht/Chanson d'une nuit (1932) before returning to Paris. His remaining French films after Cette Vieille canaille were L'Équipage (1935) and the hugely successful Mayerling (1936). The latter film was his passport to Hollywood and there, later, he directed the remake of the seminal French Poetic Realist drama, Le Jour se lève (Marcel Carné, 1939) entitled The Long Night (1947).⁵⁵

In interviews, contemporary critical references and memoirs, the recurring feature of Litvak's contribution to the French cinema of the early 1930s, was the extreme diligence and ambition that he displayed in his aim to make what he called "real cinema". This term "real cinema" may be said to have three main components all of which intersect with prevalent issues facing French cinema of the period. The first of these elements is the question of the direction that the new recorded medium of sound cinema should take in relation to theatrically based entertainment. Talking about Coeur de lilas at the time of the film's release, Litvak argued that "real cinema" should circumvent the pull of "filmed theatre" through its attention to "light, rhythm and images". "In Coeur de lilas, my cast only speak when the situation demands", he commented. "I simply want to make cinema;

⁵⁵ Le Jour se lève had been previously photographed by Kurt Courant, Litvak's cinematographer on Coeur de lilas and Cette Vieille canaille. (Interestingly, the title of the remake film, The Long Night (1947), puts the emphasis on darkness rather than light). Litvak also directed his own American remake of L'Équipage, The Woman I Love, in 1937.

nothing more, nothing less".⁵⁶ These remarks chime exactly with those of Litvak's former émigré colleague Rabinowitch who two years earlier had said, in his capacity as "the disciple of Franco-German collaboration", that the talking film must not become the "theatrical" film, the cinema must stay as cinema; it must be, above all, a visual medium.⁵⁷ They also, of course, echo debates about the nature of sound cinema in the French film press of the time; in particular the now famous distinctions drawn between René Clair and Marcel Pagnol. In juxtaposing the novelty of theatrically based scenarios and dialogue with the former glory of silent film production, Clair believed that "[t]he cinema must remain visual at all costs" (qtd. in Abel, 1988, 39). Marcel Pagnol, on the other hand—in his article "Cinématurgie de Paris", for example—saw the potential of the new sound medium to make use of theatrical drama to the extent that "the talking film [should be seen as] the art of recording, fixing, and diffusing theatre" (qtd. in Abel, 135).⁵⁸ Reviews of Litvak's early Parisian work constantly praise the level of technical prowess and the director's facility to let the co-ordination of images speak at the expense of over-laboured dialogue. His use of extensive travelling shots and rhythmic editing are frequently singled out. Cinématographie Française noted that in Cette Vieille canaille, for example, Litvak had only kept the elements from the stage version that could be rendered cinematic. "The result is that we have a well edited film that is interesting to follow where the images are important in themselves—it is a film which comes from the cinema", it declared.⁵⁹ This is true, especially in the many formally inventive links between the various scenes. The virtuoso crane shot which introduces the world of the street in Coeur de lilas, and which I discuss in Chapter Three, is another indication of Litvak's method.

⁵⁶Cinemonde 31st December 1931.

⁵⁷Cinématographie Française 30th November 1929, p. 14.

⁵⁸For an interesting reversal of the commonly perceived distinctions between Clair and Pagnol in relation to the depiction of social reality see Faulkner (1994). According to Faulkner's argument, it was Pagnol's manipulation of the expressive potential of the French language that accorded his sound films a greater degree of authenticity. Unlike Clair who constructed "an ideal, universal and transhistorical spectator", Pagnol assumed a spectator who had "a local, particular and material existence" (164).

⁵⁹Cinématographie Française 25th November 1933, p. 39.

The second aspect of this notion of "real cinema" concerns the specific facility of film, as a popular entertainment, to draw upon the "authentic" immediacies of the social world for its dramatic narratives. Like a number of émigrés, Litvak was particularly interested in the urban milieux of his adopted environment. In this sense his concerns matched with uncanny precision those outlined in an important article written by Francis Carco in 1930.⁶⁰ Following the success of his screenplay for Paris la nuit (Diamont-Berger, 1930), Carco made a call for French cinema to make "films of atmosphere" which made use of cinema's ability to register, in the minutest detail, aspects of the urban everyday.⁶¹ Exactly one year later, Litvak himself authored a piece entitled "The Film of Atmosphere must replace the 100 per cent talking feature".⁶² Central to Carco and Litvak's concerns was the sense that the visual inspection of the camera created a spectatorial relationship which differed from that of the connection between a live theatrical audience and a stage play. Carco suggested that the cinema was "less collective and more direct", meaning that the partnership between the viewer and the screen was as immediate and intense as the intimate bond created between the mind of a novelist and his or her reader. Consequently, what mattered for both figures was the evocation of social atmosphere and detail over the display and artifice of spectacle and performance. Carco, for example, wrote in his article about a subsequent film project which would draw upon his personal knowledge of the men and women of "certain obscure corners" of Paris whilst Litvak, according to the memoirs of the assistant producer on Coeur de lilas, René Lucot (1984),

⁶⁰Francis Carco (1886-1958), was the writer of many books about "dark Paris" which included such emblematic titles as La Lumière noire, La Rue, and L'Ombre. He had sung in the *café-concerts* as "Le Petit Mayol" and by the 1930s, particularly because of the novel, Jésus la caille, he was a celebrated literary figure. Carco featured in Parisian magazine photo-spreads (see Rifkin, 1993, 101) and even cropped up in film as himself in Prisons de femmes (Roger Richebé, 1938). He wrote the sub-titles for the French release of Dead End (William Wyler, 1937) known as Rue sans issue. As Andrew (1995, 158) points out, the film that he scripted such as Paris-Béguin (Augusto Genina, 1931) and Paris la nuit both involved "wealthy women seduced by swarthy criminals or lured to the climate of the criminal *quartiers*". In his obituary published in Aurore (27th May 1958) it was claimed "nobody knew like him the appeal of pavements wet with rain, the mist of mornings in Montmartre and the equivocal atmosphere of cafés populated with girls and ruffians".

⁶¹Cinémonde, 11th December 1930.

⁶²Cinémonde, 31st December 1931.

made extensive searches for authentic Parisian locations prior to shooting the film. Even in the scenes which were shot in the studio, Litvak uses numerous apparently non-professional faces to provide background flavour to the narrative. I shall come back in greater detail to this important question of the relationship between "real cinema" and the émigré depiction of the "real world" of the Parisian street in Chapter Three.

The third sense in which the question of Litvak's "real cinema" related to the concerns of the day is an extension of the points made so far. Litvak matters as an important case study of one of the early 1930s film émigrés because of the level of visual sophistication and training that he was able to bring to a national cinema searching for a way of competing with the models of Berlin and Hollywood film production. Litvak, simply, was able to bring the proficiency of his German training to the Parisian film studio. Lucot, for example, recalls Litvak's extensive preparations for the previously mentioned key travelling crane shot in *Coeur de lilas* which introduces the atmospheric milieu of the *quartier* for the first time. In her memoirs, Witta-Montobert (1980, 56) also makes the point that Litvak "dressed himself with great consideration". "This finesse was found again in the way that he very rarely mishandled performers and technicians", she observed. "He presented a familiar, solid impression whilst on set but this did not prevent him from being demanding. All his films were meticulously prepared. Most of the scriptwriters he worked with had been formed in the German school—they worked with extraordinary care, leaving nothing to chance, checking the script for the smallest detail. ... Litvak made his plans in collaboration, then he let his co-workers edit the dialogue. ... Once the script was done, he checked it and modified it depending on the kinds of lens he wished to use". All of this points also to close levels of collaboration and it is to Litvak's key émigré co-worker, the cinematographer Kurt Courant, that I shall now turn to as an example of the further beneficial contribution of foreign personnel to French cinema of the time.

CASE STUDY II: KURT COURANT

As in the case of Anatole Litvak, there has been very little written on Kurt (later Curt or Curtis) Courant despite his important contribution to the French cinema of the 1930s. His first full-length film made in France was also Coeur de lilas although he had made French language MLVs in Berlin after the coming of sound (**See Appendix Four**). Unlike Litvak, he was a native German. He had started making films in 1917—he co-directed Hilde Warren und der Tod (1917) with Joe May—and in Germany worked with a number of names such as Fritz Lang and Hans Steinhoff who were to leave for France later with the rise of Hitler. In a short memoir of his silent period of film-making, Courant recalls how he learnt the dramatic and emotional possibilities of the moving picture medium. "I began to look upon photography not as the mere recording of a scene but as an integral part of the drama", he wrote. Hamlet (Glade, 1920), in particular made him "aware of the unrecognised possibilities of creative cinematography" (1956, 18). Courant also had Italian connections. He worked with an Italian director, Palermi, in Germany, and after Coeur de lilas, he was the cinematographer on Carmine Gallone's Un Fils d'Amérique shot in Paris.

Courant went back to Berlin in 1932 although, by the end of the year, he had returned to the French capital to set up temporary residence at the Hôtel Napoléon. He did briefly visit Germany the following year but, as a letter published in Cinématographie Française later in 1933 makes clear; by now, he saw Paris as his home. The letter is somewhat curious. It seems at pains to prove that Courant was not exactly part of the growing tide of politically motivated émigrés who were beginning to cause some consternation in the French studios. Yet the truth was that Courant was Jewish and so he actually falls into both camps of émigrés who came to work in Paris—he worked in France at times for both economic and political reasons. "It was not without interest or feeling that

I read the article in your latest issue devoted to French and foreign film-makers", the letter says. "I wish to inform you that I have been resident in France since December 1932 but I was not mentioned in your list of foreign operators who have been resident in France from the 1st of May 1933. I also want to add that I always work with a French First Assistant".⁶³ By saying this, Courant was alluding to the widespread fear that talented and well-esteemed newcomers from the Berlin studios, once installed in Paris, would pose a threat to French job prospects. There was, certainly, a broadly held view that German cinematographers such as himself and compatriot Eugen Schüfftan, were responsible for a perceived German "look". In 1931, for example, a review of Courant's L'Homme qui assassina (Kurt Bernhardt, 1931) had found that if the film had a fault, it was because "the atmosphere is too German. ... the photography has conceived both the interiors and the full daylight exteriors in *clair-obscur*".⁶⁴ Again and again on his arrival in France, Courant's attention to the singular effects of lighting techniques was signalled by commentators. In Cette vieille canaille there is indeed evidence of a deliberate exploration of the way different lighting sources may be exploited for dramatic purpose. In Le Jour se lève (Marcel Carné, 1939) the steam from passing trains is specifically lit for its atmospheric potential. Yet as we shall see in the course of this thesis, this "German" visual style was to be one of the greatest contributions that the émigrés actually made to 1930s French cinema, in general, and the representation of Paris, in particular. In this sense, Courant was right to stress his affiliations with French film-making interests. He is a fascinating example of the way in which many of the émigrés worked in Paris by fitting in and enhancing the development of "native" production by at the same time being "different".

⁶³Cinématographie Française 3rd June 1933, p. 15.

⁶⁴Cinématographie Française 24th January 1931, p. 24.

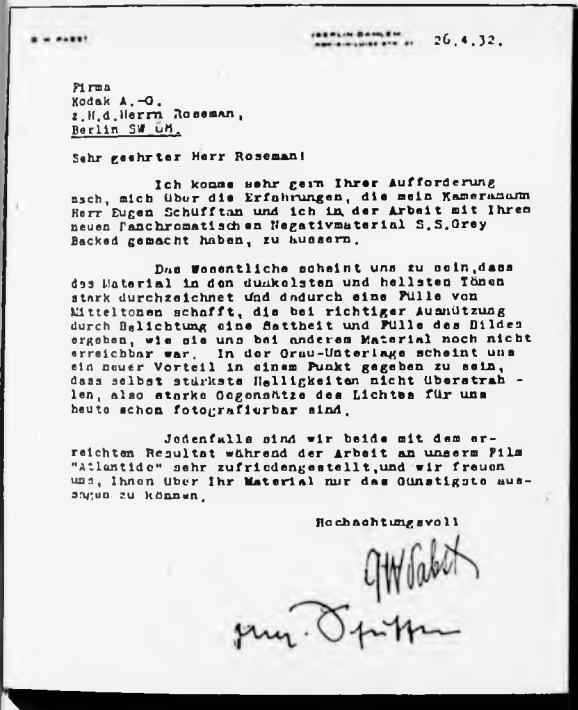
Courant, like his other German compatriots, was "different" because of his technically astute understanding of the narrative possibilities of relating character, space and decor within the frame through the control and direction of lighting. As Roger (1991, 117) has suggested in his general discussion of the German camera operators in France in the 1930s, the key to this was the simultaneous concentration and dispersal of light within the shot. On the one hand, light was directed so that blacks and whites were reinforced at the expense of neutral and even lighting arrangements. Strong light sources meant a kind of sculpting effect within the space of the image. This often produced harsh contrasts between illumination and ink-black darkness so that the contours and outlines of facial features or items of the decor were dramatically defined. On the other hand, light was also actually carefully dispersed so that the direction of a particular light source was obscured in favour of a more diffuse and suggestive use of shadow. This offered multiple possibilities regarding the creation of space and depth in the image and the situating of the actor in relation to the design of the set in the studio. Courant himself was particularly known for the way he worked to soften the texture of this ambient light through the use of fine silk fabric which was attached to the numerous small projectors he used.

Courant is especially interesting as a case-study because of the important role he played in the future direction of French film output. In particular, he was, as he has already suggested himself, adept at playing a teacherly role to native cinematographers. The benefit of being considered "German" was also that he could pass on the fruits of his own indigenous training. This is an important point. The relationship, for example, between the creative use of diffuse and pointed light sources was "German" partly only because of the vast financial and material resources of the German studios. A heightened degree of proficiency and expertise with the available technology had been managed due to industrial strength. Lighting technology had developed rapidly in the late silent era and Berlin was able to invest in the skills needed to manipulate the various projectors now available. As

well as knowing how to differentiate effectively between the older and stronger arc lighting and the softer potential of recent incandescent lamp sources, German technicians such as Courant were also skilled in the potential of new film stocks. The introduction of panchromatic film allowed a far more subtle palette of greys and washes which proved to be of great potential regarding the illumination of the urban milieu. The fame of the German camera operators was such in France that Courant's fellow future émigré Eugen Schüfftan actually advertised the new Eastman Kodak film with G.W. Pabst in the French film press. This meant that when the German lighting émigrés arrived to work in Paris, they were seen as advantageous to the future growth of the indigenous industry.

ILLUSTRATION THREE—EUGEN SCHÜFFTAN ADVERTISES KODAK
EMT PANCHROMATIC FILM (CINÉMATOGRAPHIE FRANÇAISE)
28TH MAY 1932)

Voici ce que pensent de notre pellicule Panchro "Super-Sensible" Grey-Backed



**Négative Panchro N° 2
"SUPER-SENSIBLE"
Eastman**

le célèbre metteur en scène **G.W. PABST**
réalisateur de :

LA RUE SANS JOIE
QUATRE DE L'INFANTERIE
L'OPÉRA DE QUAT'SOUS
LA TRAGÉDIE DE LA MINE

et de

L'ATLANTIDE

et son opérateur **M. SCHÜFFTAN**

G. W. PABST

Berlin-Dalheim 26.4.32
Konigin-Luisa-Str. 27

Société
KODAK A.-G.
z. H. d. Herrn Roseman,
Berlin SW 68

Cher Monsieur Roseman,

C'est bien volontiers que je vous communique, suivant le désir que vous avez exprimé, le résultat de l'expérience que Mr. Eugen Schüfftan, mon opérateur de prise de vues et moi-même, avons faite avec votre nouvelle émulsion négative Panchromatique S. S. Grey-Backed.

Cette émulsion se caractérise essentiellement par une graduation complète partant des noirs les plus intenses aux blancs les plus purs en passant par une gamme étendue de demi-teintes, qui donnent, avec un éclairage approprié, une profondeur et un modèle que nous n'avions pas encore obtenus sur d'autres films. Nous avons trouvé que le "grey-backed" offre un autre avantage du fait que les plus hautes lumières sont exemptes de halo, ce qui permet l'obtention des grands contrastes et l'emploi des éclairages les plus violents.

Nous sommes, Mr. Schüfftan et moi, très satisfaits des résultats réalisés au cours de la prise de vues de notre film "L'ATLANTIDE" et heureux de pouvoir vous transmettre une appréciation aussi favorable sur votre émulsion.

Veuillez agréer, cher Monsieur Roseman, l'assurance de mes sentiments très distingués.

(Signé) G. W. PABST
Eugen SCHÜFFTAN

This necessity of this pedagogical function, as Andrew (1995, 177) has suggested, was symptomatic of the lack of any consistent artisanal studio-based learning along the lines of the model of the American corporations in Hollywood. Younger French cinematographers were obliged to develop their skills through temporary mentoring relationships which varied from one production to the other. Throughout the 1930s, before and after his interludes in England between 1933 and 1936, Courant consistently worked with native assistant camera operators such as Charles Bauer, Jacques Natteau, André Bac and Maurice Pecqueux. This amounted to a form of non-formalised instruction. In his memoirs, the set designer Georges Wahkewitch concurred. "I was lucky enough to know the great Germans, such as Courant and Planner, who formed the whole group of people like Matras, Kelber, etc.", he said. "Our cinematographers were practically all taught by these people. We decorators also had a lot to learn. ... The lighting, the acting, the intelligence behind the scenarios [of the German films of our youth] was devastating. For us, it was a revelation" (qtd. in Crisp, 377).

Claude Renoir, for example, was Courant's assistant on Jean Renoir's celebrated adaptation of Zola's *La Bête humaine* (1938). The deputy might well have been impressed by the virtuoso way in which light is modelled by Courant in the film for dramatic purpose. The cinematography makes full use of the aesthetic potential of reflective surfaces like water, window panes, shiny black fabric and mirror glass. At key moments in the narrative, psychological tensions registering on the faces of its main protagonists are enhanced by expressive abstract patterning. In an important review of the film, Emile Vuillerme returns to the themes introduced by Carco and Litvak earlier. In so doing, he highlights the way that Courant's "Germanic" visual style actually served the purpose of such a prestige, ostensibly "French" production. Vuillerme describes how the cinematography of the film reminds him of the work emanating from the Berlin studios in the late silent period. In his mind, however, this is proper because "the subject of the film

is *noir*". Indeed, "*noir* is currently the colour in fashion in our studios".⁶⁵ Vuillerme then goes on to make a fascinating comparison between the success of this visual darkness and the novelistic qualities of the author on which the film is based. He suggests that "the art of Zola [itself] is essentially cinematographic. His realism ... is exactly that of a cameraman".⁶⁶ We shall return to this inter-relationship between realism, urban darkness and the potential of émigré cinematography when I discuss Courant's work on Coeur de lilas in more detail in Chapter Three.

⁶⁵ *Le Temps* 14th January 1939.

⁶⁶ Ibid. The critic Georges Altman makes the same point in his review of Courant's subsequent work on Le Jour se lève which he calls a "pure film noir" (qtd. in Abel, 1988, 266).

V: PARIS. THE GERMAN ÉMIGRÉS AFTER 1933 AND THE QUESTION OF JEWISHNESS

THE RISE OF THE NAZIS IN BERLIN AND THE POLITICS OF DEPARTURE

For the thousands of German based émigrés who decided to leave the country after the rise of Hitler in 1933, the decision to emigrate "was determined by motives which were at once political, moral, emotional and psychological" (Palmier 1990, 143). The situation for many German directors, actors, technicians and producers had been worsening throughout the early years of the 1930s as the Nazi propaganda machine steadily produced diatribes against the perceived specifically Jewish bias of the German film industry. In one 1932 pamphlet (qtd. in McGilligan 1997, 169), the National Socialist Party claimed that "Germany's motion picture distribution companies were 81 per cent Jewish run." In early 1933, Joseph Goebbels went as far as calling for a boycott of all Jewish businesses. Just over a week after the Nazis seized power in the March 3rd elections, Goebbels set up the Ministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (National Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda). At the same time, because of this political tide, film trade relations between France and Germany were also showing signs of obvious strain. German press articles, reported in Cinématographie Française, still tried to stress the mutual interests of the German and French film-going public despite the ongoing difficulties of the technicalities of economic co-operation. "The charm of Annabella and Milton's good humour" had been called France's best diplomatic assets by Film Kurier.⁶⁷ Yet, in March 1933, Bernard's Les Croix de bois was suddenly banned from further distribution in German cinemas. A spate of nationalistic "revenge films"⁶⁸ such as Blutendes Deutschland (Carl Froelich, 1933) was noted by the French with great anxiety. Given this background

⁶⁷Qtd. in Cinématographie Française 16th January 1932, p. 22.

⁶⁸The words of P.A. Harlé in Cinématographie Française 11th March 1933, p. 7.

of rising national chauvinism, it was not surprising that the new German government moved swiftly to make an imprint on such a key feature of cultural production as the film industry.

The now infamous gathering of DACHO (the Association of German Film Producers), chaired by Goebbels, took place at the Hotel Kaiserhof on March 28th 1933. According to Michel Gorel, then a reporter in Berlin, Goebbels was dressed in a brown shirt and displayed a pronounced "Napoleonic air". Speaking to a vast assembly of German film workers, he complained bitterly that they were making "licentious films".⁶⁹ He meant by this that the national purity of German film culture was being tainted. "You are employing the French and the Jews", he is reported by Gorel to have said. "You are sabotaging the German renaissance and all the work of the Führer. I've decided to keep a close eye on you and that is why I am grouping all the German film companies into one vast syndicate with myself in charge".⁷⁰ Goebbels aim was to purge the German cinema of all undesirable elements. In another report, he was quoted directly to have said that "the cause of the crisis in film isn't economic, it is moral. The German cinema needs new men, new artists, new forces and new subjects. The cinema must evolve with the times".⁷¹ Consequently, the next day after the meeting, U.F.A. set about firing all its known Jewish employees and a formal boycott of Jewish film-makers was instituted on April 1st. A week later, in the German Film-Kurier, Gorel noted at least 4 new films with marked Hitleresque themes already in development.

Kurt Bernhardt, the film director, was at the Kaiserhof meeting and in his memoirs (qtd. in Elsaesser and Vincendeau (eds.) 1983, 12-13) he remembers the room being filled with Nazi stormtroopers. "I had arrived with my girlfriend Trude von Molo, star of

⁶⁹Cinémonde 6th April 1933.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Cinématographie Française 1st April 1933, p. 10.

L'Homme qui assassina which I had just finished shooting", he wrote. "She was a very beautiful woman and Goebbels wanted to greet her in person. Whilst he approached us, I asked Trude "What should we do?" She replied, "Let's get out." Bernhardt was one of many to take an early train out of the country though he did return briefly, with specific permission, to shoot some of the exterior sequences of Le Tunnel (1933). The immediate decision to leave has, however, been over glamourised by some. This is true in the notable case of Fritz Lang whose own departure narrative shall be recounted in more detail in Chapter Four. From Horak's account (1996, 375), it appears that the Nazis were aware that the sudden withdrawal of Jewish money would have a disastrous effect on the German film industry but he is wrong to suggest that "there were no new films produced in the Summer of 1933 involving Jewish film-makers". Although many had left Germany, some like Ludwig Berger and Joe May were still working on French language MLVS in Berlin in July before their departure.⁷² The idea of hordes of people getting on the first train out, therefore, seems to be an exaggeration. It was not until July 14th that a temporary Reich Film Guild (Filmkammer) was instituted with a permanent model coming into effect as late as November 1st. Horak points out that although Aryan ancestry was obligatory, exceptions were made in the early months of the enterprise. Indeed, as late as July, the German government seemed to be keen to persuade some of those who had temporarily deserted the Reich to return. In a circular, publicised in the French film trade press, Goering, the German Minister for the Interior, noted the fact that "numerous German subjects belonging to the film industry have gone to Paris in search of work in the studios there. Most of their names are known and they figure on a blacklist. If they do not reply to the letter of reintegration, that they can obtain from the Ministry of the Interior, they will lose their nationality and their possessions".⁷³ Leaving, evidently, was not a simple matter. As Palmier (1990, 143) sensitively notes, the decision to emigrate was affected by "very diverse objective factors" which included "the material and intellectual capacity to abandon

⁷²La Guerre des valses (Ludwig Berger, 1933) and Tout pour l'amour (Joe May, 1933).

⁷³Cinématographie Française 22nd July 1933, p. 20.

Germany in an attempt to construct a new existence abroad". Many émigrés even believed that they were going to return soon. Alfred Döblin, the author of Berlin Alexanderplatz, for example, thought that Nazism was just a "storm" that would not last (qtd. in Palmier, 146). A significant number of immediate departees in the early months of 1933 returned to Germany from France once their tourist visas had expired. Lotte Eisner, the prominent film critic, was, however, one of the few who felt differently. In an interview (in Badia (ed.) 1982, 299), she movingly recalls having to abandon everything; even all her books. "I knew that I wouldn't be coming back in a hurry", she said. "Lots of intellectuals thought that Nazism would only last a few weeks. From the beginning, I was more realistic".

THE PLACE OF THE JEWS IN THE CITY OF PARIS

The process of the displacement of Berlin based film-makers, necessitated by the rise of the Third Reich in Germany, had ramifications beyond the immediacies of national exile. Because the émigrés were often Jewish and because they were mainly German, they also played a part in the way notions of Frenchness were discussed. This is why an account of the émigré representation of France's capital city Paris is of such intrinsic significance. It raises issues around assimilation and cultural difference which were pertinent beyond the confines of the film industry of the time. Before moving to a discussion of the specific reception of the émigré filmmakers when they arrived in the French capital, I want to contextualise their arrival by looking at the place of the Jew in Paris. By tracing the historical relationship between Jewish immigration to Paris and questions about national identity and the city, it becomes apparent that the 1930s émigrés actually fell into a continuum of thought about the nature of urban life which goes back to the nineteenth century.

Paris in the 1930s was the third largest Jewish community in the world after the cities of Warsaw and New York. Between 1918 and 1939, 150,000 Jewish immigrants had arrived in the city. By 1939, Jews constituted 7 per cent of the metropolitan population.⁷⁴ The majority of these residents lived in Belleville, the area in the east of Paris which, as I will discuss in Chapter Three, was also the focus, in several kinds of cultural representation, of a certain form of authentic, working-class Frenchness. French Jewry had been emancipated during the French Revolution and during the course of the nineteenth century, at least on a certain level, it had begun to view itself as still distinctive but also somewhat assimilated into the structures of everyday French society. New Jewish migrants, however, continued to arrive throughout the century; particularly from Germany. Most noticeable was the flood of exiles from mainly Alsace and Lorraine which followed the annexation of these provinces by Germany in 1871. These migrants settled in the areas around St. Paul, Bastille, République as well as Belleville. They were later followed by other waves from Poland, the Ukraine and Lithuania. As Weinburg points out, Jewish society in the 1930s was therefore, in fact, divided between older generations of immigrants who were able to maintain a bourgeois existence through commercial and industrial interests and a secondary tier of former Eastern European, skilled, artisanal workers who worked in trades such as textiles and furniture. "Like the varied population it served", he argues (1977, 22), "Jewish organisational life in the 1930s was a patchwork quilt of competing identities and solutions to the "Jewish question"."

The central component of this "Jewish question" was thus the degree to which Jews could act and be perceived as "French". This attempt to settle cultural difference and attempt to fit in also lies at the heart of the ways in which the émigré film-makers of the 1930s operated in relation to the representation of Paris. Even at the time of the Dreyfus affair, there were distinguishable strands of opinion about the place of Jews in national life. For

⁷⁴Figures qtd. from Golan (1995b, 164).

the older generations of Jews in Paris, integration meant that fidelity to French identity could work alongside religious affiliation to the remarkable extent that, in some quarters, anti-Semitism, could actually be seen as a German import. France's established Jewry perceived themselves as different from the recent Jewish arrivals from Alsace and Lorraine and in right-wing discourse, there was an important conflation between anti-German and anti-Semitic sentiment. An example of this confusion was the writing of the right-wing journalist and commentator Edouard Drumont who "disseminated the image of the Jew as [both] the newcomer to France and the quintessential German" (Hyman, 14). This tendency to exaggerate the differences between old and new (between having roots and being uprooted) was exacerbated during the early years of the twentieth century, particularly with the influx of skilled workers from the Jewish cultures of Eastern Europe. The image persisted, however, of the relationship between Jewishness and being German and this duality undoubtedly fuelled the elements of xenophobia which greeted the likes of Robert Siodmak on their arrival on French soil.

An important subsidiary element to the continuing critical debates about the place of Jews in relation to French culture, and Paris in particular, was the contention that Jews were perceived as "symbols of the city ... and of industrialisation" (Hyman, 200). There are a number of significant ways in which this touches on the concerns of this thesis in relation to Paris. Firstly, the fact that French Jewishness remained largely an urban phenomenon meant that the ideological value of the old and untouched rural version of Frenchness embodied by the peasant worker could remain intact. Secondly, as a result, it was mainly the French capital that became the staging ground for debates about the degree to which modern material advancement related to the question of national identity. The manner in which capitalism and industrialisation meant a refashioning of what it meant to be French was, in fact, contradictory. On the one hand, Jewishness, in particular, could present a set of anxieties about the loss of what the nation once had. The destruction of the

old simplicities in favour of impersonal mass production could be simply seen as someone else's fault. Further, the inequities of capitalism could be seen as something intrinsic to the character of Jewishness. This is certainly the point, to some extent, in the value-system that the likes of Paul Morand perpetrated. This anti-Semitic line of rhetoric was easily extended in descriptions of the French film industry's main competitors. American finance was equated with ex-German Jewish control and thus also anti-French tendencies. Louis-Ferdinand Céline (qtd. in Weber, 102), for example, wrote of the perils of "American Judeo-Gangsterism" and *L'Ami du peuple* (qtd. in Weber, 102), just before Hitler came to power, warned of the dangers of "Judeo-German-American finance." On the other hand, however, it was obvious that the nation needed to keep up with its industrial competitors such as the United States, Great Britain and, of course, Germany whose industrial strength France feared for political reasons after the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. The tragedy of the post World War I Jewish migration to France was that it only fulfilled a temporary economic need in building up manpower lost due to the ravages of battle. When economic stagnation and depression set in the 1930s, Parisian Jews, once again, became the targets for resentment. This contradiction between an acceptance of the input of beneficial skills, and a rejection based on redundancy or detrimental effect on the indigenous economy, was paralleled in the reception of the émigré film-makers. Although highly regarded, as mentioned before, they became, increasingly, the focus of economically and racially motivated resentment.

The fact that the majority of migrants naturally made Paris their home raised another issue seized upon in anti-foreigner discourse in relation to the city. Reservations about the extent of urbanisation had led to a rhetoric, in some quarters, involving the city with associations of disease and filth. As a result of the waves of immigration to Paris, the stigma of cosmopolitanism could be added to these sins. As Hyman (67) points out, it was post World War One "urban migrants who remained most resistant to the treasured simple

French virtues best incarnated in the peasant." In his extensive analysis of the critical practices of the right-wing film critic Lucien Rebatet, Faulkner demonstrates how this historical conflation between the Jewish migrant and urban cosmopolitanism worked within the specific terrain of film culture of the 1930s.⁷⁵ He suggests that "Rebatet's reviews [reveal] that the Jew is the figure of heterogeneity" (1992, 145). The word "Jewish" thus became "an emblematic epithet, an omnibus adjective of opprobrium, that [could] designate a person, place, attitude, condition, idea, situation, politics [or] behaviour" (145). In Rebatet's writing, "the word "Jew" is not merely a serviceable epithet of scorn or abuse; it is the floating signifier of Otherness which formulates the division between the same and different, inside and outside, French and non-French" (145). What is fascinating, for the purposes of this thesis, is the fact that right-wing critics such as Rebatet then went on to link the perceived ill-effects of Judeo-Germanism with the filmic depictions of the realities of city life which began to proliferate in the 1930s. These depictions included the work of indigenous filmmakers. Rebatet detested both the emerging hard-boiled realism from America of James M. Cain and the home-grown populist Parisian literature of Francis Carco because they appeared to conflict with his political allegiances. Writing in Les Tribus du cinéma (1941), he linked the popularity of this literature to key Poetic Realist films such as Marcel Carné's Jenny (1936), and Le Jour se lève (1939). For Rebatet, Carné "was the most accomplished representative of that Marxist aesthetic which ... springs spontaneously from the political, financial and spiritual rot that always follows the Jewification of a state" (86). "The leprous and misty *faubourgs* which [Carné and his like] used for settings exuded nothing but sordid feeling" (87). Jewishness then becomes linked to the negative associations of the cultural representation of urban darkness. Right-wing film historians Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach's made the same point in their critical history of

⁷⁵Lucien Rebatet (1903-1972) wrote under the pseudonym of François Vinneuil. He was the film critic for Action Française between 1932 and 1939. From 1938 and during the Occupation he was an editor and film reviewer at Je suis partout. Rebatet was openly fascist in his sentiments—his essays in Les Tribus du cinéma et du théâtre (1941) are shockingly pernicious. He was found guilty of treason at the Liberation and sentenced to ten years imprisonment.

the cinema when they conflate morbidity with the national character of German cinema. In their view, "The French cinema slowly lost its national character" in the later 1930s. "The most famous works between 1936 and 1940 resorted to a morbid aesthetic analogous to that which held sway in post-war Germany" (qtd. in Vincendeau 1983, 6). Even in his memoirs published in the 1960s, Brasillach was to complain about the way that "the émigrés cried and raised their fists saying to France "pay attention", whilst collaborating in doing their best to create the terror that they denounced" (1968, 121). Despite this, one of the challenges of the early sound era for French film-making was to manage an effective and nationally specific set of representational codes for the depiction of the national capital which could compete with the successes of its main rivals, Germany and the United States. As I shall show in the course of this thesis, one of the greatest paradoxes of the involvement of émigré personnel in the French industry of the 1930s was that they partly helped to shape a filmic version of Paris which did compete; but one that did so, not just because they were able to fit in, but also because of the contribution of the significantly different cultural baggage they brought with them as exiles. I shall return to these issues in Chapter Three when I discuss the ways in which the émigrés specifically helped to shape the version of Paris as city of darkness that Rebattet and his ilk so detested.

RECEPTION—THE ÉMIGRÉS' ARRIVAL IN PARIS

During the periods of emigration from Germany in the nineteenth century, France had not normally been the German country of choice. In 1933, out of a total Parisian population of 1.25 million, the number of people of German origin already living in the city only amounted to between 50 and 60, 000.⁷⁶ In the light of this, perhaps it is not altogether surprising then that the total number of Weimar refugees in France did not exceed 30, 000, with 90 per cent of this number being male and 75 per cent between the productive ages of

⁷⁶Figure qtd. in Badia (1979, 13).

25 and 40.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, between 20th April 1933 and 7th July 1933, 7,195 German refugees were noted by the Préfecture de Police de Paris.⁷⁸ The émigrés from Germany can be distinguished under three main categories: Jews who were fleeing racial persecution, political opponents of the National Socialist regime and lastly, literary, artistic or intellectual figures who were motivated (and prosperous) enough to refuse the terms of the new dictatorship. They included, apart from the names already mentioned, the following film-making talents: the directors Karl Anton, Hans Steinhoff, Adolf Trotz, Georg Krause, Joe May, Robert Wiene, E.A. Dupont, Richard Oswald, Ludwig Berger, Berthold Viertel, Fedor Ozep, William Thiele, G.W. Pabst, Max Ophuls, Richard Pottier, Leontine Sagan and Alexis Granowsky. Also to be mentioned were the producers Seymour Nebenzahl, Eugen Tuscherer, Joseph Somlo, Joseph Lucacevitch and Hermann Milkowski; the writers Hanns G. Lustig, Ernst Neubach, Friedrich Kohner, Walter Reisch and Billy Wilder; the composers Franz Waxmann, Max Kolpe, Friedrich Hollaender and Oskar Straus; the cinematographers Hans Androschin, Franz Planer, Otto Heller and Georg Krause; the actors Peter Lorre, Felix Bressart and Walter Rillo; the editor Jean Oser and the set designers Otto Erdmann, Ernö Metzner, Hans Sohnle and Emil Stepanek.⁷⁹ Many of these film industry professionals passed through the Hotel Ansonia, 8 rue de Saigon, near the Arc de Triomphe. This trajectory was later written about in the novel Arche de triomphe by Erich Maria Remarque. A small number of wealthy exiles found rooms at the Majestic Hotel, avenue Kléber, which ironically later became the main head of German military command during the Occupation.

⁷⁷Figures qtd. in Palmier (1990, 143 and 274).

⁷⁸Figure qtd. in Thalmann (1982, 150). The breakdown of this figure is as follows: artists (425), liberal professions (424), intellectuals (904), businessmen (1,189), artisans (241), employees (980), labourers (117), general (1,085) and unemployed (1,830).

⁷⁹Several of these personnel, as already mentioned, were not of German origin but arrived, instead, from Berlin after working in the studios there. Litvak, Trivas, Granowsky and Ozep were Russian and Richard Pottier (né Ernst Deutsch) was Hungarian, for example. Some of these names never left France. Granowsky and Wiene died before the end of the decade and Pottier was successful in obtaining full French citizenship.

At first, the émigrés were treated sympathetically by the French government. A circular from the Ministry of the Interior, dated 20th April 1933 (qtd. in Palmier, 277), gave instructions that French consulates were to treat German Jewish requests for visas liberally. Even at this stage though, the move was opposed in hostile articles by journalists on right-wing publications such as François Coty's hugely popular, anti-Semitic L'Ami du peuple which, as early as 1930, printed one million copies per issue and claimed three million readers.⁸⁰ In June for example, it criticised the "hurried tide of Jewish-socialist-Germans" who had descended upon the French capital (qtd. in Badia 1979, 26). Paul Morand (qtd. in Badia 1979, 26), writing in Le Temps, also noted the "veritable Biblical" nature of the photographs appearing in the newspapers that depicted the scenes at the Gare de l'Est and its environs. At the end of October 1933, however, the French government took its first steps to rein in this flow of German refugees. The Minister of Foreign Affairs asked the French ambassadors in Berlin and Munich to no longer issue visas to Germans unable to provide all the required documentation. Extra vigilance was advised at all frontiers. With an increased climate of xenophobia after the Stavisky affair of January 1934, the Ministry of the Interior advised prefectural chiefs, in the Autumn of that year, that no extensions should be granted to foreigners who had obtained only a limited stay visa from French consuls.⁸¹ On the 6th February 1935, the French government formally passed a decree which limited the validity of identity cards for overseas emigrants. At the same time, foreigners were disqualified from taking on salaried work without first having obtained a work contract. This degree of administrative uncertainty is well reflected in Siodmak's account of the time that he spent in France (qtd. in Elsaesser and Vincendeau (eds.), 13). "I didn't have a passport and my wife had only a German one which could

⁸⁰Figure qtd. from Weber (88).

⁸¹On the 9th January 1934 Alexandre Stavisky, a petty Parisian criminal with high society connections, was found dead from either suicide or murder by the police authorities. Stavisky, a Jew, had been suspected of financial fraud by selling bonds which later proved to be worthless. His case revealed a murky series of jurisdictionally and politically corrupt entanglements. Stavisky's trial had been postponed 19 times by the Paris procurator, the brother-in-law of the Prime Minister Camille Chautemps and Chautemps' Minister for the Colonies, Albert Daladier, had advocated the bonds. The resulting lack of accountability lead to street protests which culminated in the eventual resignation of the leading political protagonists.

have been cancelled at any moment", Siadmak wrote. "Not having a work permit either meant that my presence was only just about tolerated. I don't know how many days we spent at the Préfecture. We were part of the hundreds of people from all nationalities sitting on wooden benches. We never knew if our permit to stay would be extended."

The émigrés were received well in some quarters of Parisian society. Jewish refugees were subject to welcome committees such as the *Comité national de secours aux réfugiés allemands victimes de l'antisémitisme* organised by the Consistoire israélite de Paris under Robert de Rothschild. In February 1934, the committee decided to organise the *Bibliothèque des livres brûlés*. Entertainment was established such as the Franco-German cabaret Die Lanterne which provided twice weekly revues of songs, dance and sketches between 1933 and 1939 at various locations across Paris including the Caveau Camille Desmoulin at the Palais Royal. At one time, Joseph Kosma, the film composer, was in charge of the music. There were various press organisations such as the daily Pariser Tageblatt and the weekly Les Nouvelles d'Allemagne to both keep the newcomers informed and assist in the formation of a sense of place. Artists and intellectuals were also befriended by politically minded French compatriots. One case, that of the populist novelist Eugène Dabit who was the intimate of many émigré writers, is particularly interesting in the context of the discussion of this thesis. Dabit's fictional narratives of Parisian life form part of the intertextual motifs which are discussed in Chapter Three—The City of Darkness. His most famous novel, Hôtel du nord (1929), was filmed in 1938 by Marcel Carné in a production supervised by the former U.F.A. producer Joseph Lucacevitch.⁸²

⁸²Eugène Dabit (1898-1936) also edited E.E. Noh's émigré novel L'Enfant écartelé for the journal Europe and participated in the activities of the Associations des écrivains révolutionnaires. He was an important spokesman for the League Against Anti-Semitism. Hôtel du nord had won the first French Prix populaire for a literary work of populist fiction. Dabit produced other works of fiction, memoir and criticism before his premature death whilst on a visit to the U.S.S.R. with André Gide.

Lucacevitch was just one of the many personnel who came from Berlin to be praised by sections of the French film industry for their skill and professionalism. In a later interview (qtd. by Vincendeau, 1983, 5), Louis Daquin recalls Lucacevitch's singular tenacity in getting each scene just right. "As for the school of French cinematography", he recalled, "their skills were perfected [by the arrival of] the German camera operators; all the assistants battled to work with them." Despite these comments, the idea of Paris as the City of Light—a kind of urban lighthouse beacon signalling the values of liberty to those in distress—needs to be seen in a fuller context. Just as this thesis as a whole will explore the culturally coded notions of darkness as well as light in relation to the filmic representation of the French capital; so it is important to acknowledge the shadows of xenophobia and racism behind the glow of goodwill. According to the German idiom, the definition for contentment is to be "as happy as God in France." That certainly was not always the case for those film-makers who found themselves in exile in Paris.

RECEPTION—THE FRENCH FILM INDUSTRY

From the perspective of the French film industry, the presence of foreign professionals working alongside French workers on French language productions was consistently viewed with a certain amount of ambiguity. By the early years of 1933, it was evident that a number of directors who had achieved popular success with the French public with productions based in Berlin, were viewing Paris as a destination due to increasing political difficulties in Germany. Nino Frank acclaimed this potential in a report which suggested that the French capital could soon amass a group of talents which "Hollywood would be able to envy us for."⁸³ One of the directors mentioned was Victor Trivas who was to go on to direct Dans les rues. Trivas's enthusiasm for working in Paris may well have been tempered reading reports which began to regularly appear in the French

⁸³Pour Vous 26th January 1933, p. 3.

film press. A typical editorial which appeared in Pour Vous deplored the persecution of minorities in Nazi Germany but, at the same time, cogently emphasised the growing anxieties of native French film-makers. "Several French directors have been coming to see us", it reported. "The current situation is worrying them. There is so little work in France but [they say] you can see yourself calmly removed from directing a production in favour of a stranger, freshly arrived from Germany who is unknown in this country."⁸⁴ To this extent, the magazine applauded the recent decision by the Employment Minister on 7th April to further regulate the proportion of foreign workers who were permitted to work on a single French film production. This decree followed previous versions issued on 10th August and 19th October 1932. It stated that no more than 10 per cent of the major artistic personnel, and no more than 25 per cent of minor staff members on a single film project could be of foreign origin.

Previous scholarly attention to the phenomenon of German emigration to France (Elsaesser and Vincendeau 1983, Crisp 1993 and Andrew 1995) has not fully recognised the level of ambivalence in French reception. Throughout the summer of 1933, the Parisian film press was making sharper distinctions between genuine political refugees and those who were coming to work in France for economic reasons. In an article entitled "The Great Exodus of Cinema Jews", Michel Goret drew a line between the moneyed "carpetbaggers" (as he saw them) and the "real victims of the Hitlerian terror". "Among these German Jews, I know two or three directors of real talent, a dozen excellent camera operators, several magnificent actors and a number of authors and scriptwriters of real sensibility", he commented. "We have to set them to work—and fast!"⁸⁵ Lucie Derain pointed out, however, in an article which bore the headings "The Overseas Invasion" and "French Directors First", that for every overseas talent such as Anatole Litvak and Kurt Bernhardt

⁸⁴Pour Vous 18th May 1933, p. 2.

⁸⁵Cinemonde 25th May 1933.

employed, there was a risk of putting a French director out on the street.⁸⁶ Similar arguments were consistently made for the number of French cinematographers facing unemployment. This point underlines, again, the perceived evident strengths of the contingent of German émigrés. Paradoxically, it appears that little critical mention was made of the influx of Berlin producers who, as previously mentioned, were in a position to galvanise their contacts and revitalise the French film industry. Derain's article, in particular, specifically bemoans the lack of native French talent in this domain to match the contributions of Germany and the United States. "It is imperative that we rapidly acquire this sense of organisation that is so lacking", she complained. Derain, at this stage, was yet to realise the impact that the likes of Seymour Nebenzahl, producer of several Siodmak features among others, would have on French film production.

By 1934, France's economic situation had worsened and the German film émigrés were thus becoming the subjects of increasingly organised hostility from disenfranchised sections of the French film industry. Famously, the studios at which Robert Siodmak's prestige musical La Crise est finie was being shot were picketed by protesters bearing placards with the motto "Siodmak Go Home!" In May, the Justice Minister specifically rejected requests that the émigré film-makers be naturalised whilst the Employment Minister Adrian Marquet announced that no further work permits would be issued to foreign film personnel. Gaston Thiery captured the thinly veiled tone of antagonism in an article published in Paris-Midi. In a dig at the enthusiasms of the likes of Victor Trivas, he noted that "We learn that a film with a "truly French" subject and title is currently being shot in a Parisian studio ... where the producer of this film is a M. Apfelbaum (or some such name). ... If we think about this carefully, will this really be a French film? ... When one notes that half of French film workers are unemployed, the worry is that whether the facilities accorded to foreigners aren't perhaps a bit much" (qtd. in Jeancolas 1983, 115). This type

⁸⁶ La Cinématographie française 30th June 1933, p. 45.

of criticism was just the polite version of an increasingly harsh line of politically motivated rhetoric which held sway over segments of parliamentary discourse and more widely in the proliferating right-wing press. The pejorative term *métèque* began to appear more frequently in written articles along with the phrase "invasion". Jacques Feyder (qtd. in Weber 1996, 93) complained that "Jewish invaders had taken over the French cinema".⁸⁷

A key example of this anxiety over national pride in the sphere of cultural activity was the publication of Paul Morand's *France la douce*, first printed in serial form in 1933 and then published by Gallimard in 1934. The novel satirises the place of the foreigner in France's film industry by telling the story of the manipulation of a Breton aristocrat by a bunch of scheming foreign Jewish financiers who want to set up a film production. In the publicity attached to the novel, Morand denied ill intentions. "To prevent any misunderstandings", he wrote, "I declare that the rabble who swarm around here bear no relation to the big international names which we have welcomed on their journey. I am only asking for a place for our compatriots; just a small place in our national cinema." Nonetheless, the following description of the supposed current state of French film production speaks volumes. "This was a new dimension, without any depth, where logic, form and normal relations had disappeared in favour of a never-ending Tower of Babel in which words and the simple ideas of ordinary human exchange were emptied of their original sense. Only the word "money" was capable of stirring this heavy spirited but powerful world" (1934, 122). Morand's theme of the corruption of French cultural production was later reiterated in Marcel Pagnol's self-reflexive cinematic representation of the film industry, *Le Schpountz* (1938). The film featured a Jewish producer and a director, Bogidor Glazounov, who because of his indeterminate nationality, Russian name

⁸⁷This debate was not restricted to the film industry. An argument also raged about how truly French were those Germans that had become naturalised French citizens. In a culturally symbolic moment in 1935, the newly elected Miss France, a naturalised German woman named Mlle. Pitz, was forced to resign to be replaced by the more appropriate Mlle. Giselle Préville. A newspaper declared that this time "Miss France will be French!" (qtd. in Weber, 92).

and Italian accent was sarcastically allowed to be defined as a "great French director" (qtd. in Billard, 207).

As we saw earlier in this chapter, France's Jewish population became a particular part of the way that definitions of the French nation state were fought over by both sides of the political spectrum in the 1930s. For the Right, the Jewish film émigrés, amongst others, represented an unwarranted threat to a pure and homogenous version of nationhood whilst for some elements of the Left, they could stand as a symbol of organised capitalism. Faulkner (1992) has even gone as far as arguing that the Parti Communiste Français's (PCF) scornful but nationalistically motivated rhetoric of the "two hundred families" during the period of the Popular Front contributed to the eventual success of the right-wing argument. The "two hundred families" were the unjustly favoured ruling elite of the nation whose interests were naturally hostile to the programme of Léon Blum's short-lived Popular Front reforming government which came to power after the elections in April-May 1936. Faulkner's suggestion is that the PCF "created room for a competing interpretation" by allowing "the Right to supply its own anti-patriotic equivalent of the Left's "two hundred families" in naming Jews and foreigners as enemies of the nation and the state" (139-140). Be that as it may, it is true that the reprieve offered by the Popular Front regarding anti-foreigner legislation ended with the fall of Blum's government in July 1937. Restrictions on immigrants and quotas on the number of foreigners to be employed in the film industry were re-enacted. In March 1938, illegal aliens were even formally barred from Paris. They were given the choice of either leaving the country or going to work on a farm in the provinces. In the year that the Second World War broke out, Rebatet's column in L'Action française produced a black list of Jews and foreigners who directed films in France during 1938. Yet, as we shall see, in terms of many of the personnel who frame the discussion in this thesis, Rebatet was in a way labouring a dead horse. Several of the émigré film-makers were already on their way to the United States whose film industry,

unlike its French counterpart, was from the start made up of migrants. It is to two German Jewish émigrés that were to go on to Hollywood that I shall now turn as individual examples of those émigré personnel who, because of their ethnicity, appeared to have little choice but to leave Berlin for Paris after 1933.

CASE STUDY III: ERICH POMMER

In many ways, Erich Pommer is as an emblematic example of the inter-relationship between the French, German and American film industries that characterises the general history of the German film émigrés. Before arriving in Paris in 1933, he had already had extensive experience of working as a film producer in all three countries. This trajectory provides an insight into the shifting positions of strength and interdependence between the different localities. It also explains two further points—the course Pommer's career took after his arrival on French soil when Hitler came to power and the extent to which it was actually seen, in some quarters, as a source of national pride that such an international figure should make Paris their temporary home.

Thanks to the recent research by Hardt (1996), we now have a clearer and more detailed picture of the course of Pommer's particularly international career. Pommer had started work for the Berlin branch of Gaumont in the pre-World War One period at a time when Franco-German film relations were skewed in favour of the predominance of Paris. The main French companies had important subsidiaries in Berlin and the majority of films exhibited in the German capital then were of French origin.⁸⁸ He started to have direct contact with Paris whilst working in Berlin for Eclair, and before war started he was put in charge of an Eclair production unit in Vienna. Pommer's collaborator there, Marcel Vandal, was to be a co-producer with him on Fritz Lang's émigré Paris film *Liliom* (1934). During

⁸⁸Pathé's subsidiary was Literaria, Gaumont's was Deutsche Gaumont-Gesellschaft and Eclair's was Deutsche Eclair Film.

World War One, France's subsidiaries in Berlin were placed under military supervision but the Franco-German film relationship survived through the creation of innocuous sounding "front companies" set up in neutral countries. In the immediate years after World War One, Pommer was at the forefront of the reorganisation of the nation's film production as Germany's film industry faced strengthened economic pressure from Hollywood. Arguing that Germany needed to control capital due to the pressure of war reparations to France, Pommer advocated the previously mentioned system of import quotas for French film exports. He took on Fritz Lang as a leading directorial talent and after his significant domestic and overseas success with Robert Wiene's Das Kabinett des Doctor Caligari (1920) he became increasingly concerned with overseeing the high-production quality, "artistic" end of German film production.⁸⁹ Pommer became famous as the producer of the so-called *Großfilm* such as Die Nibelungen (Fritz Lang, 1924)—the large-budget, export market driven features which are remembered today at the expense of the vast majority of less expensive, popular genre films. By the mid-1920s, he had a powerful holding in the eyes of his European competitors. Cinématographie Française called Pommer "the soul of the gigantic [German] cinematographic organisation" (qtd. in Hardt, 82).

Following the fallout from the controversial trade agreements between U.F.A. and Paramount and M.G.M. in 1925, Pommer resigned from his position in Germany and went to the United States for two years.⁹⁰ It was there that he encountered, first-hand, the material differences and advantages of a modern industrial infrastructure and consumer society that so interested the Berlin intelligentsia of the time. When he came back to Europe, he brought with him an enthusiasm for the possibilities of new production techniques. Pommer had been fascinated with the superiority of American lighting procedures and opened the door for Kodak and Eastman Panchromatic negative film to be

⁸⁹For the French reception of Das Kabinett des Doctor Caligari see Kristin Thompson "Dr. Caligari at the Folies-Bergère, or, The Success of an Early Avant-Garde Film" in Budd (ed.) (1990), 121-170.

⁹⁰See Hardt (87-93) for more on the intricacies of the so-called Parafumet agreements.

made available on German films. The subsequent degree of facility and expertise in the possibilities of managing the exposure of light on negative film was to be a significant contribution that the German émigrés made to French film production. I shall discuss this further in Chapter Two. As well as introducing the novel concept of a shooting schedule, Pommer also became infused with a greater degree of American showmanship which, Hardt points out, became crucial to the German advantage in the transition to sound. In 1929, Pommer declared that the task of his native film industry "is not so much the cultivation of the absolute artistic film, as it is the raising of the artistic level of the entertainment film" (qtd. in Hardt, 113). This comment provides a clear indication of where he also stood in relation to his short-lived output in France between 1933 and 1934.

Two of the key successes of the early sound era, overseen by Erich Pommer, indicate the dual direction this export-led component of German cinema took in the years leading up to his decision to emigrate to Paris in 1933. First, there was the cycle of the light musical *operettenfilm* established by Germany's first sound feature, Melodie des Herzens (Hanns Schwartz, 1929); then secondly, there was the darker dramatic element apparent in the phenomenal success of Der blaue Engel (Joseph von Sternberg, 1930). As already mentioned, many of these features were MLV productions (**See Appendix Five**). Pommer became adept at allaying the costs of some by setting up short-term partnerships with foreign business partners. Given his demonstrable business flair, it is not surprising then that Pommer had already made provisions for his professional future by the time the U.F.A. board met on 29th March 1933 to decide the fate of its Jewish employees. Unlike the majority of Pommer's fellow Berlin émigrés, the move to Paris was for him, in this sense, the continuance of business as usual.

Ludwig Klitzsch had apparently assured Pommer in 1932 that U.F.A. would not discriminate between Jewish and non-Jewish personnel but by the beginning of 1933, Pommer had entered into discussions with American Fox Film Corporation's Sidney Kent about setting up a European production subsidiary in Germany or France the following Autumn. Clearly, Pommer was hedging his bets about the outcome of the political developments in his native country. After his dismissal from U.F.A., he remained in Berlin until the third week of April but when his son began to encounter anti-Semitic discrimination at school, Pommer made plans to leave immediately taking the Berlin-Paris train as far as Hanover. The family were then driven into France at a more obscure border point. Although Pommer rightly feared for his wife and child, there is evidence that he was still cognizant of his status within the now highly politicised world of German film production. He might well have anticipated returning briefly for he left preparatory work on the Fox German outlet with an assistant, Eberhard Klagemann. Certainly, as with certain other prominent German Jewish film-makers, the Nazi authorities were prepared for a while to turn a blind eye to the producer's ethnicity. During his stay in Paris, probably for propaganda as much as practical reasons, Pommer was offered the chance by the German authorities to become an honorary Aryan. As late as 1935, he was granted a curious renewal on his German passport in New York which did not identify him as Jewish.

Pommer spent his early months in the French capital settling in and furthering his set of pre-existing contacts. In August, the formation of Fox Europa Productions was announced in the French trade press. In an indication of how earlier Franco-German collaboration had provided a grounding for the subsequent French output of the German émigrés, Pommer's appointed assistant was André Daven. Daven had been a ^{production} ~~supervisor~~ for Paramount at Joinville and supervisor of French language version films for U.F.A. in Berlin. There were to be two initial projects: Liliom, directed by émigré Fritz Lang, and an adventure film to star Henri Garat. This second feature turned out later to be

On a volé un homme (1934). It was directed by fellow émigré Max Ophüls and based on a script by René Pujol and Hans Wilhelm.⁹¹ I shall discuss Liliom in detail in Chapter Four. Judging by the admiring comments published in sections of the French film press, the arrival of Erich Pommer on French soil again was perceived as a matter of great potential. Referring to the successes of both "dark" films such as Asphalt and Tumultes, and "light" films such as Le Chemin du paradis and Le Congrès s'amuse. Roger Régent reminded French readers that Pommer's films had "a definite personality, a care for detail and a degree of technical perfection".⁹² Pommer reciprocated. "I want to favour in all possible ways the French industry", he told Régent. "I want to devote my efforts to discovering the young gifted individuals who should tomorrow constitute the real backbone of French cinema". By now, Pommer obviously didn't expect to return. "I am starting my life again", he said. "Everything is finished [in Germany]".⁹³

Pommer and Daven had initial plans for further productions in Paris which included a Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein operetta to star Garat and Lilian Harvey.⁹⁴ In a later interview in Cinématographie Française, Pommer detailed his plans to create a "serious Franco-American collaboration" with the idea of pooling technical and artistic resources from both countries in a Paris-based production outlet to rival the German industry.⁹⁵ This new and ambitious reformulation of the triangular film relationship between the United States, Germany and France is a powerful reminder of the changes in European film culture that the Nazis necessitated, but Pommer's dream failed. Both Liliom and On a volé un homme fell at the box-office and Fox pulled out of Europe partly because of this and partly

⁹¹It was later suggested by Ophüls in his memoirs that it would have been better if he and Lang had reversed their assignments. "Had we exchanged the films, Lang most likely would have made an extraordinary mystery and I a very good romantic comedy" he said (qtd. in Hardt, 142).

⁹²Pour Vous 31st August 1933, p. 14.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴The film, Music in the Air was to be Pommer's first Hollywood feature after leaving France. It was produced almost entirely by fellow émigrés with Joe May as director, Billy Wilder as co-scriptwriter and Franz Waxmann as musical director.

⁹⁵Cinématographie Française 28th October 1933, p. 30.

because of currency difficulties following America's decision to remove itself from the gold standard. In any case, France was now, as we have seen, experiencing the worst of the Depression and xenophobic sentiments were running high. Pommer's status as a particularly international émigré was beginning to count against him. In relation to Liliom, Lucien Rebaret was to note in a sneering fashion that "by virtue of the "cleaning" of the German studios, the Jew Erich Pommer has installed himself with us. ... M. Pommer may wish to make France the new centre of cosmopolitan film production, but he has only brought us a yid film in both technique and spirit".⁹⁶ Suffering also from health problems, Pommer decided to take up residency in the United States. He was to return to Germany only after the war, where he took up a job initially turned down by fellow émigré Billy Wilder—to oversee the reconstruction of the shattered Berlin film industry during the American Occupation.

CASE STUDY IV: ROBERT SIODMAK

In terms of the scope of this thesis, Robert Siodmak is probably the most important of the German émigré filmmakers who came to Paris in the 1930s. Apart from the scale of his output whilst in France, Siodmak is also noteworthy because of the number of other émigrés he worked with on his films. Like Erich Pommer, he was a well connected and well respected member of the former Berlin filmmaking fraternity. Accounts of his personal history have made a play of the seemingly shifting nature of his identity. Like his compatriot Fritz Lang, Siodmak, it seems, was not adverse to an element of self-mythologising. Contrary to personal legend, the director was actually born in Germany and not the United States to where his father had emigrated at the end of the previous century. Siodmak liked to refer to the accident of his so-called American ancestry especially after emigrating to America himself but he was of firm European origins being a descendent of a

⁹⁶ Action Française 28th April 1934.

group of Hassidic Jews in Poland. Siodmak worked as an actor in the theatre and briefly set up an illustrated revue magazine before moving to Berlin with his brother Curt, in the mid 1920s, with the aim of getting a foothold in the capital's film industry. Central to Siodmak's relationship to this thesis is his association, from an early stage, with the cinematic representation of the modern city. In 1929, along with fellow cafe-life associates Billy Wilder, Edgar George Ulmer, Friedrich Zimmerman and Eugen Schüfftan, he was responsible for the influential *plein-air* city documentary Menschen am Sonntag which depicted the activities of the residents of Berlin during the course of their day of rest. All of these film-makers were to emigrate from Germany in the 1930s with Wilder and Schüfftan both working in Paris. Wilder stayed just to make Mauvaise graine (1934) whilst Schüfftan continued to be part of the French film industry until the 1960s. He was Siodmak's cinematographer on La Crise est finie (1934). Both of these films will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two.

Following the success of Menschen am Sonntag, Siodmak was subsequently taken on by Erich Pommer at U.F.A. where he worked as a director on a number of high profile, mainly Berlin-based films. In the course of this short period, he was to become one of Germany's most celebrated directors (**See Appendix Six**). Siodmak's first sound feature, shot with Schüfftan, was the naturalist urban melodrama Abschied (1930). It was written by Emerich Pressburger who was also to be the scriptwriter on La Crise est finie. Set in a dingy Berlin boarding house, the drama apparently exemplified Siodmak's predilection for establishing the precise social context of his narratives through an attentive use of camera movement and decor. Shortly after completing the film, he wrote a number of articles in German film periodicals extolling the new dramatic potential for the visual and aural components of film to capture the realities of the ordinary urban dweller. Like his fellow émigré Litvak, he wanted to produce a cinema which referred to the complexities of city life as it was led. For Siodmak too, the technical and aesthetic potential of "real

"cinema" meant a conflation between the medium of sound film and the details of "real life". Arguing for the virtues of actorly and directorial improvisation only after the benefits of careful rehearsal and planning, he suggested that dialogue "must be natural, "popular" in the true sense of the term. No gesticulation, no recitation, no pathos but life itself in all its simplicity" (qtd. in Dumont, 1981, 46).

After the satirical black underworld comedy Der Mann der seinen Mörder sucht (1931), scripted by Billy Wilder, Siodmak turned to his first MLV, the prestige level production of Voruntersuchung/Autour d'une enquête (1931). The French version of the film, which was shot simultaneously, starred Pierre Richard-Willm in the part played by Gustav Frölich. It also featured Florelle, Annabella and Gaston Modot. René Clair's brother, Henri Chomette, was appointed co-director and French dialogue supervisor. Chomette was nicknamed in the trade "Clair-Obscur" meaning "the lesser known Clair" but whilst this may have been true, the term also has a secondary ironic formulation which points to the significant difference between the French and German depictions of the city at that time. Unlike the lighter, more romanticised version of capital city life achieved by the more famous Clair, Voruntersuchung was primarily indebted to the atmospherics of "clair-obscur" lighting which emphasised the social entrapment of an impoverished world of urban shadow and darkness. The melodramatic crime narrative takes place in a series of poorly lit boarding house rooms, city offices, underground train carriages and dingy streets. Through its investigation of the inter-relationship between the bourgeois world of a judge's son and the tenement life of a female prostitute it may have born a resemblance to the Weimar street film such as Dirnentragödie (Tragedy of the Street) (Bruno Rahn, 1927). As Dumont suggests though, Siodmak's film was actually more a forerunner of the spate of realist city films that appeared in Berlin the same year. These included Piel Jutzi's adaptation of Alfred Döblin's Berlin Alexanderplatz; Lupu Pick's Gassenhauer (Streetsweeper) and Hans Tintner's Zyankali (Cyanide). The following year, Siodmak was

to have his greatest German success with the MLV urban underworld drama Stürme der Leidenschaft/Tumultes which starred Emil Jannings and Charles Boyer in the respective leading roles. The script was actually written in Paris by Siodmak and co-workers Robert Liebmann and Hans Müller. As Dumont has noted, the film also bears passing similarities to the German street film as well as the American early sound crime drama such as City Streets (Rouben Mamoulian, 1931) and Public Enemy (William Wellman, 1931), but it differs from these prototypes in the sphere of public morality. In the case of Siodmak's film there is no redeeming conclusion in which bourgeois codes supplant those of the urban criminal underclasses. In Tumultes, instead, we see ample evidence of Siodmak's facility to marry psychological detail with social texture. Through effective use of lighting and decor, in particular, the city emerges, despite the additional use of location footage, as a somewhat claustrophobic and heightened environment for the consequent outpouring of criminal and emotional passions. The film was a great success and managed to seal Siodmak's French critical reputation for producing a certain kind of city-based realist cinema. It was still playing in Parisian auditoriums in the Autumn of 1933, months after the director's arrival on French soil.

After a light costume comedy appropriately called Quick (1932) for U.F.A., Siodmak joined its main competitor, Deutsche Universal-Film AG, to shoot an adaptation of Stefan Zweig's Brennendes Geheimnis (Burning Secret) (1933). Deutsche Universal-Film AG, a former branch of Universal Pictures, was becoming an increasingly necessary place of hospitality for Jewish film-makers. In 1932, one could count fellow future Parisian based émigrés such as Franz Wachsmann, Herman Kosterlitz and Kurt Bernhardt among the names of its luminaries.⁹⁷ The company was also, at the time, responsible for the distribution of the films of Siodmak's cousin Seymour Nebenzahl's Nero-Film company (See Appendix Seven). An indication of the problems facing Berlin's Jewish

⁹⁷In 1934 Goebbels ordered the integration of the company into the Tobis trust under the name of Rota-Film AG.

filmmaking population is provided by the fact that the premiere of Brennendes Geheimnis was delayed several times. It finally took place in Berlin on March 20th 1933 but the film was projected, under the command of Goebbels, without any production credits. Only the cast were mentioned. The following day, The Nazi party paper Der Angriff pressed for a formal ban arguing in a harshly motivated editorial, then typical of contemporary German politics, that Siodmak had produced a film with "a sickly and stifling climate". It went on to claim that "[t]oday we must demand a cinema that is clean and decent so that we may be spared from now on these unhealthy erotic disturbances" (qtd. in Dumont, 85). Not long after Goebbels' Hotel Kaiserhof speech on March 28th and the formal call for a boycott on all Jewish businesses on April 1st, Siodmak made the justifiable decision to leave for France with his wife. On the basis perhaps of his father's American citizenship, he managed to enter the country without any problem on a simple visa but, as previously mentioned, for the duration of his stay until 1939, he was never formally granted any residency permit by the French authorities.

The two main biographies of Robert Siodmak to date (Dumont, 1991 and Lazaroff-Alpi, 1998) have focussed primarily on the significance of his American films, especially those which make a contribution to the post-war noir cycle. Disappointingly, Lazaroff-Alpi simply transcribes her predecessor's brief chapter on the director's French career, which means there still remains a need for a more detailed consideration of Siodmak's Parisian output. I provide this in part in Chapters Two and Four by analysing and contextualising the director's films which were specifically set in the French capital. Before that, however, a broader survey of the German director's place within French film production of the 1930s is necessary. By May 1933, Siodmak was being interviewed in the Parisian press about his future projects in the French film industry. At this stage in his career, it appears that Siodmak truly believed that his chances of obtaining American residency had expired and so the "famous director of Tumultes" was described as "for the moment without

nationality". "I don't know how long I am going to be here. For a long time I think", he told Jean Barois in Paris Midi.⁹⁸ None of this early projects came to anything but they reveal a previously unnoted consistency in aim in that suggest a desire to fit in with the codes of French culture. They included screen adaptations of Julien Green's Leviathan, Maupassant's Bel-Ami (with Charles Boyer) and perhaps most interestingly, a version of Edouard Bourdet's lesbian drama La Prisonnière. Siodmak also turned down the screen adaptation of Flaubert's Madame Bovary on the basis that he didn't "know the French provinces well enough".⁹⁹ The project went to Jean Renoir instead. Finally, in July 1933, Siodmak was offered a contract with Nero-Film and his first film in France, an adaptation of another Bourdet play, Le Sexe faible, went into production. It starred many of the original cast of the stage version such as Pierre Brasseur and Victor Boucher. The script was written by Yves Mirande, the dialogue supervisor on Tumultes. Mirande's work was partly amended by fellow émigré Hermann Kosterlitz.

A crucial interview given at the time by Siodmak to Lucien Rebabet provides a fascinating glimpse of the life on the set of an émigré production.¹⁰⁰ It also suggests ample evidence of the simmering xenophobic resentment of the right-wing press. Siodmak was evidently anxious to demonstrate his credentials as an unthreatening European, rather than specifically German film-maker. He didn't want to appear a problem-making political figure. Rebabet remains unconvinced. As the interview progresses, Siodmak stresses that he was not completely qualified to tackle a popular Parisian stage comedy. "I haven't done any thing without the advice of M. Edouard Bourdet", he reassures his interlocuter. He also praises the French film industry. "It is possible to make excellent films here. You've got everything it takes, it is as good as in Germany and I really like your actors". The only fault that Siodmak discerns is the frequently noted aspect of professional organisation.

⁹⁸ Paris-Midi 21st May 1933.

⁹⁹ Siodmak qtd. in Cinémonde 8th June 1933.

¹⁰⁰ Le Suis Partout 2nd September 1933.

"You simply lack discipline and method", he comments; before adding approvingly "but we'll bring that to you". This must have been exactly what the likes of Lucie Derain wanted to hear, but Rebaret intervenes and questions Siodmak about his belief that French directors have been highly worried since the arrival of the German émigrés in France. "I know", Siodmak says, "but there is no need for alarm. What am I going to do? Two films a year. In your national output, that doesn't amount to much". At this point, Siodmak apparently searches for a word and calls an interpreter. Rebaret sarcastically notes that there are no shortage of those on the set. The journalist then moves to provide apparent evidence for the assertion that French film industry professionals should be worried about the presence of the émigrés. Bourdet's brother reveals that despite being employed as an assistant on the film, there is nothing for him to do on the set. "With the exception of the camera operator, all the major figures around Siodmak are German", he comments. "They work in a team. Normally there should be only one foreigner on the main crew of a film". As if to prove this point, Rebaret then goes on to detail a police raid on the set. One of the German employees, still without the proper working papers, is questioned but to the journalist's evident disapproval, the matter is seemingly resolved.

The negative feelings that must have been engendered by Rebaret's barely concealed hostility in the Autumn of 1933 were, as previously mentioned, exacerbated by the congruence of both political and economic upheaval the following year. Siodmak's subsequent project for Nero-Film, the depression-era musical La Crise est finie, was, as we have seen, picketed at the Joinville studios in May 1934 by the National Federation of French Cinema. Its representative, Siodmak's former assistant Henri Chomette, spent several weeks lobbying the French Ministry of Justice for Siodmak to be taken off the project. According to Dumont (99), the matter was settled when the girlfriend of a member of the aforesaid ministry was appointed as an extra. Nonetheless, Seymour Nebenzahl still felt it necessary to advertise the fact that only seven foreign staff, integral to the project, had

been employed. This figure could be set against a total figure of 90 personnel who had worked on the production.¹⁰¹ The film was a moderate success and subtitled prints were made for the English language export market. Despite this, however, it was not until the Summer of 1935 that Siodmak was to work again on a proper feature length project—another musical, this time based on the Offenbach operetta La Vie Parisienne. Siodmak had to make do with an uncredited contribution to the Buster Keaton vehicle Le Roi des Champs-Élysées (Max Nosseck, 1935) in the Winter of 1934. La Vie Parisienne (1936) which, again, will be discussed in Chapter Two, was a lavishly funded production. As an indication of its anticipated box-office returns, dozens of sets were constructed at the Pathé-Nathan studios and there was an expensive publicity campaign. In spite of these efforts, the film was not a commercial success. This might well have been due to Siodmak's attempt to alter the scenario of the original which was set in the heyday of the French Second Empire. The ironic, temporally layered nature of the narrative combined with the relative lack of original music from the stage production might have led to the French public's disenchantment.

Siodmak worked next on a further music related project with Métropa-Films entitled Le Grand Refrain (1936). It was written by Yves Mirande and scored by the celebrated German composer Richard Werner Heymann. Since Heymann had written the music for two of the previous models for La Vie Parisienne—the German FLV operettas Der Kongress Tanzt/Le Congrès s'amuse (1931) and Die Drei von der Tankstelle/Le Chemin du paradis (1930)—this could have been an effort to meet audience expectations more directly. Siodmak's subsequent film, Mister Flow (1936), was shot in the Summer of 1936, as Dumont points out, in curious circumstances. The project, previously turned down by Pierre Chenal, was based on the society criminal novel by Gaston Leroux and featured a number of Paris's most prominent stage talents such as Louis Jouvet and Edwige Feuillère.

¹⁰¹See Cinématographie Française 30th June 1934.

It was written by the prominent screenwriter Henri Jeanson. The film was financed by an impecunious Greek producer, Nicholas Vondas, so the shoot was marred by the fact that many of the actors were only paid on a daily basis. Often only one of the main players was on the set at a time necessitating some awkward camera manoeuvres. Siodmak was obliged to use his own furniture for the decor. Despite these setbacks, the film was a critical and financial success and it appears, from then on, Siodmak's currency within the French film industry was secure. His next project, the white slave trade drama, Le Chemin de Rio (1937), was also written by Henri Jeanson and starred Jean-Pierre Aumont, Suzy Prim and Jules Berry but it was his last with Nero-Film. Siodmak's cousin had apparently taken advantage of his precarious position and had consistently not properly paid the director for his efforts. The two never spoke again.

Mollenard (1938) saw Siodmak reunited with Eugen Schüfftan on a prestigious adaptation by Charles Spaak of the Prix de Paris winning adventure novel. It starred Harry Baur, Albert Préjean, Pierre Renoir and Gina Manès. Like Le Chemin de Rio, the film had an ostentatiously international setting for the basis of its dramatic narrative. Again, it combined the work of a prominent French script-writer with the an attention to atmospheric visual detail in both lighting effects and set design. In this case, Mollenard boasted the contribution of the Hungarian set designer Alexandre Trauner. We can now begin to see what happened to the German émigrés who stayed in France to weather the original storms of racial disdain and economic difficulties in the especially difficult years of 1933-4. Many eventually successfully integrated themselves with leading aspects of French film production. The émigré cinematographers Schüfftan and Courant, like Trauner, worked, as we have seen, with leading French directors Jean Renoir and Marcel Carné towards the end of the decade. Indeed, it is noticeable how many of the reviews of Mollenard refer to its distinctively French status. Le Petit Parisien wrote that the film "honours French

production" whilst Pierre Gignac claimed that Siodmak's film "marked a red letter day in the progressing output of the French film industry" (both qtd. in Dumont, 118).

Mollenard was not a success with the public but perhaps the level of critical acclaim that Siodmak now enjoyed persuaded him of the worth of making what would have been his most directly political French film. In the early Summer of 1938, he was engaged in negotiations with the Austro-Hungarian émigré novelist and playwright Ödön Von Horváth to shoot a version of his novel Jugend ohne Gott about the conflict between a German school teacher and a class of Hitler Youth. In a truly bizarre turn of fate, the writer was suddenly killed by a falling tree in front of the cinema showing Snow White and the Seven Dwarves where he was due to meet Siodmak's wife. After completing remaining parts of two features, Ultimatum (Robert Wiene, 1938) and Les Frères corses (Jean Tarride, 1939), Siodmak turned to his final French film, Pièges, made between April and May 1939 against the backdrop of a seemingly inevitable war with Germany. Pièges was to be the director's most successful film in France although it did attract critical comment from some quarters which were keen, once again, to insist on Siodmak's ethnic difference. L'Action Française complained about the way in which a national treasure such as Maurice Chevalier was being used by the director and the co-scriptwriter. "Two foreigners, Messers Siodmak and Companceez, have played this dirty trick on him", it wrote (qtd. in Dumont, 123). The film obviously benefitted from the performance (against type) of its leading star, Maurice Chevalier, but it also saw a return to the conflation of careful social detail, atmospheric visual style and an interest in the undercurrents of urban criminal psychologies which marked Siodmak's Berlin successes. By now, Siodmak, one of the longest established of Germany's French-based Jewish émigrés, was making plans to leave his country of asylum. Upon discovering that he was, in fact, still eligible for American citizenship, he organised his departure to the United States, sailing from France on the day before war broke out. He had an advance for a Dutch based film, to be made the following year, in his

pocket, but like so many other émigrés from Berlin, he did not return. The world of the American rather than the European city became, instead, his subject.

VI: CONCLUSION

In 1930, the French writer Louis Reynaud conducted an enquiry entitled L'Âme allemande into the mutual differences in character between the French and German nations. His speculations concluded that if the German temperament relied on a knack for combining instinct and organisation, the French could, on the other hand, be justly celebrated for their elevated sense of taste and reason. His findings match the racially motivated distinction Norbert Elias was later to make in Über den Prozess der Zivilisation (1936) between Parisian "civilisation" (meaning intellect and artistry) and Berliner *Kultur* (meaning modern-day socially minded politics). This chapter has argued that the tenor of these remarks also reoccurs in cinematic critical discourse of the early 1930s. The fact that Paris was seen, to some extent, as a more stable place than its German counterpart, provides a framework to understand many of the journeys of the film émigrés. Indeed, Kracauer commenting on the pace and momentum of change in Berlin, called Paris "Europe's oasis" (qtd. in Hansen, 386). By drawing attention to cultural continuity, he was also suggestively reiterating the conventional image of the French capital as the beacon of refuge for the continent's displaced. Modern Germany and American companies may have been literally harnessing the power of light to dominate the electrification market and its ancillary industries (including the potential of sound cinema), but Paris continued to stand for the intellectual and political connotations of light in the metaphorical sense of enlighten—ment.

Having said this, I have also been interested in this chapter to point out how the different waves of emigration between France and Germany in the early sound era, actually suggest new ways of discussing the inter-relationship between film and national identity. I have argued that the apparently clear-cut dichotomy between the two nations, outlined in the previous paragraph, may, in fact, be troubled in two ways. Firstly, by an

understanding of the complex and ambivalent nature of the Franco-German film relationship in particular, and then, secondly, more generally, by the Franco-German relationship as a whole. The changing nature of film relations between Berlin and Paris during the early years of sound cinema, for example, specifically challenged any attempt to make too much of the notion of a homogenous national film culture. I have shown how a complex network of co-operation, rivalry and exchange emerged between Berlin and Paris as Germany took advantage of the parlous state of the French film industry. Central to this was the MLV phenomenon which simultaneously related to ongoing competition from the United States. This competition took the form of European language film production in France as well as Hollywood. I have also suggested, more broadly, that the long reaching legacy of the First World War significantly altered the ways in which the French saw themselves in relation to Germany and the ways in which, through the medium of cinema, the French then represented themselves to each other. The devastation of the war induced a deeply felt need for recuperation and longing for the reassurances of past notions of national belonging. For France and Germany, the cinematic city became one of the crucial sites for the representation of the nation. Yet, as I have argued, the city, by the beginning of the era of sound film production, meant different things in the two different contexts.

Despite these factors, trade and economic partnership and rivalry between the two countries did continue to take place against a frequent backdrop of nationally specific commentary. In terms of production management and aesthetics, Berlin film-makers were praised by the French for their organisational skills and their attention to form—especially in relation to the manipulation of light for subtle atmospheric and psychologically motivated effect. The question that remained for many was what the characteristics of Paris-based sound cinema were to be. The critic Georges Altman noted bitterly that "the films coming out of this new technology and which represent "landmarks" are coming, for the moment, from America and Germany" (qtd. in Abel, 1988, 82). He even went as far as suggesting

that "*the Latin genius [might] be badly suited to the screen*". Altman's pessimism was, of course, misfounded, but I have begun to argue that the various waves of émigrés who travelled to Paris in the 1930s came to play an important role in representing the French city on the screen. Berlin trained or experienced technicians and cinematographers were particularly welcomed within a fractured Parisian film industry which was still debating the directions that the cinematic representation of life in the French capital should take. Significantly, Altman praised a number of contemporary urban based films such as Vidor's Hallelujah (1929) and Pabst's Threepenny Opera (1931). He was opposed to the "treasons practiced at the cinema's expense" by the "old ruts of the theatre, the operetta, and the music hall" (82). This idea of forging a specifically cinematic portrayal of the world of the city also, to some extent, chimed with the concerns of many of the émigré directors. We have seen how Anatole Litvak's notion of "real cinema" was echoed, for example, by Robert Siodmak. This constructed polarity between the inauthenticity of the Parisian theatre and the authenticity of the visual potential of the urban street will resurface again in the chapters to come.

As I have already suggested, one of the key reasons that the city played such an important role in the development of early French sound cinema was that the French capital, like Berlin, had become the primary staging ground for specific debates over the character of the modern nation. In Berlin by 1933, race had become the dominant issue fuelling political rhetoric. Horrific decisions were beginning to be taken over the future direction of the ethnic composition of both the capital and the state. Many prominent talents in the German film industry felt it necessary to leave, though perhaps not in such dramatic circumstances as previous narratives have indicated. In Paris, the reception of the German émigrés was initially favourable but it was soon complicated not just by political ideology but also by a subsequent downturn in the film industry in 1934 caused by the delayed onset of the Depression. For many émigrés, the crucial issue remained the distinction between

cultural difference and cultural assimilation—in other words, what Albert Dreyfus termed "the ability to adjust" (qtd. in Golan, 1995, 141) when he wrote about the position of the Jewish artist in 1930s Paris. The measure of this issue of adjustment will be one of the key focus points of my discussion in subsequent chapters.

The fact is that many of the post 1933 émigrés were Jewish. Like previous Jewish members of the Parisian population, the Berlin film-makers found themselves caught between being of beneficial use and being secondary to domestic interests. Right-wing commentators specifically focussed on fears of cultural heterogeneity by relating Jewishness to threatening aspects of urban darkness and even to the ill-effects of modern life. These terms were also mirrored in the language used by sections of the French film critical establishment to discuss the German film industry's representation of urban life. It therefore remains a central paradox that despite this negative critical reception, the arrival of the émigrés in the French capital mattered not just because of their difference, but because of the very facility with which they could, as non-French personnel, enhance the existing tropes of Parisian representation. We shall now see how this was achieved in more detail as we turn now to an investigation of the films themselves.



Chapter Two

City of Light

I: INTRODUCTION

"The Avenue de l'Opéra inundated with electric light; rue Quatre Septembre shining with a thousand gas jets ... a crowd coming and going under a shower of rosy and whitest light diffused from the great ground-glass globes ... that mass of gleaming streets which lead to the Théâtre Français, to the Tuileries, to the Concorde and Champs-Elysées, each one of which brings you a voice of the great Paris festival, calling and attracting you on seven sides, like the stately entrances of seven enchanted palaces, and kindling in your brain and veins the madness of pleasure."¹

This delirious quotation was unsurprisingly not authored by one of the émigrés from the German film industry who arrived in "the City of Light" in the early 1930's—it comes from the pen of a visitor in the 1870s—but the phrasing does suggest a number of the broad issues regarding the relationship of the émigré films to the mythical status of the city of Paris which this chapter is going to deal with. Firstly, it introduces the notion of spectacle which was, arguably, as appropriate for the visitor as the native resident. According to Clark (1996, 63) the term "spectacle" "points to the way in which the city (and social life in general) was presented as a unity in the later nineteenth century, as a separate something made to be looked at—an image, a pantomime, a panorama". Did the émigrés, as temporary residents of Paris, refer to this "highly coded" (Clark, 63) aspect in their filmic representations of the capital? The suggestive condensation of looking and performance leads to the question of pleasure and entertainment as a second notion to be explored. What exactly was the relationship of the émigré films to pre-existing city-based forms of live entertainment which de Amicis makes such an intense allusion to? Thirdly, the quotation suggests an equation between these codes of knowledge regarding "the great Paris festival" and the matter of light. How was the "City of Light" represented by

¹E. de Amicis qtd. in Clark (1996, 76).

personnel who came from a different urban culture, namely that of Berlin, which, many have argued (Eisner, 1983; Elsaesser, 1984; Morgan, 1996), corresponded more to notions of a site of transgressive desires and an attention to shadowy objects? Furthermore, did the émigrés picture the city in ways which subscribed to the conventions of popular Parisian filmic practice or can a difference be discerned? Could this difference allow one to say something about the unique three-way relationship between Berlin, Paris and Hollywood that the émigrés embodied with Paris as a kind-of staging post between the past of Germany and the future of the United States?

It was suggested in the introduction to this thesis that a key dichotomy in the French cinema of the 1930s was the use of lightness and darkness to represent different constituents of the national culture of the time. I want to explore what happened to the picturing of the city of Paris—a particularly potent figure of that culture—when the possibility of a hybrid cinema emerged with the arrival of various émigré film-makers from an ostensibly different cinematic background. In order, firstly, to consider the inter-relationship between light and place, and to develop answers to the questions outlined above, I will discuss in this chapter three representative city films made by émigré personnel. These films address Paris in a number of ways—both in terms of their aesthetic construction and in terms of their relationship to the set of mythologies concerning the French capital as the "City of Light". The two musicals directed by Robert Siodmak, La Crise est finie (See Appendix 8) and La Vie Parisienne (See Appendix 9), which I shall concentrate on, begin with journeys to the city whilst Billy Wilder's Mauvaise graine (See Appendix 10) ends with a journey away from the city. This pattern rather neatly encapsulates the trajectory of the émigrés arriving from Berlin and, for the most part, departing to Hollywood. It also establishes the notion of travelling across time and place which is central to my reading of the issues around light in these films.

I shall begin in Part One with the idea of journeying to and around Paris as a means of exploring the idea of the city as a destination or place to be viewed which is in itself spectacular. An analysis of the ways in which both musical films blur the passage between the city as a destination and the city as a site of theatrical performance will serve as a bridge to Part Two. Here, I shall develop the idea of performance by going on to explore the question of light in relationship to specifically Parisian notions of spectacular pleasure and entertainment which can be said to be suggested by the term the "City of Light". It will be argued that the instability in the films' historically specific hybrid nature can be located in their relationship to the mythologising principles of this version of Paris. If Siodmak's films journey back to a Parisian past they, and the Wilder film as well, also inhabit another axis of temporality in relationship to place. All three films also play on the idea of present-day Paris negotiating between its own past, the past of Berlin and the future as represented by Hollywood. This complex weave of competing notions of the city will form the basis of discussion in Part Three.

II: PARIS AS SPECTACLE

"Paris which had always amused me on holiday, was too lovely ... It captured me with its pleasant carefreeness ... The night porter down in the plush entrance hall [of the hotel] ... invited me to a *coup de rouge* and prophesied "it will sort itself out, sir, I am sure of it. Everyone in the world has two fatherlands: his own and Paris."²

It is unlikely whether many of the émigrés themselves shared Max Ophuls' rhapsodic impressions (qtd. in MacDonald 1996, 101) regarding their place of exile but both of Siodmak's musical films, La Crise est finie and La Vie Parisienne, conform in different ways to the consolidating myth of Paris as a site of cosmopolitan belonging. Mauvaise graine also presents an image of the city as playground which when left becomes a sort of referential home. Where does this key notion of non-Parisians coming to Paris and being nurtured, exhilarated and dazzled by its attractions come from? The idea of Paris itself as a spectacle for visitors to consume and admire has as one of its main antecedents the development of the physical spaces of the city under Haussmann in the nineteenth century. Haussmann's redesign of Paris, with the more or less wholesale clearing and redevelopment of its central areas, effected two significant results regarding the way that the city could be viewed. Firstly, in architectural and thus also spatial terms the strategic urban panoramic view was developed. This led to an enhanced sense of promotional civic display based on the principles of seeing and looking. As Schwartz (1998, 2) puts it, "visualising the city became synonymous with knowing it".³ Related to this typology was

²For a further example of this mythologising see Josephine Baker's famous song Lai Deux amours.

³Schwartz's book contains an extended and fascinating argument about the inter-relationship between 19th century Parisian spectacular forms such as the waxwork museum or urban panorama and the development of early cinema. She argues that "the visual representation of reality as spectacle in late 19th century Paris created a common culture and a sense of shared experiences through which people ... [imagined] themselves ... participating in a metropolitan culture because they had visual evidence that such a shared world ... existed" (6). This meant that Parisians were in a position to bring "rich and complicated habits of viewing and comprehensions of reality and its representations" (179) to the cinema when it emerged. As with Rice's

the notion of the past belonging to darkness so that the emergence of widely distributed all-night street lighting, for example, served an allegorical, as well as a practical, function.

Prendergast (1991, 183) argues, for example, that "The public provision of light represented a triumph over social and cultural "darkness"; light meant *lumières* in more than one sense; the project of the illuminated city became cognate with the idea of the enlightened city" (183). The second effect of Haussmannisation, largely as a result of this enhanced potential to be viewed, was a whole subsidiary set of social practices emerged to do with the way the city was not just experienced by its own residents but also imagined by those from afar. These ranged from the development of window displays in department stores (aided by the introduction of sheet glass and modulated lighting features) to the spread of photographic and lithographic reproductions of "sites of interest". Many of these stores or covered commercial arcades were on the *grands boulevards* which were located immediately south of three of the city's main train stations for visitors. This was the time of the spread of guidebooks for the traveller to Paris and, very importantly, the emergence of the picture postcard as a means of sending Paris as it was pictured to the provinces and overseas. The popularity of the spectacular view of the city was developed with the running series of *Expositions Universelles*, one of which in 1867 coincided with the first production of Offenbach's operetta La Vie Parisienne.⁴ At such exhibitions the world came to Paris twice over: firstly, in the physical sense as paying visitors and then secondly, in the metaphorical sense in the form of such erected displays as the "Rue des Nations" (1878) with its facade of architectural styles from around the globe. Paris was then sent back to the world in the form of pictorial messages, most spectacularly in the example of the 1889 event when enthusiastic visitors could post Parisian images from the top of that recently erected emblem of urban modernity, the Eiffel Tower.⁵

recent work (1998) on 19th century Parisian photography, however, there is surely a danger here of universalising visuality and urban experience to the detriment of understanding how all this viewing meant different things to different people.

⁴The actual premiere of the operetta was on the 31st of October 1866 at the Palais Royal.

⁵This association between light and spectacle was literally embodied in the alternative project considered to

**ILLUSTRATION FOUR—PARIS AS POSTCARD. A SOUVENIR FROM THE
1900 EXPOSITION UNIVERSELLE**



Both the original production of *La Vie Parisienne* and Siodmak's loose adaptation refer explicitly to this idea of Paris defining itself both against the world as something distinctive and unique and within the world as the centre for a kind of communal

mark the 1889 Exposition—Jules Bourdais's Tour Soleil. The Tour Soleil was planned to be equipped with enough arc-lighting to illuminate the entire capital. Other international public events designed to link Paris with light included the 1881 Paris Electricity Exhibition and the Palace of Electricity exhibit at the 1900 Exposition Universelle. As Schivelbusch (1988) points out, Paris was, in fact, the centre of many of the 19th century's technological light innovations. These included the creation of incandescent street lighting in 1886.

cosmopolitanism. It is surely not coincidental that both the theatrical and film production are the work of German émigré outsiders who found themselves producing work inside the capital about the capital.⁶ The plot of the Offenbach operetta concerns the entertaining amorous and mercenary entanglements of a visiting wealthy Brazilian baron, his wife and mistress and two scheming Parisian fortune-hunters. A key chorus by Meilhac and Halévy (1889, 20), which is reproduced in the 1935 film, gives an idea of the flavour of the way Paris was represented in the performance:

"Nous venons,/Arrivons,/De tous les pays du monde,/Par la terre ou bien par l'onde./Italiens,/Brésiliens,/Japonais,/Hollandais,/Espagnols,/Romagnols,/Egyptians,/Péru viens./Nous venons./Arrivons!/De tous les pays du monde,/Par la terre ou bien par l'onde./Nous venons,/Arrivons,/La vapeur nous amène,/Nous allons envahir/La cité souveraine./Le séjour du plaisir,/On accourt, on s'empresse,/Pour connaître, O Paris,/Pour connaître l'ivresse/De tes jours, de tes nuits./Tous les étrangers ravis/Vers toi s'élancent Paris!/Nous allons chanter/Nous allons crier/Nous allons souper/Nous allons aimer/Oh! Mon Dieu, nous allons tous/Nous amuser comme des fous."⁷

The film version of the operetta retains the cosmopolitan narrative hinge of the visiting wealthy colonial to the capital of pleasure but enlarges the range of entanglements by having Don Ramiro (Max Dearly) leave his mistress and Paris in 1900 and return in 1936 with his grand-daughter Helenita (Conchita Montenegro). In 1936 the exuberant Brazilian

⁶Jacques Offenbach was born in Cologne in 1819, also of Jewish parents. He came to Paris in 1833 to train at the Conservatoire. In his book on Offenbach and Paris, Kracauer (1937) argues that the world of the Parisian boulevards suited Offenbach's social status as a rootless foreigner. "They were both related in their nature", he suggests (75). "The boulevards were no home in the ordinary sense". Their striking characteristic was their "lack of anchorages". In some ways, Kracauer suggests, the operetta was, in fact, "an émigré product" (141). Did Robert Siodmak read Kracauer's work? It was published in German the year that the film was made. There are striking descriptions throughout the text which recall scenes from the film.

⁷"We are coming/Arriving/From all the countries of the world/By land or even by air/Italians/Brazilians/Dutch/Spanish/Gypsies/Egyptians/Peruvians/We are coming/Arriving!/The steam leads us/We are going to invade/The sovereign city/The place of pleasure/We rush, gather pace/To get to know Paris/To get to know drunkenness/And your days and your nights./All delighted foreigners/Are rapidly moving to Paris!/We are going to sing/We are going to shout/We are going to dine/We are going to love/Oh my God, we're all going/To be crazy and have fun".

is still up to his amorous indulgences and excessively energetic visits to entertainment venues. There are several key scenes set in hotel rooms or train stations which evoke the sense of Paris belonging not just to its residents but to the world. At significant intersections in the plot of the film a postcard-like image is visualised to reinforce the dazzling spectacle of the city's world of light. After a scene set in a drab, functional 1936 immigration office, for example, an official moves to a window. Whilst opening the left shutter he declares: "This is Paris!" The right shutter opens of its own accord and dissolves into a panoramic night sky-line image of the city with the illuminated Eiffel Tower on the horizon and the rooftop of apartments in the foreground. To reinforce the picture element of the city, the camera tracks back slowly to frame the image with the inclusion of the bordering element of the window. Before that the film had begun with a tableau shot of the theatre "La Vie Parisienne" at night-time again with the Eiffel Tower in the background and this time the twinkling features of the "City of Light" breaking up the darkness. The effect is of an instantly recognisable, almost iconic, display of "Parisianisme". It could be the cover of a guidebook from the period.

Mauvaise graine is another film interested in the notion of the city on display. It frequently uses postcard-like images of urban spaces such as the Pont Alexandre III or the Bois de Boulogne and has a developed sense of the city as an open-air site of play and leisure. Sections of the film such as the car chase at the beginning of the film, when Pasquier (Pierre Mingand) decides to steal a parked vehicle from under the eyes of a gang of car thieves, are perfect examples of how the film turns Paris into spectacle by integrating a sense of the space and freedom of the city with the modern sensations of speed and mobility. In his deft commentary on the development of new forms of perception in Paris under Haussmannisation, Schivelbusch (1986, 188-197) has argued that the department store and railway journey developed a "panoramic" mode of viewing so that the object "was no longer experienced intensively, discretely ... but evanescently,

impressionistically" (189). This effect is managed in the film by a range of fluid points of view. For example, as the chase begins, the camera is placed on the bonnet of the crooks' car looking in front at the speeding vehicle. We then rapidly cut across space, but in the same time continuum, to a view from the rear seat of Pasquier's car. As well as seeing him from behind we also see his face in the rear mirror as the city speeds by in a blur. This tightness of vision is later contrasted with alternate panoramic views which include a spectacular extreme high wide-angle shot of the two vehicles maneuvering across the space of an open square and differing positioning of the moving car in relation to the mobility of the frame. This gauging of space and motion allows Wilder to integrate more fully the exhilaration of the chase with the freedom of seeing rapidly changing vistas of the city flash by. Most "spectacular" of all is when the camera is planted on the bonnet of the lead vehicle looking out and we have, therefore, a visceral sense of new forward-driven space constantly emerging into the frame to reveal the sights of a city in transit.

Towards the end of *Mauvaise graine* there is another chase scene which involves the Parisian police following their quarry, Jean la cravatte (Raymond Galle), by means of that iconic pictorial representation of the city, the map of the Metro system. Previous to that we have seen Pasquier and his girlfriend Jeannette's (Danielle Darrieux) escape from the city actually mapped on screen with the movement of the camera across the map of France mimicking the couple's "real" geographical relationship to the capital. *La Crise est finie*, Siodmak's first émigré musical, begins with another journey to Paris by non-Parisians (a provincial troupe of down-on-their-heels theatrical performers) but it also entails a conflation of movement and a certain commodified or standardised imagining of the city.⁸ After an umpteenth lacklustre performance of their stage number entitled "On ne voit ça qu'à Paris" ("You Only See That in Paris"), and dismissal by their manager, the group

⁸See Schivelbusch (1986, 197) on how the development of the railway removed "spatially individual or autonomous" localities and produced a new inter-relationship between the consumer commodity and the subject's sense of place.

LA CRISE EST FINIE

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1.6



actually decide to seek their fortunes in the capital. It is clear that for the younger members Paris exists only as a representation. "Do you know Paris?" one asks. "Only as a view in a painting" another replies. "I am afraid of Paris" claims one girl. The troupe shout their denial and the girl's wail continues as the camera swish pans from the backstage area of a provincial theatre to a painted backdrop of trees (See La Crise est finie Fig. 1.1-1.2). This scenery begins to rotate as a train's steam whistle is heard. We also hear the sound of the train engine picking up and the beginning of the refrain from the previous number. As the pace of the music increases in time with the train, the artificial scenery dissolves into a blurred vision of speed taken from a real window of a railway carriage (Fig. 1.3). The second, far more exuberant, version of "On ne voit ça qu'à Paris" which now follows, underlines the pleasures, delights (and dangers) of the capital that the troupe will apparently encounter. By means of a witty montage of short dramatic inserts the ideas that the lyrics refer to are visualised on screen. As we see the scenery passing by, Madame Olga (Suzanne Dehelly)'s voice starts singing "Aucune ville n'est aussi romantique que Paris/Montmartre et Montparnasse sont des paradis"⁹ Siodmak cuts to a shot in which the camera moves from the window pane of the carriage to rest on four seated figures: a male, Olga, Marcel (Albert Préjean) and Nicole (Danielle Darrieux). They are pictured in a state of communal imagining and anticipation. Olga, given the voice of maturity and experience, continues in full swing: "Les jeunes y vivent d'amour et d'eau fraîche et l'on se dit/On se voit ça qu'à Paris"¹⁰ (Fig. 1.4 and 1.6). With the very youthful Nicole listening and smiling, Marcel continues spinning the myth: "Tous les jours 100.000 taxis circulent et font du bruit/Le soir 100.000 lumières font oublier la nuit/Et 100.000 jolies filles font des rêves jolis/On ne voit ça qu'à Paris"¹¹ He continues: "Les apaches sont polis, leurs gestes sont précis/Après avoir tout pris, ils vous disent merci/Aucune ville n'est aussi romantique que Paris/Montmartre et Montparnasse sont des paradis/On se dit en voyant tous ces chants et

⁹"No town is as romantic as Paris/Montmartre and Montparnasse are paradise".

¹⁰"The young live there on love and fresh water and one says to oneself/You only see that in Paris."

¹¹"Every day 100,000 taxis go around making noise/In the evening 100,000 lights make you forget the night/And 100, 000 pretty girls have sweet dreams/You only see that in Paris".

ces cris/On se voit ça qu'à Paris".¹² The succession of studio-bound images relating to the words of the song are very obviously artificial and thus bear out the impression of distance from the "real" city (Fig. 1.5).



ILLUSTRATION FIVE—LA CRISE EST FINIE. PRESS ADVERTISEMENT,
SONG SHEET AND CARTOON

¹²"The hoodlums are polite, their gestures are exact/After having taken everything, they say thank you/No town is as romantic as Paris/Montmartre and Montparnasse are paradise/One says it to oneself seeing all these chants and shouts/You only see that in Paris".



LA CRISE EST FINIE !
Distribué par la S.A.F. PARAMOUNT
Production NERO FILM

LA VIE PARISIENNE

1.1



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1.6





seamless whole¹³ (See **La Vie Parisienne** Fig. 1.1). The sequence thus evokes the sense of Paris as a communal home—a place of belonging—by developing the way the world of the theatre and the world of the city intersect. The filmic spectator is taken on a journey from "Parisian life" to "La Vie Parisienne" after the opening tableau by the figure of a visiting male customer who descends from his carriage accompanied by a slow, romantic musical score. The camera lingers, in a medium close-up shot, on the steps outside with the doorman standing on the left and a poster announcing "La Vie Parisienne With Lianne d'Isigny" to the right (Fig. 1.2). The visitor passes the ticket desk and the music begins to surge in anticipation as he ascends the stairs (Fig. 1.3). The moment he exits the frame, the film cuts to a high-angle shot of the conclusion of a raucous revue number. Audience members are visible in the lower part of the frame but the energy and near chaotic spectacle of the gyrating bodies of the formally dressed performers dominates the image (Fig. 1.4). This density of feeling is at odds with the quietude of the preceding sequence so that the impression is of a concentrated emotionality (Fig. 1.5). The emotionality of this performance works as a bond for the diegetic audience members, one of whom, in a subsequent shot, blows a kiss to the performers (Fig. 1.6). The cast raise their hands in unison, almost as if in return, as the music reaches its climax. This contract with the audience and the performers is re-enacted when we cut from a backstage aerial shot of the cast preparing to bow to the audience to a full-frontal, proscenium shot of the curtains opening on a crowded stage from the point of view of those clapping. The sense of shared "Paris" created by the emotionality of the bond between audience and performers is also suggested in the final part of the preface to the film's main narrative which takes place at the railway station. There is a long, steady tracking shot which details the many departing couples on the platform but instead of following the direction of the train, the camera moves in reverse towards the city which is being left behind. This allows one to

¹³See Boyer (1994) for further discussion on the shifting relationship between urban space and theatrical space. Taking as her starting point that "the Greek word "theatron" means literally "place for seeing" (74) she argues that "both the theater and urban space are places of representation, assemblage and exchange between actors and spectators, between the drama and the stage set" (74).

LA CRISE EST FINIE

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1.12





make sense of the use of the previously mentioned chorus as musical accompaniment. The lightly ironic use of operetta music and accompanying visual style evokes a powerful sense of leave-taking which is developed in the subsequent shot from the point of view of the passengers looking out of the train onto the platform and the faces of those who form the home they are leaving behind. The emphasis, again, is on the communality of the experience. When the film shifts to the present and the return of Don Ramiro to Paris after a long absence, his arrival, this time at an airport, is preceded in the film by another musical sequence set in period costume at a railway station. This time, although the musical chorus is the same, the scene is not "real Paris" but the stage. The two have become blurred once more.

In La Crise est finie we never see the railway station and point of arrival to the city but the transition from Paris as it is performed to Paris "as it really is" is effected during the progression of the number when we see the troupe arrive and actually continue the song in the street. In the "real Paris" we see a succession of let-downs for the performers who have to face rejection or subordination to theatre managers only interested in young women for their nude revues (See La Crise est finie Figs. 1.7-1.12). It is possible to read this passage from dream to brute fact as a symptomatic commentary on the position of the émigrés in Paris. The production of La Crise est finie was, as we have already seen, accompanied by an orchestrated press campaign by French film professionals against the film. However, one can also read the progression of the song in terms of one of the broader "crises" that the film makes explicit reference to. Siodmak's obtrusive *mise-en-scène* during the number indicates that the capital can be linked in this version of the song not just to live theatrical performance but to the specificity of the recorded moving image. The fact that the capital is pictured through a fusion of song and insistent cinematic devices such as the variety of wipes between shots is an ironic foregrounding of the fact that the troupe will eventually make their Parisian home in a disused theatre that is fatefully for

them to be turned into a cinema. In this way the idea of an emotionally shared version of mythical "Paris" sustained by the bond between the performance of the singers and the audience differs from La Vie Parisienne. As the song progresses and the diegetic audience leaves the train and enters "real" Paris, the potency of the theatricalised version of the myth of the city is in fact undermined by a rival mode of entertainment—the cinema.

III: PARIS AND THE SPECTACLE OF ENTERTAINMENT

I have suggested so far that Siodmak's musical films appropriate a cluster of mythologies regarding the city of Paris. The films develop meaning in their narratives through a journey to the capital on the part of non-Parisians. Either during the journey, or as a result of the journey, ideas to do with urban spectacle and display are foregrounded in the text by means of the protagonists' encounter with specifically Parisian performance and entertainment. The films' use of the potency of the idea of Paris as the centre of "light" and pleasure may be read in two ways. Firstly, by placing themselves in relation to the traditions of Parisian live performance as well as 1930s French film practice, the films seek to engage actively in the reification of certain notions of Parisianisme and thus fit in with the prevalent culture. Secondly, the negotiation between the visitor and embedded traditions of popular pleasure in the diegesis may be read in terms of the meta-textual journey of the émigré personnel who came to Paris themselves to find work in the French film industry. Does this suggestion trouble an attempt to read the films as smooth adaptations to convention? To answer this question and to be able to examine more fully the particular work of *La Vie Parisienne* and *La Crise est finie* in relation to the way Paris was pictured, I will now attempt to define more clearly what the components of this light tradition of Parisian representation are. In doing so I will examine further what sorts of myths are proposed in their differing configurations.

If I have argued that "Paris" has been foregrounded in the light tradition in terms of a sustained bond between live performance and audience, it is because notions of what constitutes the city have, to some extent, historically been intricately bound up with performance and consumption in the sphere of entertainment. It is not surprising, therefore, that acts of display and acts of viewing and communal imagining also feature in many

French urban cinematic representations of the 1930s.¹⁴ As I have previously mentioned, it is possible to equate this showing and imagining of the city partly with the historical emergence of practices associated with the spectacle of "The City of Light". The very lighting up of the city (and spaces of performance) by means of the use of electricity to replace the standard gas lamp, the development of a culture of civic promotion, the actual "lightening" of urban space by the removal of dense networks of medieval street complexes all relate to the concurrent emergence of a commodified and bourgeois culture of diversion and entertainment. Clark argues the same point by stating that "the rise of commercialized entertainments in Paris, catering to a mass public ... cannot be understood apart from ... the end of old patterns of neighbourhood and the birth of a city organized round separate unities of work, residence, and distraction" (1996, 235). This process undoubtedly helped to propagate a master narrative of an association between Paris, performance and pleasure which spread far outside the capital, hence the journeying I have been referring to.¹⁵ It also, symbolically, allowed for the enhancement of the equation between capital and nation—Paris was France. By the 1930s and the time of the arrival of the émigrés in Paris, city live entertainment had evolved to the extent that the working class or petit bourgeois tradition of the localised neighbourhood *café-concert* which "combined the socialising aspect of the café with the consumer aspect of spectatorship" had waned considerably (Vincendeau

¹⁴Vincendeau (1985, 113) develops this point by claiming that "the histories of theatre (and music hall) and cinema [are] ... intimately linked in France in the 1930s, on the level of production, finance, and personnel". She argues that cinema and live entertainment, by co-existing through an intertextual relationship, shared genres, extra-textual practices such as printed publicity and song recordings, modes of performance and even audience loyalties. Vincendeau (137), sees "the privileging of the actor's performance [in so many French films of the 1930s] as the crucial link with the audience". She goes on to claim that, very often, "performance in these films is not what the actor does in addition to his or her function in the plot, but it **is** that very function" (141). Andrew (1995, 97) notes that "within most of the hundreds of films built around or including formalised songs, dances, recitations, and the like, simple reverse shots display an original audience whose admiration or disapproval of the performance serves as a model for our own reaction. ... It could be said with only slight exaggeration that the French cinema of the 1930s ... is a cinema of reaction".

¹⁵Caradec and Weill (1980, 7) mention that the "Paris Guide", produced by Lacroix for as far back as the *Exposition* of 1867, signalled to visitors that the *Café de Géant*, *l'Eldorado* and *l'Alcazar* were worthy of exploration. By the time of the 1900 *Exposition*, according to the *Guide des plaisirs* specially produced for the occasion, Paris was "a city of extraordinary pleasures, the pleasure capital of the whole world" (in Caradec and Weill 1980, 145).

1985, 153). It had not totally disappeared¹⁶ but the more formalised *revue à grand spectacle* or the *spectacle de variétés*, which had begun to emerge in hand with the new viewing practices of the city on display in the late 19th century, had risen to considerable prominence. These newer types of consolidated performance offered the pleasure, as their names suggest, of spectacle be it of the order of elaborate, and thus costly, staged music and song numbers or a succession of variety acts consisting of feats of wonderment by acrobats, magicians and the like. Many of the embedded notions about the popular image of light Paris derived from a sustained relationship between performers and public which had failed to dissipate despite the shift from an intimate milieu to one of stage-bound spectacle. Indeed, it was partly because of this very heavy commercialisation of light entertainment that a mythical version of the city emerged. The idea of an image of the city being enacted in direct and quite small-scale terms by a contract between the performer and live neighbourhood audience (through the address of song lyrics for example) was slowly replaced by the emergence of a different entertainment complex. At the heart of this complex, which amplified the same work of staging an image of the city, was an urban centred star system which propagated the closeness of the performer to the public in terms beyond that of the usual intimacy fostered by watching live performance. We can thus see the emergence of an extended "Parisian community" being fostered in the proliferation of song-sheets, illustrated journals, posters and front-of-house publicity material. This dates back broadly to such entertainment figures as Thérèsa of whom, for example, it was written at the time: "she is a woman of the people ... she represents life as it is in the city" (Jules Vallès in Jando 1979, 20). By the 1930s this correspondence between print media, performer and public had been strengthened by new forms of city-oriented communication practices. Along with boulevard theatre, music-hall and cabaret now co-existed with the mass media of cinema and gramophone recordings to the extent that "the relationship between cinema and other entertainment forms [can] be seen in a multi-dimensional way

¹⁶Bach and Milton, two of the most popular comic male entertainers in the 1930s film industry, both came from *café-concert* backgrounds.

rather than as a one-dimensional, linear, connection of "influence or of one form's decline signalling the rise of another one" (Vincendeau 1985,115). This multi-dimensionality, which also intersects with radio, was still bound up with the relationship between Paris and performance. This is not the same as saying that because so much of the entertainment industry was based in a relatively concentrated area of Paris things inevitably had a Parisian identity, though this was to a great extent true.¹⁷ Rather, the city was performed in the sense of a, by now, historically calibrated collusion between public and personnel. For example, through a combination of lyrics, staging and evident sheer charisma, the body of many music-hall, cabaret or theatrical performers (many of whom moved in and out of film production) were now linked with the body of the city.¹⁸ Large-scale stars such as Joséphine Baker, Mistinguett and Maurice Chevalier who had performed in venues like the *Folies Bergère* (named after a Parisian 18th century house of pleasure) or the apositely named *Casino de Paris* were intimately associated with the city in the popular imagination through song (Mistinguett's "*Ça! C'est Paris!*" for example), titles of revues or critical and fan commentary. Performers such as Albert Préjean had adopted as a definitive part of their routine significant items of working class male Parisian iconography such as the flat cap, and in comic boulevard theatre the delivery of precisely orchestrated witticisms in high society settings by trained actors had become emblematic of a certain metropolitan sophistication. As Vincendeau has suggested, this shift in the organisation of popular entertainment led to the subsequent reification of a mythical community which served distinctive ideological functions. By the time sound cinema in the 1930s was actually able to insert a diegetic audience into the "live" performance of music-hall entertainers such as Georges Milton, Maurice Chevalier and so on, "Paris—and particularly popular Paris—had by then come to connote France, embodying the myth of a deeply-rooted community of origins" (Vincendeau 1992, 55).

¹⁷Mainly the 9th and 10th *arrondissements* or what Maurice Chevalier called "the quadrilateral of song" to describe the world of theatres, agents, publishers and costumiers based in this area. See Jando (1979, 25).

¹⁸In the case of stars like Maurice Chevalier, the performer then stood for Paris to the outside world.

These modes of performance and the subsequent notions of "community" were, of course, inflected by class in terms of the type of representations they offered and the type of audiences that they attracted. In the case of the canonical work of René Clair, for example, whose films are axiomatic when it comes to any discussion of the representation of the French capital in the period of the early 1930s, Paris meant a pleasurable, detailed and inherently nostalgic evocation of a world in which the quotidian lives of urban working people are integrated into a prominent community of interests. By means of dexterously interwoven music, sound, set design and performances—by the likes of the aforementioned Albert Préjean in *Sous les toits de Paris*—he achieved a folk-based and sentimental appropriation of a milieu which had come to connote a dominant notion of iconic Frenchness. Through the inscription of songs such as "À Paris dans chaque faubourg"¹⁹ and the foregrounded motif of circularity (and thus inclusiveness) in the *mise-en-scène* in the film *Quatorze juillet* (1932), we can see how certain codified mythologies about the capital were sustained into the era of sound cinema.²⁰ The centrality of these mythologies of togetherness, resourcefulness and convivial sharing remind us of Clark's central argument regarding the relationship between performers and audience at the Parisian *café-concert*. He suggests that "the *café-concert* produced the popular, which is to say that it put on class as entertainment" (1996, 234). In *Quatorze juillet*, for example, we do see the entertainment of the film fitting Clark's description of "a fiction of working-class ways of being ... put alongside a parody of middle-class style, the one being granted imaginary dominion over the other" (1996, 238). The image of the world of warm, working class pleasure is, crucially, defined against the cold rectitude of the bourgeoisie—the circularity of the dancing, decoration and camera movement for the symbolic

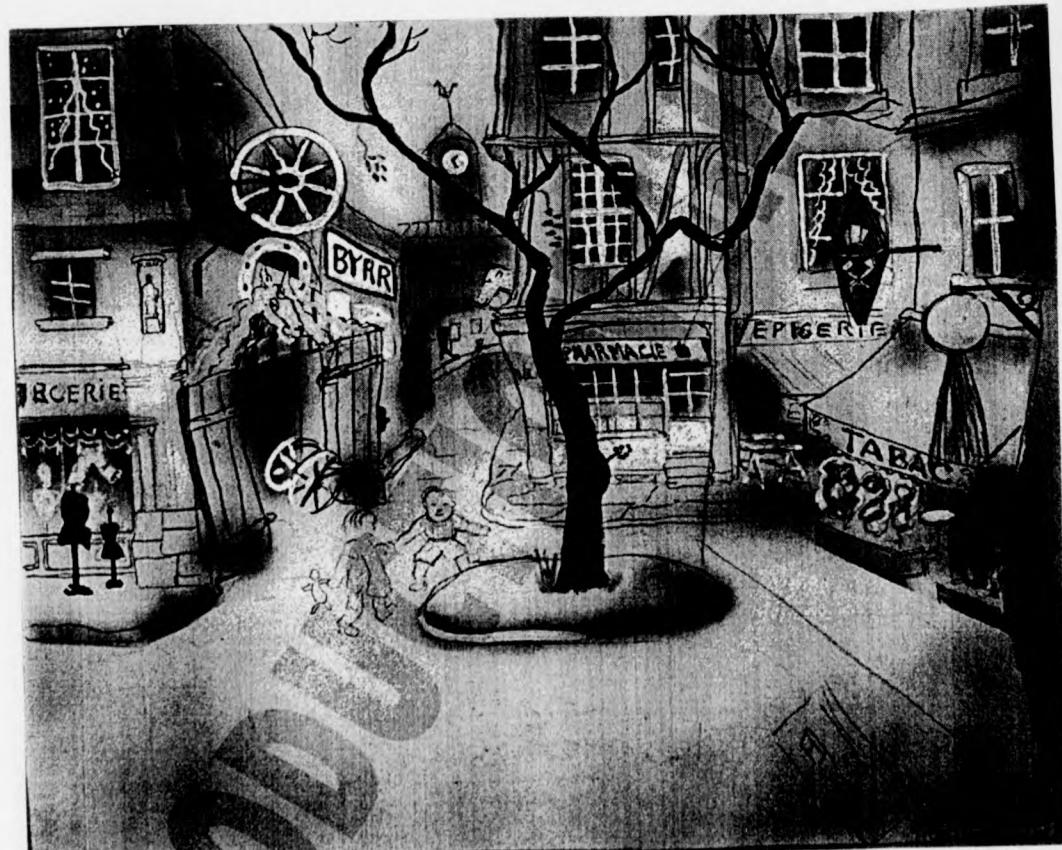
¹⁹Sung by the *chanteuse réaliste* Lys Gauty in the famous recorded version.

²⁰Images of street children playing and visual accounts of the urban working classes integrating leisure and national pride can also be found in the myriad of photo-journalistic publications of the era.

community is contrasted with a diagonal linear camera movement and an emphasis on rigid straight lines in set design for the middle-class other.²¹

²¹It is as well though not to dehistoricise Clark's argument. By making his point about the *café-concert*, Clark wishes to show that the popular culture on offer was produced for an unstable and *newly emergent* urban petit-bourgeoisie. Vincendeau has argued that, by the 1930s, the incorporation of the inheritance of these class-based mythologies (which stem from traditions of live performance) means, in cinematic terms, an emphasis on *nostalgia*. According to Andrew (1995, 121) this emphasis on a "lost community" can be read in terms of "France's economic and international situation." As "its increasingly urban population became more alienated, the cinema conveyed the security of a former identity." The point, however, is that surely this "former identity" was never secure in the first place—it always carried elements of myth. One can also go further to say that the element of "dropping in on a world" (made manifest in Clair's films about the *faubourg* by the gentle swooping in camera takes he frequently uses as establishing shots) is actually consistent with a certain class voyeurism which goes back to the intertexts of 19th century realist novelists such as Zola and Sue, painters such as Courbet and the entire photographic project of Marville. This would suggest a paradoxical spectatorial positioning instead of one which assimilated the myth wholesale. Directors such as Clair and Stiodmak themselves came from middle-class backgrounds.

ILLUSTRATION SIX—PARIS AS VILLAGE. LAZARRE MEERSON'S SET
DESIGN FOR QUATORZE JUILLET



This opposition, which occurs across the French cinema of the period, is successfully transplanted into the narrative of La Crise est finie, particularly when the spontaneity and warmth of the theatrical ensemble is threatened by the efforts of the comically repressed piano-shop owner, M. Bernouillin (Marcel Carpentier). The audience of the period's responses would have already been cued by the coded signals given the Parisian performance histories of the main stars. In his revue acts, Préjean was famous for his working-class Parisian cloth cap whilst Carpentier's dress and performance style conned a bourgeois type familiar from the boulevard stage²². According to Préjean's autobiography, Clair, who had used him to great acclaim in Sous les toits de Paris, said "they like you because you're just like them" (1956, 105). What is interesting in the sequence when the troupe receives Bernouillin's letter, informing them that he plans to hire the disused theatre they have taken over and turn it into a cinema, is how well Siodmak's *mise-en-scène* conspires to picture a performance-based urban community in opposition to its antithesis. The troupe are visualised in a fluid integrated manner. In a medium close-up we see Marcel seated at a piano on-stage with Nicole to his left and Olga to his right. Exasperated, Marcel rises and exits screen right. The camera follows him to the point when we can see Olga's reaction more fully. She then turns and moves in the same direction. Siodmak cuts to a shot of the stage from further forward and the camera starts to track right in the direction of Olga as she walks across the space behind a number of the cast. The camera halts as René and the concierge enter the screen talking in the foreground. They move off and we start to follow them in the same unbroken shot. A group of girls then passes in front of the couple and the camera begins to track them. As they begin to exit the stage Marcel re-emerges screen left picking up the path they have delineated. Through this careful integration of space and movement we have a sense of how the community are linked geographically and emotionally to the environment which matters most to them—the stage. It is the actual stage which ensnares Bernouillin when the community decide to take

²²Suzanne Dehelly (who plays the old stage hand Olga) had a particular reputation for playing witty mature women in boulevard comedy.

action. Marcel hatches a plan to lure the shop-keeper to the theatre and then pull the stage trap-door open. When Bernouillin enters with the concierge he is pictured in a long-shot from way back in the aisles as if the theatre itself is watching him. The space is lit by the émigré cinematographer Eugen Schüfftan to suggest the darkened and shadowy sense of menace with which he became associated. When Siodmak moves the camera to intercut between closer shots of Bernouillin and Marcel, who is hiding in the wings, we have an even stronger sense of class difference. This is managed by an effective blurring of the French and German inheritances. Marcel is shot from straight on to implicate him more persuasively with the spectator. The contours of his white t-shirt (itself a class signifier) are brightly illuminated against rear shadow. He whistles the refrain from "On ne voit ça qu'à Paris" as if to suggest the sense of musical Paris colluding with him in the downfall of that which threatens it. Bernouillin, in contrast, is shot from a prominent high angle camera position to emphasise his isolation and malevolent intent. Schüfftan uses a minimum of identifiable light. The contours of the shop-keeper's body as he moves amongst pools of diffuse shadow are pitch black.

There is though another class location that has always existed with its own set of mythologies. As Rifkin implicitly states when he claims that "Paris can as well be typified through the society lady as the *midinette*" (1995, 108), an imaginary map of the city composed according to co-ordinates of entertainment must take into account more than the spaces accorded to the working-class community. It must be read in terms of gender and sexuality too. Again, this version of the city works against the standards of bourgeois propriety. The mythical Paris which pertains to the idea of the complex of sexuality, permissiveness and luxury moves in spatial terms from salon to theatre and opera to cabaret and night club. These representations, very often coded as feminine, partly stemmed from the 19th century comic farce traditions of Feydeau and Labiche and the verbal wit and disruptive gender comedy of Beaumarchais in the 18th century. They were sustained by the

growth of urban performance spaces in the 19th century as well as the steady commodification of the female body in relation to the material culture available in the streets of Hausmann's Paris. Through advertising and shop window displays in the new spaces of the city an association between France, femininity, luxury and sexuality was consolidated and indelibly promoted. Entertainment forms such as the comic-opera and the increasingly licentious spectacle of the *Belle Époque* cabaret and the world of "gai Paris" embodied this tradition as well as opening it to certain cross-class movements on the part of the *demi-mondaine*. The literary character of Zola's *Nana*²³, for example, embodies the figure of the *courtisane*, the kept woman of wealthy married aristocrats and bourgeois bachelor society figures who flourished at the time of Offenbach's original production. Such figures raise the issue of what Prendergast (1995, 138) calls "an increasingly opaque and fluid urban reality, in keeping track of the identities and movements" of the unregistered prostitute. He sees the obsessive abundance of documentation (both visual and literary) regarding prostitution in the nineteenth century as evidence of an anxiety about the place of the prostitute as a metaphor for Paris. Despite the strict and hypocritical prostitution and censorship laws of the period, "the "woman"—in particular the transgressing, adulterous woman—[was] always the site of social and sexual trouble, a trouble of classification, a problem of *identity*" (137).

We can see this blurring occur, for instance, in *La Vie Parisienne* through the figure of Lianne (Marcelle Praince) who is linked to both versions of Paris—the city of society and bourgeois spectacle and the Paris of the *petit peuple*. As the star of the "La Vie Parisienne" revue and the mistress of Don Ramiro, Lianne encapsulates the principal set of mythical elements that the first version of light Paris offered. In the prologue of the film, set in 1900, the "world" of Paris created by the emotionality of the bond between audience and performers spills into the subsequent dressing room party. This "world" is sustained

²³Date of first publication: 1880.

by a good humoured and vigorous depiction of conviviality, luxury, romance and an extravagant celebration of the good life amongst the cast and clientele of the theatre. Lianne is a figurehead of this "Paris". She represents conviviality because her sociable presence generates affection and attention. This conviviality extends to a form of cosmopolitanism by means of the inclusion of the Brazilian lover. Paris can accommodate the world. Lianne also embodies a certain blending of sexuality and romance which is a continuation of the performance on stage. There is a sense of licentiousness and permissiveness which goes with the way she displays her body —her undergarments slip down for all to see, for example. Later, in the main part of the film, when she is reunited with Don Ramiro, their relationship is far more flirtatious and physical than the sober coupling of Don Ramiro's grand-daughter and Jacques (Georges Rigaud). Luxury and the good life are indicated by the spirited consumption of champagne (itself almost a meta-symbol for a certain strata of French culture). Champagne is drunk at the toast announced on occasion of Don Ramiro's impending departure to "savage Brazil". He declares that he is "leaving his heart behind" and it appears because of the wording of the toast—"vive l'amour et la vie Parisienne"—the object of his affection is a conflation of the city and the female.²⁴ This is appropriate for "Lianne" is undoubtedly a transposition of the real Lianne de Pougy, one of the "Queens of Paris" who came to fame and certain notoriety around the turn of the century.²⁵ Like women such as Caroline Otero, Lianne de Pougy, a dancer from the *demi-monde*, led a life of much publicised scandal. According to the 1930s Parisian social columnist Janet Flanner, "every Parisian who could afford it fell in love with her" (1988, 13). Her ambivalent class status is therefore important for it reminds us that Lianne in the film is not of the same background as Don Ramiro. In 1936, rather overweight and extravagantly

²⁴This attitude was the norm for wealthy male visitors to Paris at the time. Take, for example, this prescient quote (in terms of the narrative of *La Vie Parisienne*) taken from an article written by Léon Gozlan in 1852 on "What it is That Makes a Parisienne" (Oster and Goulemot, 1989, 249). According to the opinion of foreigners "she is a composite of spirit, grace and sensibility; an inexhaustible source of seduction, the resounding justification for the superiority of France above other nations; the woman one dreams of at sixteen and the one one remembers at sixty".

²⁵Liane de Pougy actually starred in the Offenbach Revue at the Moulin Rouge in 1904.

LA VIE PARISIENNE

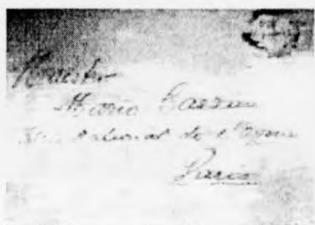
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adorned and clothed, she cuts a somewhat awkward figure. Her unaffected ease of manner, and inappropriate toast to the engagement of the new lovers at the sophisticated nightclub table, suggests a different social world which somehow has to lie contradictorily with the celebratory impetus of the luxury version of the Parisian myth.

La Vie Parisienne succeeds in reconciling these differing elements by having Lianne literally save the day. In the montage sequence which follows Lianne's "call to arms" we see the city open up from the milieu of entertainment, and for the first time a glimpse of the working life of the city is visible, as well as more detailed location footage of a "modern Paris" firmly aligned with the social world of 1936. Through a visualised bond of association with the values of Lianne's emotional appeal, the citizens of "modern Paris", despite all the trappings of modernity, rally together to reaffirm the myth that the Paris (France) Lianne adores is still alive in their hearts. In this way the world of present Paris is seen in terms of continuity rather than disjunction with the past. Lianne's plot is hatched, significantly, backstage at "La Vie Parisienne". A despairing Don Ramiro states that it is necessary to have an army to defeat his son. "Well, I have one", she replies, "All my friends. My old friends. The friends of Lianne d'Isigny!" "That's a marvellous idea, but what are you going to call it all?" he asks. At this point, the on-stage music changes and rises in tone. The main theme of the film returns and Lianne moves her head to listen. Her eyes and face are alit with inspiration and with her finger pointing upwards she declares: "La Vie Parisienne!" We see Lianne seated at a table writing a letter (See La Vie Parisienne Fig. 2.1). Just as the figure of a Parisian female *chanteuse* has sung earlier in the film to unite the two lovers, so Lianne speaks through the power of the memory of her singing to bring the couple together permanently. The camera slowly tracks closer to her as her voice can be heard speaking: "It is necessary to remember again the France that I adore ... ". The shot dissolves to the previously seen night-time image of rooftop Paris. Overlaying this canonical representation of the city is a montage of a succession of

envelopes to suggest that the city is being written to or that the spirit of the city itself is doing the "writing" as in the sense of the city "speaking" through the use of neon lettering in urban musicals of the period (**Fig. 2.2-2.3**). Each postal destination is shown with Lianne's letters appearing on the screen coming out of the building. There is a reprise of the music which "inspired" her in a softer, gentler key as the occupant of the building reads the text of the letter. The same tracking in camera motif that accompanied the original composition of the plea is repeated to underscore the sense of Lianne's voice speaking. One of the recipients is, interestingly, a fellow émigré—a Russian prince. He is set in a redolently, almost parodic, noirish milieu seated on the edge of a taxi in a raincoat. To underline his difference, the musical theme is relayed by a more sombre oboe. Siodmak cuts to a high angle shot of the street. Near darkness prevails except for a light source from the left of the image which highlights the contours of a line of parked, black cars. Four men in long, dark coats are silhouetted to the rear. The émigré gestures to the others and in the next medium close-up shot he passes the letter to one of them (**Fig. 2.4**). Siodmak then cuts to a sudden close-up of just the envelope. The absolute contrast between the blackness of the night and the whiteness of the contours suggests the heightened awareness of the object that conforms to Elsaesser's notion of an émigré cinema (1984, 282). Siodmak moves on to the mass production of newspapers and a sequence which deals with the printing and distribution of an editorial in the appropriately named Le Petit Parisien. The editor tells his female typists he is changing the editorial to one entitled: "Hats Off To The People of Paris!" (**Fig. 2.5**). There follows a semi-modernist montage which partly through the energy and vigour of the editing and partly through the on-screen action of printing presses, photographs, motorcyclists and so on creates a sense of the energy of the contemporary city being harnessed. Stylistically, instead of looking back to Berlin, this sequence looks forward, as it were, to a Hollywood-esque visualisation of the pace of

urban life.²⁶ A prominent magazine at the kiosks is Radio Magazine indicating one further stage of removal from the "old" Parisien world of entertainment (**Fig. 2.6**).

When the stiff and formal father tries to leave Paris with his daughter it is as if the city won't let them leave. The porters at the hotel plaster his suitcase with the telling photo of himself which has been printed all over the city to show the heartlessness of the man. Taxis can't be hailed and buses stop and pretend then to be full when the conductor realises the potential passenger is Don Ramiro's son. The couple finally hitch a lift on the back of a lorry but the drivers take them miles away from the station. In a moment of imagistic self-reflexivity the shot of the laughing men in the front of the lorry is freeze-framed and then shown to be printed on the cover of a newspaper with the caption: "Bravo and Thank You!" It is because of Lianne's different background that she is able to contact this second version of light Paris—"the Paris that I hold so dear"—and enlist the working citizens of the city in the campaign to save the romance between Jacques and Don Ramiro's granddaughter. Though we never see Lianne directly with the ordinary population of the city, it is clear that this is the world which she came from as a performer. Lianne, in fact, through her class mobility, embodies the over-arching myth of the "great Paris festival": that Paris, coded in feminine terms, is a communal home to one and all.

²⁶There is a very similar sequence, two years later, in Le Crime de M. Lange (Renoir, 1936).

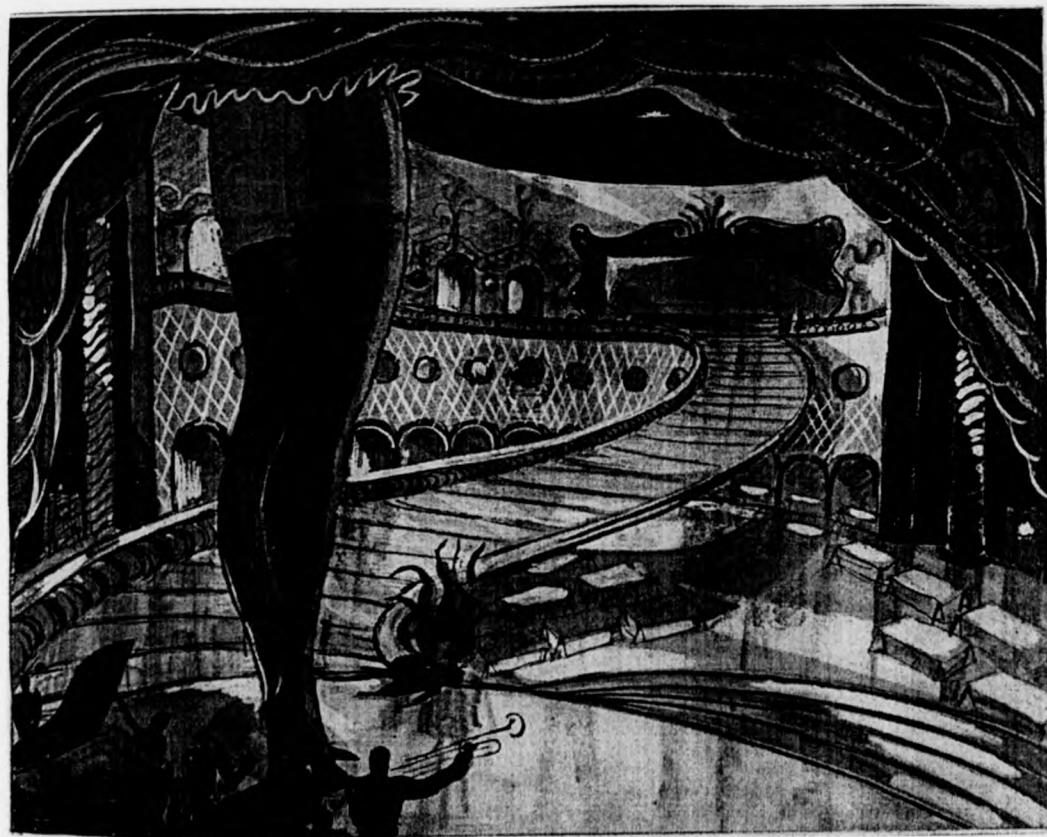
IV: PARISIAN JOURNEYS ACROSS TIME AND PLACE

I have argued so far that both of Siodmak's musical films are suggestive of the way the work of a prominent émigré intersected with established modes of urban representation in the sphere of Parisian entertainment during the 1930s. They pay attention to the blurring of stage and "real" Paris and picture the city, to a great extent, in concordance with a historically and nationally specific relationship between performance and the urban public. We have seen how this collusion extends to the depiction of on-screen communities and their recognition in terms of the issue of class. But it seems apparent, in terms of both narrative and textual style, that the films also relay a sense of instability. This is suggested by a number of journeyings between past and present that are present diegetically and extra-textually. We have seen this in aspects of the conclusion to La Vie Parisienne. To some degree the components of Parisian mythology reduce or reconvene the instability in the films' particularly hybrid nature but, as will now be argued, it is only through acknowledging the centrality of this hybridity to the films' history and meanings that one can fully make sense of how "light Paris" was pictured by émigré personnel. This duality or two-way looking also travelled outside the example of the musical. By also examining the case of a neglected émigré city-based film like Mauvaise graine one can gain a fuller picture of Paris beyond the immediate world of performance and entertainment.

In a number of complementary contexts La Vie Parisienne is a paradigmatic example of the kind of hybrid cinema that the émigré French cinema produced. Interestingly, Seymour Nebenzahl (Siodmak's cousin) had originally considered another émigré from Germany, G.W. Pabst, to direct the production of Offenbach's operetta. Family loyalty prevailed however, perhaps because the previous year Siodmak had worked on a script of the life of Hortense Schneider—the celebrated lead of the original stage production. The film was bankrolled by United Artists and two versions were shot

simultaneously with Neil Hamilton taking the Georges Rigaud part in the English language version. It was a prestigious production in a number of ways. Firstly, compared with the then average shooting time of not more than a month for French productions, the shoot stretched to five months. This was necessary because of the huge investment in set design and the subsequent requirements for shot construction. Eighty sets, designed by the prominent decorator Jacques Colombier, were built and real locations were used including the Café de la Paix.

ILLUSTRATION SEVEN—LAVISH SET DESIGN FOR LA VIE PARISIENNE



Secondly, as an obvious consequence of the expectations of the production company, a large-scale publicity campaign was arranged. The revealing slogan "A Piquant Cocktail of Three Generations" accompanied unusually lavish glossy colour brochures. All of this was to little avail though and the film achieved modest returns. In one sense, the publicity of La Vie Parisienne might also have read "A Piquant Cocktail of Three Cultures". This is because the production does more than remind us of the place of operetta in Parisian culture. As well as implicitly looking back to the heyday of Parisian operetta, Siodmak's film, as a commercial enterprise, looks sideways to the success, in audience and filmic terms, of the exported Austro-German operetta such as Le Chemin du paradis (Thiele/de Vaucorbeil, 1930) and the ongoing powerful model of Hollywood city-oriented musical entertainment.

The film needs firstly, therefore, to be contextualised in terms of a number of differing orders of urban entertainment and representation. When Offenbach died in 1880 a musical critic wrote that "the sun of French operetta has set" (qtd. in Fornairon 1932, 25). This use of a metaphor using light is appropriate for a man who in his work, particularly with the librettists Halévy and Meilhac, had consolidated a mythical association between Paris and the pleasures of spirited leisure, sharp wit and musical *joie de vivre*. La Vie Parisienne was emblematic of the picture of the capital which he had propagated from his own theatre, the aptly named Les Bouffes-Parisiens in the Passage Choiseul.²⁷ As has often been pointed out, the operetta was rarely called just that. In most cases the term *opéra-comique* or *opéra-bouffe* was used to describe an increasingly loose amalgam of comic performance and scripted musical entertainment. Historically, because of the "pure" form's relative decline after the commencement of the Third Republic, the heyday of French operetta has been linked to the end of the Second Empire. Thus, as with so much

²⁷Kracauer (1937, 174) has even gone as far as suggesting that "the operetta would never have been born had the society of the time not itself been operetta-like; had it not been living in a dream world, obstinately refusing to wake up and face reality. Only in Paris were there present all the elements, material and verbal, that made the operetta possible".

Parisian entertainment, a certain in-built reflex of nostalgic imagining emerged with successive attempts to revivify the genre. In an ironic foreshadowing of the state of cinematic operations in the early 1930s, French operetta, always a carrier for a set of nationalistic discursive strategies, faced competition from two fronts: the Austro-German model and the American music-hall tradition.²⁸ Across the early years of the 20th century, one can trace in the French entertainment press an ongoing sense of crisis and national resentment that this most Parisian of forms was being bowdlerised by, for example, "dancing girls and attractions which accommodate vibrantly coloured costume and decor"²⁹. In an indignant piece published in Comédia, entitled "Where is the French Operetta Going?"³⁰, the case was made for the form being "the surest criteria for the state of a collective soul". The implication being that the state of the nation was weakening. By the late 1920s and early 1930s there was an increasing trend of live performance venues refurbishing themselves to be able to present a mixture of film and other attractions. Operetta, as it had then developed, was seen by some quarters of the critical press to be symptomatic of an un-Parisian modernity. Paul Achard, for example, wrote that Offenbach had been usurped. "They have replaced the spirit of words with that of legs and girls", he complained.³¹ Nonetheless, sound cinema, particularly that of Germany, Offenbach's native country, persisted in multi-language versions which laid claim to the technological benefits of film such as improved sets, greater variety in decor, rhythmic editing patterns and an emphasis on performance. Productions such as Le Congrès s'amuse, with Lilian Harvey, re-established conventional operetta as a popular form which engineered references to the past in a contemporary idiom.³² As Vincendeau has suggested (1985, 143), because of the costs involved in such productions which necessitated large sets and casts of performers, on the whole Parisian audiences only saw French versions of these German films such as

²⁸Charles Lecocq, in an article in 7 Jours, March 1905, also made the point that the cost of putting on "true" operetta had become almost prohibitive.

²⁹Soir, 19th August 1925.

³⁰9th November 1925.

³¹ami du peuple, 5th January 1930.

³²See Icart (1974, 169-175) for further discussion of the early German sound musicals.

Le Bal (Wilhelm Thiele, 1931). The popularity of these models has also to be seen against the competition from large budget musical American productions such as 42nd Street (Lloyd Bacon, 1933). It is therefore interesting that at the same time as the return to Paris of the operetta via the German cinema, a revival of Offenbach's production took place in the Parisian theatre. Jane Marnac took the lead with Max Dearly at the Mogador in 1931—the same year she starred in Augusto Genina's Paris-Béguin. According to some reviews, she therefore played a hand in the revival of Second Empire headwear on the streets of the French capital. Marnac went on to appear in a stage play based on the life of Hortense Schneider. In the popular press, her star persona was based on her paradoxical ability to convene the appeal of the past with the frenetic world of modern-day France. Siodmak's film, in its casting, also attempts to live up to this paradox by incorporating the appeal of performers such as Max Dearly and Marcelle Praince who were intimately associated with more contemporary aspects of Parisian pleasure and could thus straddle the worlds of Paris 1900 and 1935. The two had worked together previously in theatre and vaudeville and in the same year as the film they were to be seen at the Théâtre des Bouffes-Parisiens in Les Popinod. Whilst Dearly also specialised in comedies of Parisian manners (he had also created the notorious *valse chaloupée* with Mistinguett), Praince had made her name as a "Parisienne" in boulevard roles. The Siodmak's version of La Vie Parisienne is thus, indeed, a production which contains a multiple history. It is a film made by a German, financed by Americans and set in Paris with a Parisian cast. It is the work of an émigré on his way to Hollywood but it makes explicit reference to Parisian entertainment such as the "French Can-Can". Finally, it looks back to a distinctively French genre which had evolved to include Viennese and American influenced off-shoots and had been recently reborn in Germany and re-exported back to Paris to see off American competition.

La Vie Parisienne not only offers a sense of hybridity in terms of its production history and consequent place in Parisian entertainment. By looking at the film's formal

LA VIE PARISIENNE

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3.2



3.3



3.4



3.5



3.6





workings we can also discern a sense of journeying between the practices and values of more than one place and time. It is appropriate, therefore, that a key instance of this takes place in the intermediary space of the international hotel with its associations of being in transit. After a farcical sequence involving the raffish gadabout Georges and Helenita and mistaken bedrooms, which could have come from a Claudette Colbert vehicle, Jacques has returned to his proper quarters. He sees Helenita through the net curtain of his room gazing out across the city from her balcony. In his article on the work of the émigrés in France, Elsaesser (1984, 282) suggests that the German cinematic inheritance of the *Neue Sachlichkeit* might be "the importance given to objects (their texture, their geometrical lines) divorced from social uses and contexts, in order to bring out some vivid but unexpected qualities of abstraction and design". We can see an aspect of this, to some extent, in the way that the idea of a character being seen through the separating surface of a screen or curtain becomes a recurrent visual trope of the film. In "le Grand Noir" nightclub, for example, we see the arrival of Jacques and Simone (Germaine Aussey)—Lianne's successor at "La Vie Parisienne"—by means of a camera track in front of a dividing black chiffon curtain. The film continues to appropriate what might loosely be called a "Germanic" *mise-en-scène* by developing the motif of spatial separation in the way Jacques appears to join Helenita. The point is, however, that the *mise-en-scène* does more than serve an empty formalistic argument, it also works to distinguish space (and light) in gendered terms and thus it separates not just two bodies but two ways of seeing the city. We see Jacques tiptoeing out to the balcony then there is a repeat of the previous shot which seems to confirm that he has joined her screen right. Siodmak then cuts to a dramatic overhead shot which realigns our spatial perception since it reveals that although the couple occupy a similar plane horizontally, they are in fact separated because Helenita's balcony is foregrounded in a diagonal relationship to Jacques's (See La Vie Parisienne Fig. 3.1). Siodmak goes to a closer shot in which the distinctive geometry of the hotel architecture underscores the spatial relationship of the couple (Fig.3.2). In his piece,

Elsaesser argues that "light and lighting (its intensity or distribution across the frame) becomes, through the precise outline it throws on objects, almost a substitute for editing" (1984, 282). This is true in how the characters are subsequently pictured. Having established the lack of equilibrium between the two people, Siodmak then goes on to demonstrate a distinctive example of how the Parisian male privilege to look at women as objects (amplified in a different register by Don Ramiro's philanderings) can be underlined by cinematic style. The mythical component of light and somewhat frivolous Parisian (male) pleasure indicated in the preceding farce is temporarily given a darker hue. A very diffuse light source to the rear of Jacques reduces him to a near silhouette with only the left-hand side of his facial features illuminated by a strong side light. Helenita is more visibly lit but strong light contrasts make her appearance to the right of the frame equally distinctive and spatially at odds with the figure which occupies the rear left of the image. Siodmak cuts to a powerful medium close-up of the shadowed facial features of Jacques. Only the contours of the left edge of his physiognomy are apparent. He is smoking and as he slowly raises his hand and draws on his cigarette, the features of his face, which is gazing intently rightwards, are softly but dramatically illuminated (**Fig. 3.3**). When he lowers his hand, the shadow of the initial shot returns. If the masculine gaze is coded as dark, the look of his obviously eroticised attention is coded with a profusion of particular whiteness. In the subsequent shot, Helenita is shown looking down at the street with the details of her hair and the luxuriant, fair-toned wrap around her shoulders clarified by a light source above her body (**Fig. 3.4**). Now comes the rub, for Helenita, it is shown, also has her own active relationship to the city. In this sense, her Paris of 1936 is a different place than the city her grand-father once knew and still maintains exists. According to the boundaries of the myth of "light Paris" her relationship to the city is pictured in terms of a blurring between musical performance and "real life". In a subsequent point-of-view shot in the balcony scene we see that the object of her attention is a group of swirling, singing figures who emerge from the shadows of the street screen right (**Fig. 3.5**). Siodmak cuts to a

medium close-up tracking shot of the musical ensemble who are temporarily halted by the outstretched arm of a figure of authority. Because this is Paris they are, of course, allowed to continue performing and they are let on their way into the rear left hand shadows of the screen. "La Vie Parisienne" is part of the life of the street as well as the stage. When we return to the face of the grand-daughter, the direction of her gaze is now rightwards which confirms that all we have seen has been through her eyes (Fig.3.6). Crucially, what follows is an exact duplication of the image of Jacques which enables the filmic spectator to understand that the relationship between the performance on the street and the female protagonist has excluded the male. Later in the film, when the romance between the couple has blossomed, the two are seated together and a similar exchange of feeling between city dweller and city performer takes place, this time at a specifically coded site of entertainment—the nightclub. Because of Jacques's impecunious state he is forced to tell her that he is leaving her but the way he puts it is that he is leaving Paris. "It is good-bye to walking in the Bois every morning, strolling around museums without looking at anything", he says. As the music strikes up for the commencement of another song, he moves closer. She motions him to be quiet and turns away from him, her gaze screen left is distracted by the anticipation of another performance by the *chanteuse* we have seen previously. This is her version of the city, and it is the profoundly emotional power of the sung version of city-based feeling that proves to unite the lovers on screen. That this joining is guided by the seeming inter-relationship of subjectivities between the singer and female audience member marks the moment as distinctive. The grand-daughter turns back to look at Jacques. "I love you", he says. Simultaneously, the song actually begins and the camera slowly glides closer to the couple. Her eyes move down and then she turns again to look at the *chanteuse*. We cut to a shot of the *chanteuse*, centre stage to match her gaze. The momentum of the feeling in the musical performance takes over and in the following shots, the grand-daughter rises from the table and leads her lover to the dance floor where

she begins to sing the song to Jacques. It is as if, enabled by this moment, she can sing Paris back to him.

It has been suggested by Elsaesser that the émigré films made in France during the 1930s produced a "sense of unease and disorientation" (1984, 283) that resulted from a disjuncture between this cinema of charged *mise-en scène* and specifically French traditions of performance. He claims, as does Vincendeau (1988, 49), that "trained mainly in the theatre or coming from the music-hall revue and the Paris cabaret, the French actor [brought] to a role not only the carefully distilled observation of social types and the body language of an immediately recognisable milieu, but the sense of an established rapport with an audience" (283). Elsaesser's implication is that this performance tradition worked against the visual style of the émigré film-maker in which "the decor and the objects become the mirror and repository of reaction and response" (283). In the case of the émigré Parisian musical this case appears to collapse for two reasons. Firstly, if one looks at other French film versions of popular operettas such as Mam'zelle Nitouche (Allégret, 1931)³³ and Chacun sa chance (Steinhoff/Pujol, 1930), there is inherent in the diegesis and consequent visual style an emphasis on visual doubling, illusion and play. It was part of the form of the genre. There is a scene in Mam'zelle Nitouche which is set, of course, backstage at a theatre. Floridor (Raimu) has to keep sweet-talking Corinne (Edith Mera) despite the fact that she has heard of Nitouche's (Janie Marèse) arrival. The comic conversation is shot from an oblique angle, the "other side" of the mirror, so that the spectator sees the two guiding the dialogue whilst looking at their reflection in the mirror that we do not in fact see. Much of the film's *mise-en scène* emphasises in spatial terms the film's narrative obsession with what one character or set of characters knows at the expense of others' ignorance. In Chacun sa chance, the whole narrative hinges on disguise

³³ Shot in a contemporaneous German language version called Mamsell Nitouche by Carl Lamac. The original operetta with librettos by Meilhac, Millaud and music by Hervé was a huge national success in the early years of the Third Republic.

and duplicity from the transposition of roles between an aristocratic Baron (André Urban) and the shop worker Marcel (Jean Gabin) to the emphasis on performance and the blurring of the worlds of illusion and reality. This is heralded by the intriguing opening of the film. After a silent production credit sequence an unseen "host" introduces the film's cast who emerge in couples from behind a stage curtain. This gives the cue that the film is going to concern shifting roles and an unreliable fluidity between two types of acting—that of the film star and then that of the character the film star plays. The "host" gives the command for "the show" to begin and we witness a musical prelude with a concluding medium close-up of a conductor waving his baton looking up at the closed stage curtains. The curtains then part and instead of the expected artifice of a designed set we see a location shot of a busy Parisian street at night. The city as it is performed and the city as it really is (that only the camera can capture) are fused.

The second way in which the émigré musical actually fitted in with the French norm was by showcasing a meaningful hybridity regarding performance. Instead of disrupting the "established rapport with an audience", Siodmak's *mise-en-scène* actively complemented the idea of disparity already present in the use of stars. As Vincendeau (1988) suggests, part of the "rapport" particularly Parisian audiences of the era had with the performers on screen was being able to recognise the range of generic acting registers that each group of actors was using. The disjunction between the extravagant comic performance of Max Dearly and the mild matinée manner of Georges Rigaud in La Vie Parisienne, for example, in fact serves the purpose of enhancing the utopian aspect of the film's narrative which finally reconciles the past and present versions of Paris. Indeed, the mythical world of the "La Vie Parisienne", that both Dearly and Don Ramiro stand for, can only really make sense of in the present through the contrast with the more modern-day, less theatrical, and perhaps, therefore, "American" mode of being that Rigaud represents. Elsaesser's argument "that a mode of divided perception, and awareness of a double focus

in narrative and representation is one of the principles that the German cinema of the late Weimar period seems to have carried into exile" (1984, 280) does make sense in the film but only if one applies it to the deliberate division in the way the city is pictured. We can see this division in a key number in the film involving Georges and Don Ramiro which explores the intermingling between reality and spectacle and, in turn, the intermingling of past and present. The sequence begins in the transitory space of the contemporary hotel which, as we have previously seen, is depicted using a modernist, linear design scheme. The two men have returned with Helenita after a night out on the town. After leaving his female charge in the hotel bedroom, Don Ramiro takes Jacques by the arm and suggests more entertainment. "Arrrh ... to return to Paris!", he declares. The camera tracks the two men as they move down the corridor. It stops and the men exit the image screen left. There is a rapid wipe cut to the nightclub and the two reappear with their arms linked, as if by magic, screen right from behind a pillar. It is as though they have transcended time and space, which in a sense they have since the sophisticated luxury of the nightclub's ambiance and entertainment promises a world embedded in a sense of the city far removed from the exclusive geometric features of the facade of the modern hotel.³⁴ As Don Ramiro moves his body across the differing social spaces of the hotel and the nightclub the past version of Paris which he embodies is visualised coming back to life. What is interesting is how the returnee, dressed for the part in top hat and tails, commands the space of the venue. Modern-day Jacques can only just look on passively. As the camera moves with Don Ramiro across the floor and up the stairs he gesticulates and dances as if he is in control of the spectacle. The film makes clear here, as it does in other instances across the narrative, that it is only largely through the invention and exuberance of music and performance that the past can be actively remembered. Don Ramiro seems to embrace the world around him and through his constant motion space is continuously revealed to the

³⁴This "magical" shift in space and time across the city might be a distinctive feature of the émigré picturing of the capital. In *La Crise est finie*, Marcel and Nicole suddenly find themselves looking in front of a shop window following a previous shot of Marcel pointing off stage. Salt (1992, 217) argues that jump-cuts were frequently used by Ophuls in the mid-1930s.

spectator. He continues to dance and parade himself on reaching the level at the top of the stairway and a trail of amused, mainly female, participants are led around the contours of a bar in front of which he comes to a halt. This emphasis on circularity (the antithesis of the hotel's modernist rectilinearity) is reinforced in Colombier's extravagantly swirling decor. In a medium close-up he is pictured singing "Paris, Paris, Paris, Paris!", a glass and bottle of champagne in respective hands. We cut to a sudden overhead view of the action from which Don Ramiro can be seen with arms outstretched overlooking the stage-like space below on the ground floor. On the final "Paris", the stage figures begin to move and the "show" begins as if, through his agency, past Paris has been brought into the present.

Siódmak's preceding musical, *La Crise est finie*, also reveals its hybrid nature in a number of ways and points again to how the émigré picturing of Paris casts the city of the present as a staging post for journeying across time. The film explicitly recalls past Parisian entertainment, for example, through the character of Madame Olga and the actress Suzanne Dehelly and the setting of the Elysée Clichy theatre. When the troupe arrive in Paris, Olga is recognised by a waiter who used to work with her at the venue. She alludes to a past sexual scandal involving the then director and when she arrives at the stage-door she recalls passing through the entrance garlanded with flowers. This nostalgia works in two ways. Firstly, it posits a continuum of stardom and performance involving the city. As with Lianne in *La Vie Parisienne*, the Paris of live spectacle and glamourous entertainment is kept alive by an inter-relationship between the female body and memory. But secondly, this version of worldly, metropolitan and sexually experienced femininity accentuates the picturing of provincial and optimistic innocence that Nicole represents. Nicole's difference is also one of stardom. Danielle Darrieux was in the process of becoming one of France's leading female film stars. Unlike her co-star in the film Albert Préjean who had a prior career in silent cinema and live entertainment, Darrieux because she was still very young was completely identified with the new. Since her debut in *Le Bal* she had been promoted

in specifically French and cinematic terms so as to rival her Hollywood counterparts. This strategy is important, for although the film abounds with references to the specificity of Paris and Parisian musicality, it also looks sideways to the model of the contemporary Hollywood musical and its typical rendition of the virtuous and dynamic young female seeking romance in the big city. In fact, during its production history and afterwards, in terms of its critical reception, La Crise est finie was consistently compared to the Warners Brothers musicals of the time. "M. Siodmak makes 'La Crise est finie'", a French "42nd Street"" was the title for a vivid on-set report of the filming.³⁵

The film alludes to the scale and tenor of the American musicals of the time in a manner unlike other French titles with similar music-hall backgrounds such as Paris-Béguin and Zouzou (Allégret, 1934). The journal Candide even went as far as saying that "in ten minutes, one can see on the screen more original ideas than one can find in two hours of spectacle in one of our large music-halls".³⁶ In Paris-Béguin, the social life, backstage interaction and actual "live" on-stage numbers are centred around the star of the show, Jane Diamond—a more or less direct transposition of the star persona of the performer Jane Marnac. Even the curtains of the revue bear her face. The film is thus a star-vehicle dealing with the encounter between the glamorous world of the stage and the semi-underworld milieu with which Parisian theatre was then geographically related in the areas around Pigalle and Montmartre in the 18th *arrondissement*. The encounter is anticipated by the constant use of posters that advertise Diamond's revue appearing in the background of street conversations. Marnac is constantly pictured centre frame and her mainly white and thus sparkling attire is boldly lit to contrast with the darker clothing of her immediate screen neighbours. This patterning is reinforced more broadly by the contrast between well-lit interiors and more nocturnal street scenes. The bourgeois milieu of the theatre itself, which is demarcated by the dress and demeanour of the pictured audience, indicates the evolving

³⁵ Excelsior, 18th May 1934.

³⁶ Date unknown.

status of the revue-spectacle in Parisian society and its alterity to the world of the *apaches* inhabited by Dédé (Jean Gabin). With La Crise est finie, however, Siodmak integrates the star performers into a narrative model of putting on a show from scratch. Instead of inherent plenitude, a display of vigour and an energetic spirit of resourcefulness is used to suggest the effort involved in achieving an utopian outcome for all concerned. This allows Siodmak to combine Parisian communalism with the generic Hollywood musical's triumph against the odds à la 42nd Street.

Light is foregrounded by the theft of lightbulbs from the home of a young aristocrat. One of the girls from the troupe lures the man to his apartment and we see from an exterior long-shot each window being lit as the couple enter the rooms. There is a close-up of hands unscrewing and removing several lightbulbs and then Siodmak cuts to a comic reversal of the previous long-shot with the light in each window going out in time with a musical motif. Rather than contrasting the street and the stage, Schüfftan uses light to highlight the disparity in attitude and degree of optimism among members of the troupe. At a critical moment in the film, for example, Marcel gesticulates in an impassioned manner: "be full of life, enthusiasm, colour and light!" His raised arms are bathed in a strong, intense glow from above. Siodmak cuts with irony to a lighting technician standing nearby whose body creases up in sarcastic applause. As his body descends (in antithesis to Marcel's) his crumpled features are defined against a pool of shadow. On his knees, now bathed in real gloom, he says: "we don't even have one lightbulb!" We return to Marcel who declares: "now there is the crisis. He personifies it". The troupe succeed but, in turn, so does the world of live spectacle for the disused theatre is saved from being turned into a cinema and is returned to the city audience which it used to delight.³⁷ In the film's

³⁷Perhaps the idea of having the theatre in the film represented as one of a number of venues which have fallen out of use is a disingenuous one. It might make sense in terms of the film's "impossible" project of reconciling live performance and the cinema but as Vincendeau (1985, 119) argues "statistically, after an initial drop between 1926 and 1933, Parisian music-hall, concert-halls, theatres and other live entertainments maintained a fairly constant level of box-office receipts".

LA CRISE EST FINIE

2.1



2.2



2.3



2.4



2.5



2.6





conclusion when the homonymic relationship between the title of the revue (and film)—"La Crise est finie"—and the name of the theatre—L'Elysée Clichy—is most clearly underscored, the cinematic spectator is incorporated within the point of view of the Parisians who are themselves in the process of re-becoming a theatrical audience. The paradox is, of course, that the film is part of the spirit of crisis and displacement which the film's narrative seeks to make disappear.

The spectacular finale fuses the optimistic energy of the performance (and the constituency of the Parisian public) with a highly developed cinematic *mise-en-scène*. Like Paris Béguin the number begins with a parade of Busby Berkeley-esque revue girls pictured on top of a sequence of individual podiums (See La Crise est finie Fig. 2.1). At this moment both films seem to be simply recording the nature of the increasingly "Americanised" French music-hall tradition. But whereas Genina's film stays with the stage and opts for ever elaborate choreography and picturing in-depth of multitudinous chorus numbers, Siodmak breaks into the realm of cinematic invention. In one sense these sequences serve as a kind of calling card from an émigré versed in a film culture "preoccupied with ... a fetishism of technique" (Elsaesser, 1984, 282), but they also underline the twin paradoxes of making films about theatre, and of German personnel making films about an "alien" culture with one eye, perhaps, on a future film-making destination—Hollywood. We see Marcel alone, playing the piano, in front of what appears to be a global map (Fig. 2.2). The superimposed words "LA CRISE EST FINIE" emerge screen right and curl around the space of the frame. Eventually, after some inter-cutting with the chorus-girls, the camera tracks out and a blackened globe, lit in a swirling strobe-like fashion, is revealed with a number of girls in various national costumes on top (Fig. 2.3). The crisis is global but as Siodmak goes on to show, in the terrain of this film, so are its resolutions. In the subsequent series of bizarre national tableaux set in France, the United States, Russia and Great Britain we see money fall from the sky like

snow or confetti. Each country is introduced by an iconic image of a major city so that we have on screen a fascinating premonition of Siodmak's eventual destination—the crime-ridden world of noir New York (**Fig. 2.4**). Immediately after this montage of the nations Siodmak cuts to the diegetic audience as if they have been watching this bravura display. The theatre stalls are packed to the rafters with laughing Parisians (**Fig. 2.5**). In this way, the film has its urban cake and eats it. It pays attention to the Parisian past and to the American future and integrating them both into the present. The sequence ends with a close-up embrace of the romantic couple (**Fig. 2.6**).

In La Crise est finie, as we have seen, the improvised community of theatrical performers play with the artifacts of Paris for their own ends. In one comic sequence we even see the troupe appropriate letters from a sign for the bank "Crédit Parisien" to make the word "Crise" for their revue. The "crisis", emphasised in the actual title, stands both for the poverty and homelessness of the performers and as a metonym of the external economic crisis besetting France. This financial situation is mentioned in Billy Wilder's only French émigré feature Mauvaise graine but in this case it might also be said to refer to the personal legal and financial predicaments of many of its creators.³⁸ Wilder, for example, had left Berlin immediately after the Reichstag fire on February 27th and had arrived in Paris without a visa. Without a work permit, he was forced to earn money from hand to mouth. He had, in fact, been given the job of directing the film as the project's independent producer was not able to pay for an established professional. The film depicts a comical but effective community of thieves who also "play" in the city for their own gain but this time they steal cars from the well off. The gang then refashion these vehicles to disguise their origins and sell them on for money. Much of the film was shot on location on the streets of the city around Vincennes and the Bois de Boulogne, pre-empting the *Nouvelle Vague* by several decades, and it is a production with its own peculiar set of hybridities and

³⁸Mauvaise graine was remade in England by Gainsborough as First Offence (Mason, 1936).

perspectives. It looks back to Berlin and it looks forward to the United States but it does both by incorporating a vivid and rhythmic sense of the spaces of then contemporary Paris.

In Berlin, Wilder had worked as a writer with a keen interest in the sensibilities of the modern city. As well as writing for the leading papers of urban record and discussion such as Tempo and Querschnitt, he helped on the operetta Der Blaue von Himmel (set in the Berlin U-Bahn with singing and dancing commuters!) and had script credits on two important Berlin films which heralded the pace and tone of Mauvaise graine. In Menschen am Sonntag (Siodmak et al, 1929) we see a *plein-air* version of the city in which quotidian reality is pictured in a form akin to a presentation in a photo-magazine of the period. German critics of the film had actually made reference to its Parisian-like light touch in comparing it to the intensity of typical Berlin representation. According to Der Abend, "once Paris was shown to us in an impressive, simple manner; now, we see Berlin without the shine of advertisements in lights and the crazy nightlife of bars" (qtd. in Lally 1996, 33-34). In Mauvaise graine, there is an extended sequence set around an open-air swimming pool on a Sunday afternoon which like Menschen am Sonntag, Nogent, Eldorado du dimanche (Marcel Carné, 1930) and Genina's Prix de beauté pictures a space for mobility and release in contrast to the tensions of the week and the workplace. The film also recalls, as many have observed, the caper movie qualities of the location driven Emil und die Detektive (Gerhard Lamprecht, 1931) for which Wilder wrote the screenplay. Indeed, some of the Paris reviews also picked up on the relation between the soundtracks of the two films. Both features also involved a fellow émigré of Wilder's, Franz Wachsmann (de-Germanised to Waxman). Wachsmann matched the spirit of the fast moving images of urban modernity and speed in Mauvaise graine to an American syncopated jazz score.³⁹ In the film, the music also works to underline the consistent references to the recently evaporated world of silent cinema. Along with the chase

³⁹Waxman also shares a music credit on La Crise est finie.

sequences between police and criminals, the use of sight-gags produces resonances of the American tradition of fast-paced urban visual comedy exemplified by Max Sennet and Harold Lloyd. We can see this when the Zèbre (Jean Wall) wants to park his car he tries to tie the vehicle to a lamp-post. We see a close-up of a "No Parking" sign. The Zèbre looks at it and, to the explicit rhythm of the jazz, a succession of jump-cuts brings the sign closer and closer again to our (and his) field of vision. Thinking, he digs his hands in his pockets then goes up to the sign and peels it away to reveal a second message—"sens interdit"—which can be translated in two ways: "this way prohibited" or, just as likely, "sense forbidden". This interest in modern visual humour is combined with a number of wipes, dissolves and superimpositions to break up time and space. More than one critic noted the work of the camera and the music to produce a sense of modernity which matched the subject matter of the automobile in the city. One, in particular, saw it as a refreshing antidote to filmed theatre. In an approving tone, typical of the debate mentioned in Chapter One over "real cinema", he called Mauvaise graine a "reaction against the "Pagnolisation" of cinema".⁴⁰

It would be wrong though to see Mauvaise graine purely as a film made in transit which just happens to be set in the French capital. What makes it especially interesting is how it can be more than one thing at the same time. As we have seen with the émigré musical, Wilder's film is both a French and an émigré production. References to Parisian culture abound within the diegesis and in terms of the differing performance registers that stem from Parisian music-hall. Jean Wall performs the kind of comic buffoon that would have been familiar to his stage audience of the period and Pierre Mingand, who plays the rogue doctor's son Pasquier, was known for his impersonations of Maurice Chevalier at the Folies-Bergère. Trying to pick up a young girl at a garage he defies her to recognise

⁴⁰Source and date unknown. This is rather ironic for one of the proudest boasts of the tie-thief Jean-la Cravatte (Raymond Galle) is that one of his ties was stolen from Marcel Pagnol. The actor Maupi, who plays another member of the gang, was also a regular from Pagnol's troupe.

him. "You don't know me?", he says. "Wait! Look!" He picks up a boater which magically appears from screen-right. "Do you recognise me now? Do you know who I am? I'm Maurice Chevalier!". Mingand starts to sing and then adds: "as for Joséphine Baker—well!" Later, in the narrative when Jeannette takes an unsuspecting gentleman away from his car, so that it can be stolen by the gang, they go to see Dranem perform in a live show. In many ways, the whole film is about performance and disguise and the key to this is a very Germanic interest in visual doubling which allows Wilder to stage a number of corresponding notions within the conventional trappings of a surface "French film".

Mauvaise graine reminds us of a film such as Renoir's Le Crime de M. Lange (1936). Both concern a "little community ... the chance product of urban geography" (Bazin 1974, 45) who battle against larger forces but in the case of Wilder's film it is the city community who resort to disguise not the villain. This renders their status more ambivalent in the narrative. It is not surprising that one of the group's main members is actually visibly split in terms of his zebra-like, striped attire. Even the space of the community—the garage—is divided by a hidden sliding wall. Renoir's *mise-en scène* accentuates the mythical stability of the world of the *faubourg* by picturing the world of the courtyard bound together either by circularity (of camera movement and significant decorative features such as the paving) or complex staging in-depth of key scenes. In the case of Mauvaise graine, there is an inherent instability suggested by the constant framing in motion of the city passing by from the vantage point of the motor car.

Wilder's visual doubling in relation to the city of Paris takes a number of aspects. Firstly, there is the visualisation of the division in the character of Pasquier who, deprived of his car, is forced to join the ordinary world of the street. It is this separation from the object of his social status that enables him to play with the hitherto unknown milieu of the city criminal and transgress class boundaries. As Paini (1992, 61) has pointed out, many images of city views in the film recall a different spatio-temporal aesthetic more reminiscent

of central European photographers of the time such as Moholy-Nagy. He argues that the Constructivist interest in the plasticity of the image and near abstract attention to form in Wilder's film competes at times with the more traditional space given over in the frame to the action of the French stars and subsequent advancement of the diegesis. We can see this jostling of viewing practices in relation to the city when we see Pasquier pictured walking on a pavement after the loss of his treasured possession. His head and shoulders are superimposed over the forward motion of the figure so there are, in effect, two patterns of movement. This duality is reinforced by the way the head and shoulders are shown as a negative transparency to produce an ethereal, psychological impression over the darkness of the main image. We then see his car being taken away in a split-screen effect so that the action is repeated in the form of a mirror image on both sides of the frame. The centrally positioned character of Pasquier walking down the street is superimposed onto two more abstract shots which succeed each other. The first being a close-up of a car wheel spinning and the second being a close-up of the rapidly rotating hands of a clock. After a cut-away shot we then return to Pasquier who is now engaged in car showroom window gazing. Rather than simply make the shot a further example of the viewing practices embodied in the idea of the city as spectacle, Wilder complicates the *mise-en-scène* by re-employing the motif of visual doubling. Pasquier is pictured at an angle to the frame of the store window pane and, as he looks longingly at the new car inside, he and the spectator see the reflection of a car identical to his original vehicle pull up and "super-impose" itself onto the original object of his attention. It is as if it is only when Pasquier sees his car "come back to life" that he becomes a "whole" character again (and Mingand is allowed to re-establish his position as the star).

The second aspect of the visual doubling is the motif of disguise—an instability regarding appearance and reality. This is particularly true in the case of Jeannette who

performs the role of the kind of available Parisian woman in the street that Don Ramiro is seen watching from the vantage point of an outdoor café seat at the end of *La Vie Parisienne*. It is her job to attract male car-owners who can then become victims of the gang of thieves. A lot of the rather skimpy narrative of the film hinges on this sort of trickery and deception but it does lead to the third kind of visual doubling—the relationship between Paris and the rest of France (and the world). When Pasquier and Jeannette's boss becomes irritated with complaints about the scale of the financial remuneration among the gang members he sends the couple on a mission to Marseille with a set of forged papers. It is at this point in the film that the narrative itself splits in two. The couple's journey south is pictured via the afore-mentioned sequence of dissolving maps emphasising the provincial towns passed on the way to the port. They become embroiled in a high-speed car chase when the police notice the smudged ink on their false identity cards but their eventual passage across the space of non-metropolitan France is represented by an ongoing sense of liberation. We see them on the back of a haytruck before arriving at Marseilles gazing out across a sparkling expanse of ocean and sky. Meanwhile, the rest of the gang are contained in Paris as the police, using the iconography of the metro map, set about trapping the men. This contrast between entrapment and release simultaneously places the film outside and inside the French tradition. The escape to the world beyond the city, typically the colonies, was a recurrent motif in the French cinema of the 1930s. Pasquier and Jeannette's decision to set sail from France is, therefore, in some ways expected. But one can't help reading this narrative progression symptomatically as an escape on the part of the émigré film-makers themselves, to a world beyond Europe—to America where the opportunity to make films which are more completely in the Hollywood idiom might be found. The final sense of "light" we have is that of Paris as the springboard to the greater "light" of freedom.

V: CONCLUSION

According to the Second Empire journalist Laurent Joan, Parisians did not want to hear about journeys to fields, mountains and the sea. "The most beautiful landscape was a wall covered with posters" (qtd. in Halévy, 19). By the 1930s, with the population of the intra-mural city stabilised at around the three million mark and the subsequent rapid growth in the rim of suburban development, encouraged by the development of tramlines and rail networks, his remark might have sounded more than a little fatuous to those who were beginning to make use of the advent of paid holidays to view non-urban France. But the fact remains that representations of the city and the incorporation of the world of urban entertainment (perhaps advertised in that poster on the wall) remained enormously popular for the film-going public of the Paris region in this period. These representations, as we have seen, involved journeys of their own both on the part of protagonists to and around the city and in terms of travelling back to mythologies of the city generated during its period of most rapid growth, the nineteenth century. This chapter has taken the notion of journeying, foregrounded by the real experiences of the émigrés, and linked it to a consideration of "light" and Paris in a number of ways. Firstly, I have dealt with the notion of the city as a destination or place to be viewed which is in itself spectacular. I have linked the idea of particular viewing practices stemming from Haussmannisation with the idea, from that period, of Paris being partly defined both against the world and within the world to suggest that the émigré picturing of the capital fitted in with the conventions of the spectacle of the "City of Light". Inherent in the notion of the "City of Light" was the development of spectacular entertainment which equated an abundance of physical light with the display of a lightness of spirit and gaiety. Despite Robert Siodmak's pronouncement that he hated "operetta and vaudeville because they represent hollowness, flashiness and artificiality"⁴¹, during his stay in Paris he directed two musical films, La

⁴¹Cinémonde 8th June 1933.

Crise est finie and La Vie Parisienne, which relied substantially on an integration of cinematic technique and these popular French theatrical forms. I have noticed that both features blur the relationship between "real" Paris and stage or imagined Paris and this has lead me to consider, in more detail, the question of light in relationship to specific mythologies of popular Parisian pleasure. Both émigré films, through their casting of key performers from live and recorded city entertainment, maintain what I have called "the historically calibrated collusion between public and personnel" in linking the bodies of stars with the body of the city. It has been seen that the contours of this site are marked by differences of class and gender. The opposition of the mythical sense of a working-class community to the rectitude of the bourgeois individual, pervasive across the decade in French cinema, was, for example, inflected by the work of the cinematography in La Crise est finie so that the use of light served to highlight the spontaneity and optimism of the group at the expense of the "dark" principles of the shop-keeper. In La Vie Parisienne, the film colludes with a continuity of cultural representation of the female by blurring her class location and sexuality. Lianne's historicised place within a set of mythologies concerning the city is the key to the settling of a number of instabilities the film proposes. It is true to say, however, that the films I have examined are fascinating examples of a historically specific kind of hybridity. They allow one to make several observations about the mobile relationship between the city-based popular entertainments of the cinema and theatre at a time of a wider discourse of inter-city travel between Berlin and Paris in terms of film finance, personnel and technology. The films thus also posit questions about the place of Paris in relation to the notion of a national cinema. The émigré films were multi-national productions which had an eye on an international market but they were also hybrid in the sense that they looked backwards and forwards at the same time in relation to the present. Paris became the staging-post for this set of inter-cultural journeyings. Both of Siodmak's musicals looked to the past of Parisian culture and the past of Berlin film practice to off-set contemporary competition from Hollywood but in particularly the case of La Crise est finie.

the films also looked to America as an example, as an eventual destination. The films' hybrid *mise-en scène* was far from a hollow exercise in style. The émigré films colluded with established notions of the light tradition of Parisian representation and demonstrated different ways of viewing the city. Further, they disassociated themselves from a sense of unease by reiterating the existing aspects of filmic illusion and play and hybridity of performance in the French film operetta. If a sense of a mode of divided perception remains in the way the spaces of the city were variously pictured, perhaps this can be only expected. As refugees on a journey from an oppressive political regime and faced with a far from embracing welcome from a fractured French film industry, the émigrés were literally divided in themselves.



Chapter Three

City of Darkness

I: INTRODUCTION

The Parisian cinema auditorium of the 1930s was a place that city-dwellers largely entered at night attracted by the display lights of the cinema building. Off the street, the audience found themselves in darkness again for the duration of the evening's main entertainment whilst images of the city were projected in light. I have argued, so far, that traditions of Parisian representation similarly rely on a historically located continuity between light and its inevitable consequence—shadow. In the discussion of the "city of light" in the previous chapter, for example, we saw how mythologies of Paris as the City of Light were consolidated, to some extent, by the way that the city films of the émigrés integrated discourses contained in pre-existing modes of Parisian entertainment. I now want to turn to what happened when the émigrés pictured Paris as the "City of Darkness". Discussing the work of Emile Zola in relation to the historical depiction of social experience in the French capital, Louis Chevalier (1980, 23) has written that: "paradoxically ... the triumph of light, for him, far from eradicated the shadow and the past which it concealed. It actually accorded it a new form of life as if light was a dazzling container for shadow". In this chapter, I want to make sense of this heritage regarding the contribution that the émigrés made to the filmic interpretation of the capital. In other words, in which ways did émigré film-makers interact with the obverse of the side of the coin which had it that Paris was a site of spectacular, luminous pleasures—the modern-day city that had been over-represented to dazzle foreign visitors?

ILLUSTRATION EIGHT—IMAGES OF THE STREET PROJECTED IN THE
PARISIAN NIGHT. DANS LES RUES AT THE MOULIN ROUGE CINEMA



To unpick exactly what this "darkness" meant, I will firstly consider the cinematic depiction of the world of the street and the stress on authenticity and social concern found in strains of French realist cinema of the period. In a key polemical article "Quand le cinéma descendra-t-il dans la rue?", published in Cinémagazine in November 1933, Marcel Carné anticipated the fascination that the streets of Paris would hold for film-makers and film-goers alike throughout the decade.¹ He called Paris "the two-faced city" (in Abel 1993, 129). By this he meant that according to established tropes of representation, Paris had been divided in terms of place and class between the frivolous high life and the "real world" of the ordinary urban dweller. In his mind there had been too much of "the murky and inflated ambiance of night clubs, dancing couples, and a non-existent nobility" at the expense of "the simple life of humble people ... the atmosphere of hard-working humanity" (in Abel, 129). From the development of Haussmanisation in the nineteenth century, "the simple life of humble people" had, to a large extent, been associated within medical and social scientific discourses with the dark. Writers frequently stressed the collusion between the proliferation of disease and the darkness of the typical Parisian *faubourg* with its overcrowding and pestilential tendencies. "Tuberculosis is the disease of darkness" the Commission d'Extension de Paris wrote in 1913, for example. "To combat it effectively, one must first of all oppose it with its natural enemy, the sun" (qtd. in Evenson, 1979, 211). How did the Parisian cinema of the émigrés fit into this equation? Did traditions of visualising Berlin's urban space, and the narrative possibilities that space contained, spill over into films made about the French capital? When he was asking for the camera to go down the streets, Carné was thinking of the reality of location footage as opposed to the constructed verisimilitude of the likes of the sets of Lazarre Meerson for Clair's Sous les toits de Paris and Quatorze Juillet. For him the urban picture needed a frame which contained "a decor of factories, garages, slender footbridges, and unloading carts" (in

¹See, for example, the following articles published in Pour Vous: "Le Drame de la foule et son décor" (23rd November 1933), "Vues de Paris" (11th November 1937), "Paris Romanesque populaire" (9th November 1938) and "Paris, Studio de cinéma" (6th September 1939).

Abel, 129). What then did this difference between Paris as a place just to be captured on film and Paris as a theatricalised set actually mean in terms of the émigrés' relation to set design and location cinematography?

The second strand of darkness that I will consider is that of the Parisian night itself and the congruence of entertainment and crime that it contained. This takes me back partly to a discussion of the representation of the specific place of the nightclub with its berated "murky ambience". It also, however, means uncovering the frequent inter-relationship between the pleasures of popular Parisian community entertainment and the depiction of criminality in films of the period. In the previous chapter's discussion of the "light" work of the émigrés, we saw how what I termed "hybrid films" worked in specific historical ways in relation to past mythologies of the French capital. Was the same true in this case or is there evidence to suggest a different temporal emphasis in relationship to the representation of place? Did traditions of the depiction of Berlin night-time crime and popular pleasure predominate instead in the émigrés picturing of Paris? How did the French work of the German émigrés configure the complex inter-relationships between the criminal individual, the community and the various after-dark worlds of illicit pleasures and desires?

My third interpretation of darkness necessitates returning to Chevalier's understanding of Zola and the complex question of the way in which shadow can be linked to notions of the past. In one sense, we may take the term simply to mean all that signified lack of progress — the old Paris of densely woven, badly lit streets that was not spectacle. There is also contained in the remark an element of social criticism or reproach which suggests that the unnecessary consequence of urban modernity was the suffering and impoverishment of those excluded, those who remained in the shadows. Do the dark émigré Paris films refer to the past in these terms or are there other points of specific tension where the past (as darkness) meets the present? In the previous chapter, I chose to

use the central metaphor of journeying to discuss place in relation to the émigré representation of Paris as the City of Light. The three films which I will discuss in this chapter, *Coeur de lilas* (Anatole Litvak, 1931) (See Appendix 11), *Dans les rues* (Victor Trivas, 1933) (See Appendix 12) and *Carrefour* (Kurt Bernhardt, 1938) (See Appendix 13), also feature narrative journeys of different kinds but the linking thematic is the way in which the past catches up with the present. What does this mean in relation to their status as émigré texts? Most of the émigrés travelled to Paris to leave Berlin and in so doing put the darkness of an oppressive political regime behind them. Is there further textual evidence in these "dark city" films to suggest that the visual past of Berlin resurfaced in a new present? Does more evidence of the specific textual hybridity found in the previous chapter, suggest, once more, a different mode of viewing of the site of exile? The discussion of the émigré representation of "the city of darkness" presents a further opportunity to contextualise the journeys the German film émigrés made as they crossed their own particular cultural and historical borders.

II: THE CAMERA GOES DOWN THE STREETS

"THE HIDDEN SPIRIT UNDER THE FAMILIAR FAÇADE"—UNCOVERING PARIS AS THE CITY OF DARKNESS

It is surprising that Marcel Carné's article did not mention Victor Trivas's pivotal émigré film *Dans les rues* which started filming in April 1933 and was released in July of the same year. Its very title seems to confirm Carné's intentions regarding the relationship between cinema and the French capital although the film also reveals traces of a different cultural heritage. Little is known of the early career of Trivas who was an émigré twice over having come from Russia to Berlin to Paris. In an interview published in *Paris Midi*, he confirms that he had worked as a set designer for Pabst on his film *The Love of Jeanne Ney* (1927) and that his real métier in cinema had been work related to his training in architectural design.² This education is apparent in the way he shapes the visual organisation of urban space in the film. In the same interview, Trivas also stressed how the fact of his outsider status would inform the way he represented the French capital. Like many of his fellow émigrés, however, he was also keen to demonstrate how he would be able to fit in. "Paris for me is the great unknown", he commented. "First of all, I sense here an ideal atmosphere for the collective work that is cinema. The Paris that I will describe to you, and that will be the protagonist of my film, isn't that of the Champs Elysées or the Stock Exchange, but the Paris that René Clair so admirably showed us in his most human and seductive film *Quatorze juillet*. ... [My film will be] the hommage to Paris of a stranger who believes he can uncover its common-day, moving beauty".³

²*Paris Midi* 16th November 1933.

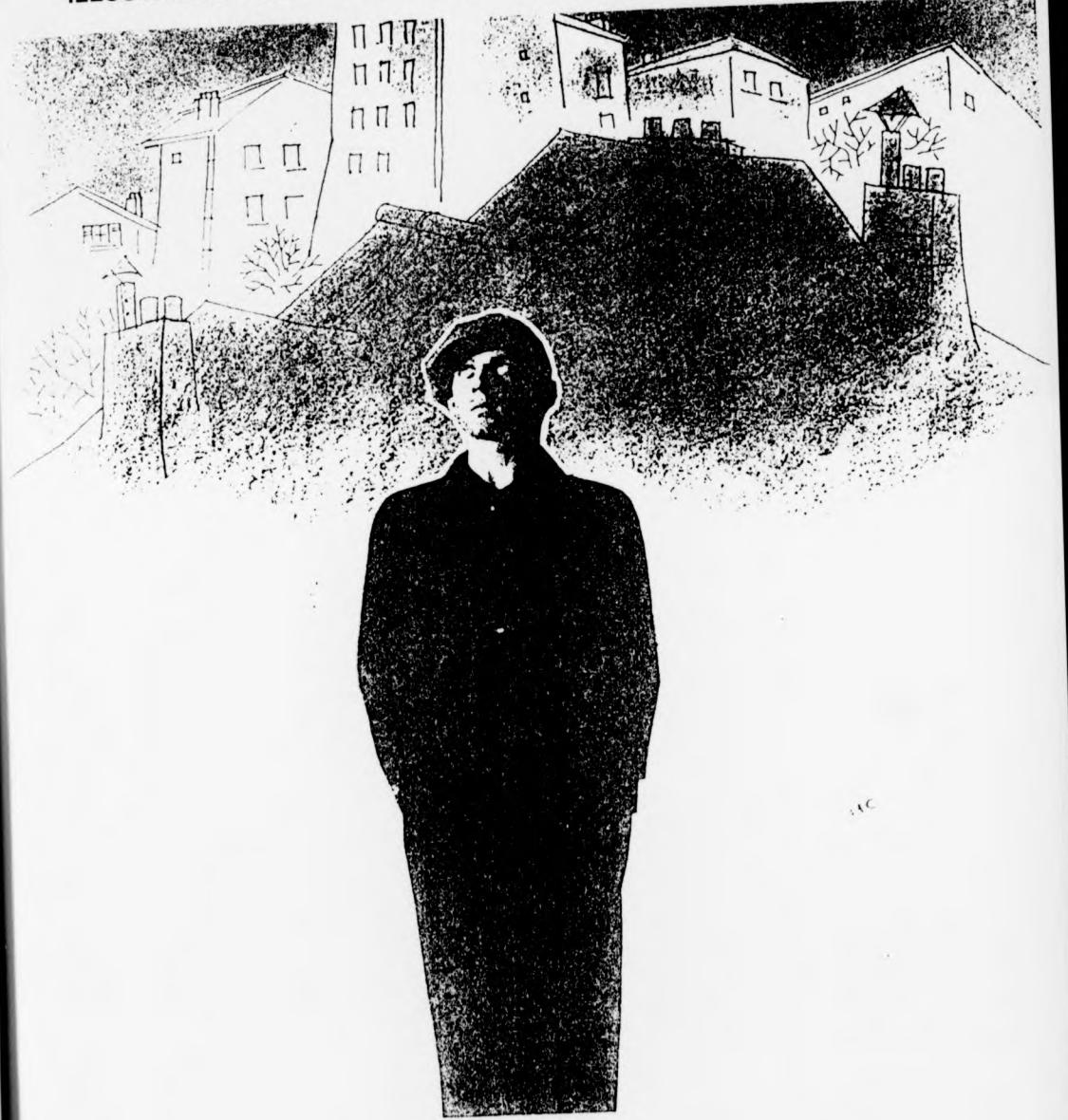
³Ibid.

As Trivas's remarks suggest, it would be a mistake to read the film solely in terms of directorial authorship. The list of credits for Dans les rues reveals many other fascinating contributions which point clearly to its particular historical status as a hybrid production. Alexandre Arnoux, the founder of Pour Vous and the author of a previous particularly favourable and perceptive review of Coeur de lilas, co-wrote the screenplay which was mentioned by many critics of the film such as Paul Souillac. In his review, Souillac drew attention to the notion that Arnoux was a "possessor of a sense of Paris and the souls of its citizens".⁴ The lead cinematography was by Rudolph Maté who had worked previously with Carl Dreyer and was also to be involved in Fritz Lang's French émigré film Liliom (1934). The sets were designed by André Andrejew who had also worked with Pabst, on L'opéra de quat'sous (1931), and the distinctive edgy melancholia of the score was written by Bertold Brecht's former collaborator, Hanns Eisler.⁵ At an important preliminary press reception for the film, even fellow émigrés Joe May and G.W. Pabst were on hand to lend support. The story of the film concerns a war widow and her two sons who live in an impoverished *quartier* of the capital. Jacques (Jean-Pierre Aumont) refuses the path of steady employment taken by his brother and falls in with a band of small-time street criminals. A romance develops between him and Rosalie (Madelaine Ozeray), the niece of a local second-hand goods dealer. Jacques becomes involved with a local burglary and after the accidental death of the elderly victim he goes on the run from the law. After days spent in the streets and on the riverbanks of Paris he is captured by the police but he is saved from prison by the special pleading of his mother (Marcelle-Jean Worms) who argues that her son is a victim of social circumstances.

⁴Cinéposé March 1934.

⁵Andrejew also worked with the other émigré directors discussed in this chapter—with Anatole Litvak in Cette vieille canaille (1933) and Mayerling (1935), and Kurt Bernhardt in L'or dans la rue (1934) and Le Vagabond bien-aimé/The Beloved Vagabond (1936). He moved between France and Britain throughout the 1930s. For an informative discussion of Eisler's subsequent work in the United States see Claudia Gorbman (1991) "Hanns Eisler in Hollywood". *Screen*. Vol. 32 no. 3 (Autumn 1991), 272-285.

ILLUSTRATION NINE—POSTER FOR DANS LES RUES



ROMAIN PINES présente
UN FILM DE VICTOR TRIVAS...
DANS LES RUES
INSPIRÉ DU ROMAN DE J. H. ROSNY AÎNÉ, DE L'ACADEMIE CONCOURT
AVEC JEAN DENOYER, MARINA SOKOLOFF, JEAN DIEDE ALIMONT

Dans les rues was based on a novel by the populist novelist Joseph-Henri Rosnay aîné. The term *populisme* signified an interest in the lives of ordinary Parisian people and was a matter of contemporary interest amongst the city's intelligentsia. It had been made the subject of a polemical manifesto by Léon Lemonnier in L'Oeuvre in 1929 and in 1930 a populist literature prize was created and won, as mentioned earlier, by Eugène Dabit's Hôtel du nord. The following year, the journal Monde sponsored a written debate on the topic which included contributions from Leomonnier as well as Henri Poulaille. Poulaille, the author of Populisme (1930), then wrote his own manifesto in 1932 which was co-signed by a number of film-related figures such as Georges Altman and Marcel Lapierre.⁶ It was this trend in literature that Carné had turned to as a model for the kind of cinematic representation of the city that he envisaged. Indeed, he was, of course, to direct a version himself of the Dabit novel in 1937 with Jean-Pierre Aumont as one of the stars.⁷ In Carné's clarion call he praised the "number of novelists [who] have not been afraid to study certain quarters of Paris and seize the hidden spirit under the familiar facade of their streets" (in Abel, 129). This conflation of novelistic intention and the idea of uncovering a hitherto unexplored social reality is a key element in the set of intertextual cultural practices concerning the discussion of "dark" Paris which go back, as in the case of "spectacular" Paris, to the nineteenth century.

With the growth of the city due to the pressures of industrialisation, came an increased anxiety on the part of the Parisian authorities about the *classes dangereuses* and their perceived "natural" milieu—the darkened streets in the working class urban areas untouched by the brightness of modernity. The anxiety itself led to a furthering of social division, especially in the way that the capital was imagined by its citizens. As Schliör (1998, 123) points out, "on the one hand, it [was] a matter of keeping the areas and regions

⁶See Abel (1993, 34).

⁷For further discussion of literary adaptation in the French cinema of the 1930s see Dudley Andrew (1990) "The Impact of the Novel on French Cinema of the 1930s", L'Esprit Crâtreur Vol. XXX no. 2 (Summer 1990).

thought of as *potentially dangerous* under perpetual surveillance ... [whilst] on the other hand, the areas of the city regarded as *potentially endangered* [had] to be saved and protected from the penetration of "crime"". Darkness thus meant more than just the natural correlation to illumination (be it from daylight or artificial sources), it also suggested an ill-focused combination of danger and immorality. Above all, for the city's bourgeoisie, it suggested the perilous seduction of the unknown. Narratives such as Eugène Sue's hugely successful *Les Mystères de Paris* (serialised between 1843-44), capitalised on these themes to represent a city which because of its profusion of darkness, needed to be investigated. The growth in police work and its methodologies of detection was seemingly paralleled by a culture of uncovering. In fiction from such writers as Sue, Hugo and Zola, this process often meant an exploration of the city at night. In the musical tradition of the *chanson réaliste* the feeling and suffering of those who came from the darkened streets was actually relayed to an audience as night-time pleasure. In the visual arts, Courbet's Realist Manifesto of 1855 proclaimed the painterly desire "to know, in order ... to translate the customs, the ideas [and] the appearance of my epoch" (qtd. in Rubin 1997, 158). The early Parisian photographic work of Gaspard-Félix Nadar and Charles Marville also specialised in seeing the streets of ordinary Paris in new ways.

We can summarise these sources by claiming that what they had in common was a set of assumptions which played on two inter-related variables: firstly, a sense of ethnographic curiosity about the social "other" and, secondly, an interest in urban marginality and the equation between class and darkness. To show how clearly *Dans les rues* assimilated certain codes of Parisian representation, there is an introduction to both of these tropes in the trailer for the film. It commences with a high-angled close-up view of the cobbles of a Parisian street. The edges of the silhouettes of residents are visible crossing the top part of the screen and as the camera begins to track backwards, moving vehicles enter the frame in the reverse direction. The effect is of an almost voyeuristic

opening up of a detailed social world based on the motif of the everyday or typical in motion. An introduction to the cast follows which begins with the musical and emotional register of the *chanson réaliste*. Charlotte Dauvia is seen knitting and singing in a medium close-shot taken of her behind the bar of a cafe. Her figure is linked to the world of the *quartier* in two ways. Firstly, through visual repetition as the camera tracks back in the same revelatory motion as the preceding shot and then, secondly, in the lyrics of her song which talk of the Parisian working class milieu of Belleville and the Parc des Buttes-Chaumont. The shots which follow of the leading characters in the film, as the song continues, all convey an attention to the impoverished milieu that the narrative inhabits. The greys and darks of the ordinary, lived-in interiors frame the set of predominately melancholic faces to suggest a naturalism committed to revealing "life as it is led".

This notion of revealing "life as it is led" is furthered by the integrated use of more documentary type footage of horse racetracks and crowds, children playing and couples dancing. These kinds of images conveying the leisure and pleasures of typical Paris were also found in the pages of the photo-journalistic periodicals such as Paris Magazine and Vu. The development of this kind of publishing had partly been based on the success of German Weimar counterparts such as Berliner Illustrite Zeitung. Indeed, Dans les rues can also usefully be compared with the realist impulses of a "Zille film" such as Mutter Krausen's Fahrt ins Glück (Piel Jutzi, 1929) which re-presented, in filmic terms, print documentary photo-spreads of the modern city.⁸ Both films do incorporate moments of politically guided vérité footage but there is a difference. The harshness of the Berlin of Mutter Krausen is largely seen as the brutal consequence of an uncaring and failed

⁸The "Zille film" was a more politically self-conscious off-shoot of the German *Straßenfilme* which took its name from the work of the influential Berlin city artist Heinrich Zille. As Bruce Murray (1990) puts it in his analysis of Die Verrufenen (Gerhard Lamprecht, 1925), while "the street films warned middle class and lower middle class spectators about the possibility of downward social mobility and advised them to avoid social interaction with the lower classes, the Zille films offered hope to those who began to question the myth of upward social mobility" (84). See Petro (1989, 90-94) for more on the inter-relationship between the development of German photojournalism and late silent cinema.

economic project that must be resisted by organised activity. The Paris of Dans les rues, on the other hand, whilst still a place of social hardship, is also a site of collaborative play, communal pleasure and improvised satire.

The trailer makes further reference to distinctively Germanic codes of expressive darkness which surface in Mutter Krausen and throughout the heyday of the Berlin late silent cinema by using night in relation to desire and criminality. In a close up of two lovers embracing at night against a backdrop of inky darkness, the edges of the male's cap and jacket are fixed by a strong, directed light source. Later, a dramatically lit gang fight at night is pictured in medium-long shot to utilise the expressive inter-relationship between the shadowy architectural space of the street and the criminal sub-culture. Here, there is a move away from a naturalistic model of ordinary city life representation to a stylised form of visual commentary which is designed to evoke sensations of danger and hitherto hidden feeling. This patterning of the city at night is also evident in the photographic work of another émigré, the Hungarian Brassai. In his pictures of night-time Paris which were taken in the 1930s, and published either in the popular photographic press or deluxe art-book formats for the connoisseur, Brassai examined the congruence of night and secrecy. Paul Morand wrote in his introduction to his first book Paris de nuit. (published in exactly the same year as Dans les rues), that "night [in Brassai's work] is not the negative of day; black surfaces and white ones are not merely transposed, as on a photographic plate, but another picture altogether emerges at nightfall" (qtd. in Warehime, 1996, 63). In Brassai's essay "Techniques de la photographie de nuit", published again in 1933 in Arts et Métiers Graphiques, he actually equated "the city at night with a darkened studio set" (qtd. in Warehime, 35). These themes occur in Trivas's film which used a significant amount of night-time location footage. Indeed, in one production report, Trivas's distinctive use of Paris at night was highlighted by the journalist concerned. "All last week Victor Trivas has been shooting location scenes for his film Dans les rues around the quays of the Seine and

Paris's distant *quartiers*", the writer commented. "It has been a veritable peaceful revolution in the quiet streets around Ivry where a number of dramatic scenes have been directed on night-time shoots".⁹

ILLUSTRATION TEN—BRASSAI, PICTURING THE CITY AT NIGHT: BELLE DE NUIT (1932)



⁹La Cinématographie française 8th April 1933.

By mentioning Brassai's name one returns again to the French literary intertext for Dans les rues. Brassai had illustrated written articles by two other leading literary figures who were both to make a contribution to the depiction of dark Paris of the 1930s: Georges Simenon and Pierre Mac Orlan. These writers were also fascinated by the ambiguities of the after hours intersection of light and shadow on the streets of the city. Writing many years later in the 1960s, Georges Simenon, himself an émigré of sorts because of his Belgian origins, was to equate learning about Paris in terms of night. "You really get to know Paris, silhouette by silhouette", he wrote (qtd. in Ford and Jeanne, 1969, 77). Three of Simenon's early Maigret novels were filmed and made into important French dark city productions: La Tête d'un homme (Julien Duvivier, 1932), Le Chien jaune (Jean Tarride, 1932) and La Nuit du carrefour (Jean Renoir, 1932). The popularity of his work and of others such as Léo Malet is indicative of the general proliferation of crime related fiction over the period.¹⁰ In his key text Le Fantastique (1926), Pierre Mac Orlan also referred to Paris as the city of darkness. He did this by proposing a new way of looking at urban reality which linked the emergent mass medium of the cinema with the (privileged) gaze of a certain kind of urban spectator. "[Y]ou could say that the cinema has made us notice the social fantastic of our times", he wrote. "All you have to do is wander the night to understand that new lighting has created new shadows" (qtd in Ford and Jeanne, 122). In 1932, the year before the release of Dans les rues, Mac Orlan had written an article on Phil Jützi's film adaptation of Berlin Alexanderplatz¹¹ entitled "Le Réalisme de certains films évoque le fantastique social". In this piece, he explicitly linked his idea of the inter-relationship between cinema spectatorship and city viewing to the streets of the German and French capitals.¹²

¹⁰As Vincendeau (1998, 31) points out, this had as much to do with the success in translation of recent American urban crime writing as the popularity of pre-established local narrative traditions.

¹¹Known in France as Sur le pavé de Berlin.

¹²Pour Vous 14th January 1932.

Mac Orlan, in particular, does more than suggest a curiosity about the hidden surfaces of the city. He also infers a sense of poetry which would have appealed to a particular educated metropolitan sensibility far removed from the lives of many ordinary Parisians. In this sense, he can be seen in part as the inheritor of the largely male tradition of the urban literary *flâneur*—the man in the crowd who self-consciously moved across the spaces of the modern city relating his exterior observations to an interiorised narrative. This is the perceptual mode discussed by Walter Benjamin who considered that Paris taught him "the art of straying" (1997, 298). For Benjamin, the world of the street meant that city "signboards and street names, passers-by, roofs, kiosks, or bars [could] speak to the wanderer like a cracking twig under his feet in the forest [or] like the startling call of a bittern in the distance" (298). Simenon, albeit in a different way, was also part of the sense in which Paris had become a central narrative component in contemporary culture. The Maigret novels relied on their huge readership's awareness of the city as a kind of circuit map in which journeys of detection relied on precisely given topographical co-ordinates. Having said all this, a film like Dans les rues would clearly not have been made purely with the bourgeois, literary thinking spectator in mind. Alexandre Arnoux, the film's co-screenwriter, wrote previously in relation to Coeur de lilas, that these types of Parisian dark films had the potential to appeal to "both the adolescent and the rather more mature bourgeois".¹³ It is just as important to suggest that these films had an even broader reach—to the very urban subjects that they represented.

This complex intertextual equation drawn so far between the cinema, shadow and social voyeurism is clearly evident in Dans les rues—particularly in its location depiction of Paris at night. In a key section of the narrative, following a police raid on the fight which has broken out between two rival gangs, Jacques and his accomplice plot the burglary on a

¹³L'Intransigeant 20th February 1932.

nearby street. As throughout the film, the sequence begins with a close-up of a particular element of the social decor. Interestingly, in this case it is a movie poster depicting a masked criminal figure. This degree of filmic self-consciousness underlines the previously mentioned equation between night-time Paris and the cinematic but it also reminds one of Elsaesser's argument regarding the Parisian work of the German émigrés that was discussed in Chapter Two. Elsaesser, we may remember, suggested that Weimar cinema, to a great extent, had been a cinema pre-occupied with technique and visual brio so that the delineation of processes of narration, at times, overtook the simple rendering of action. This degree of fetishism had carried over after "German" film-makers left Berlin so that one can still see "a persistent discrepancy between narrated time and action time" (1984, 282) in the films made in France and, later, Hollywood. We can partly see this in the way the camera pans swiftly downwards to reveal the two young men at street-level, their eyes fixed on the ground. Jacques's face is markedly divided between shadow and light. As they talk and move, the camera tracks the figures revealing a subsidiary set of movie posters on the wall behind which Jacques gazes at as his friend outlines details of the planned crime. There is a cut to a full-shot revealing the main source of light—a lamp-post. The direction and strength of this light produces a strongly defined shadow of the men on the illuminated section of the wall behind them. In the next shot these two figures are squeezed pictorially into the left-hand corner of the frame while two girls stop and chat about the images on the wall. They discuss the sex-appeal of one of the female stars and comment on the luxury of the fabric of her dress. This sequence of images may draw attention in a self-reflexive sense to the inter-relationship between film and the city but it also reveals a gendered dimension to Parisian cinematic representation in which codes of glamour and criminality fit with notions of femininity or masculinity. Paradoxically, because both are founded on a certain level of identification which foregrounds the artifice of cinema, the presumed ordinariness of the character drama of Dans les rues is actually also underscored. This somewhat diminishes the potency of Elsaesser's over-determined

formulation that objects mattered more in the émigré cinema than feeling. The idea of this somewhat humourous collusion between image and reality is made again at the closure of this section when after further plotting, in conjunction with a surge of music, there is a return close-up of the poster-image of a masked male figure in a dinner suit and the embrace of a couple with the emphasis on the subjectivity of the female.¹⁴

To illustrate the particularity of Trivas's film, we may turn to Jean Renoir's *La Chienne* (1931) which also works on this same conjugation of reality and representation regarding the city at night. It differs from *Dans les rues* in that it establishes a more naturalistic vein less heavily coded by the processes of filmic narration. As Janice Morgan (1996) has noted in her discussion of *La Chienne*'s relationship to the Weimar aesthetics of the street film such as *Die Strasse* (Karl Grüne, 1923), Renoir also offers an "audacious ironic tone and sharp sense of social realism"(35) in place of an "intense preoccupation with the shifting, and potentially dangerous social terrain of the urban environment" (34). There is a sequence in *La Chienne* which begins after Legrand (Michel Simon) has met Lulu (Janie Marèze) on the street in Montmartre. Lulu's pimp Dédé (Georges Flamant) has been dispatched to a hotel and Legrand has agreed to accompany Lulu to Barbès, where she lives.¹⁵ As opposed to the close-up framing device of *Dans les rues*, the city is firstly visible from the vantage point of a long-shot. The couple emerge from off-screen left onto the pavement and begin walking in the dark in the direction of the camera. The city was there first. The sense of an emphasis on an authentic social milieu is developed by the incorporation of off-screen street noises from the traffic and the naturalistic diction of the ensuing conversation which conveys "the solidity of a world that [resonates] with ...

¹⁴This masked criminal is probably the hugely successful figure of Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre's *Fantomas*. Andrew (1995, 26-27) writes well on the "dangerous topography of streets, alleys, department stores, warehouses, railroads, and townhouses" which he inhabited. The "general atmosphere of mystery and alienation hovering above modern city life" was filmed by Louis Feuillade in the teens and recaptured on film by fellow émigré Paul Fejos in 1932.

¹⁵Dédé seems a recurring name for the male street criminal in other dark city films of the period. See, for example: *Paris Béguin* (Alberto Genina, 1931), *Prisons de femmes* (Roger Richebé, 1938) and *Eaubourg Montmartre* (Raymond Bernard, 1931).

distinctive accents and timbres" (Andrew, 104). As they walk forward the camera tilts slightly rightwards and we see Legrand and Lulu move into the light out of the darkness. They now occupy the most part of the frame and the two bodies are kept centred as the camera continues to track their movement. As they walk in and out of naturalistic pools of shadow and illumination caused by the street lamps they come across a number of passers-by which heighten the sense of the seizing of a typical moment. It is obvious, however, that at key moments in the progression of their dialogue, for example when they halt in front of a wall covered with theatrical posters, that Renoir is also using key and fill lighting. Legrand's face is fully lit when he stands in front of an illustration for a musical revue and announces that he is a painter. Similarly, Lulu is brightly lit when she jokes about how well Dédé imitates Maurice Chevalier. The surface irony of both these moments and the explicit appeal to conceptions of Parisian performance and lightness are the reverse of Dans les rues in which darkness takes over and the references to cinematic form and appearance are so insistent.

One of the continuing traits of French realist cinema's depiction of the world of the Parisian *quartier* of the early 1930s was an almost ethnographic concern for the listing, picturing and recording the ordinary world of the city. Litvak and Trivas appeared to largely share this project. As we saw in Chapter One, one of Litvak's avowed intentions was indeed to make what he termed "real cinema". This concern of filmmakers was manifest not just in terms of the possibilities of the cinematic image, but also in terms of an interest in sound and its descriptive properties. Urban sounds, for example, form a key mode of expression in French films like Faubourg Montmartre (Raymond Bernard, 1931) and La Petite Lise (Jean Gremillon, 1930). At the end of the former, the world of the city is specifically recalled as one of the main characters listens to the noise and clamour of Paris from the other end of the telephone line. Sellier (1989, 89) has noted that La Petite Lise deserves attention because of the very fact that as "an attempt to break with the sheer

plasticity of the film image [it uses] the counterpoint of sound chosen for its realism". This subject of recording the city has a complex genealogy. Rifkin (1995, 103) has persuasively related the taxonomic interest such pivotal figures as Mac Orlan had in urban aural and visual ephemera to the "overlapping language of guidebooks [and] urban tourism", and the nineteenth century tradition of "Parisian *Physiognomies* or *Typologies*".¹⁶ He draws attention to the interest Mac Orlan had, for example, in radio and recorded Parisian music—he authored several radio documentaries during the period including a series on the accordion. Interestingly, Dans les rues and Coeur de lilas also actually feature several close-ups of radios and gramophones in communal moments—in the Legrand family home or in the "family" space of the café. Similarly, they both gain in effect from the use of natural recorded Parisian noise. In the opening of Coeur de lilas, for instance, Litvak choreographs an expressive inter-relationship between the sounds of local non-professional Parisians, the whistling of a passing train and the uneasy melancholia of a typical Parisian street organ-grinder.

The attempt to capture "real" Paris pictorially, as well as aurally, is evident in the early work of the French director Pierre Chenal. Chenal worked on several documentary short films about Parisian architecture and city life such as Les petits métiers de Paris (1931-32) which had actually contained a commentary spoken and written by Mac Orlan. The film was praised by the critic A. Bourgoin for its ability to "know how to find the picturesque in places where one would imagine coming across nothing more than the most unimaginative banality".¹⁷ Bourgoin's notion of the combination of the urban commonplace and the picturesque is a key point; not least because it also reoccurred in several émigré features. It is there explicitly in Dans les rues, for example, when Jacques takes to the streets on the run from the law and we see a wistful analogy drawn between his social

¹⁶Related to this point of documenting Paris, one should also note the work of Marcel Poëte who was instrumental in setting up the Écoles des Hautes Études Urbaines in 1919. See Evenson (1979, 266).

¹⁷Pour Vous 9th June 1932.

isolation and the ongoing lives of river workers hauling bricks onto the banks of the Seine. The predominance of images captured in documentary like long-shot contrasts effectively with the tightly-knit claustrophobia of the previously foregrounded set design of the *quartier*. It is also there in the depiction of the detailed open spaces of the Parisian *zone* at the beginning of *Coeur de lilas* which features an iconography of factoryscapes, railway lines, wastegrounds and marginal lives. These picturesque but everyday visual motifs, including also the atmospheric urban canalscape, were also found in a significant number of other French films such as *Jenny* (Marcel Carné, 1936), *La Goualeuse*. (Fernand Rivers, 1938) and *La Maternelle* (Marie Epstein and Jean Benoit-Lévy, 1934). They have come to be seen as a distinguishing component of the term "poetic realism".

FRAMING THE URBAN DECOR—THE ÉMIGRÉS AND POETIC REALISM

As Andrew (1995, 11) points out, the phrase "poetic realism" was actually coined by Jean Paulhan, the editor of *La Nouvelle Revue française*, in a review of Marcel Aymé's populist novel *La Rue sans nom* in 1929. The novel was adapted by Pierre Chenal for a 1932 feature of the same name.¹⁸ The critical reception of an early, solely French poetic realist film such as *La Rue sans nom* is of crucial interest regarding any discussion of the Paris of the German émigrés. It becomes evident that such films coincided with an attentiveness in French film culture towards the depiction of the French capital that, in fact, had as much to do with national cultural prestige as social concern. Importantly for the purposes of this thesis, being for or against the tendency to "go down the streets" therefore meant more than "uncovering the hidden spirit under the familiar facade" of the city. It also meant the taking of sides regarding the creation of a French sound cinema that could be worthy of the same international esteem that German cinema had attained in the silent period.

¹⁸For an interesting discussion of the 1930s feature films of Pierre Chenal, see Andrew (1995, 160-66).

For the writer Michel Goret, for example, *La Rue sans nom* merited a return to the terms "poetic" and "realist" largely because of the way it constructed a distinctively French vision of tenement life: "I've said "realism" and I've also said "poetic" because even in treating such a hard and brutal subject, Chenal never renounces poetry. The most beautiful scenes of the film are perhaps those where the characters, who have been gradually worn down by the stones of the hovels where they are imprisoned, try to escape, some by love, others by wine, adventure, revolt".¹⁹ One can't imagine a German critic making the same references to wine, romance and revolution. Another reviewer noted that Chenal had made "a powerful and sober film which catapults him right away to the premier league of German directors".²⁰ For many critics of the period, the allusion to the high, crafted style of the German street films of the 1920s such as Pabst's *Die freudlose Gasse* (1925), meant also an occasion to come down on one side of the debate mentioned in Chapter One over whether cinema should turn to the theatre or to the social world of "real Paris" for its point of reference. Jean Fayard in *Candide*, for example, saw *la Rue sans nom* in terms of another chance "to condemn that execrable genre: the "slice of life"²¹ whilst *Gringoire*'s critic argued that the film was far superior to not just the uncinematic form of filmed operetta but also German Expressionist cinema. Implying that Chenal's film transcended the Germanic for something distinctively Parisian, he claimed that "what's even better [in the film] is the impression left that [the modelling] has nothing to do with morbidity".²² As we also saw in Chapter One, this reference to "morbidity" must be taken simply as racially motivated shorthand for "Jewishness".

¹⁹*Cinémonde* no. 277 (8th February 1934), previously cited by Andrew (1995, 371). This translation is mine.

²⁰*Petit Bleu* 4th February 1934.

²¹*Candide* 8th February 1934.

²²*Gringoire* 2nd March 1934.

The debate over the turn to realist depictions of life in the French capital should also be seen in the context of the competition which early French sound cinema also faced from the United States. If commentators of the period frequently referred to German city cinema's heavy and sombre concerns, the consensus was that Hollywood's version of urban life also had its own particularities. In an article commenting on the contemporary popularity of the city crime drama in French, German and Hollywood film releases, the journalist and script-writer Paul Bringuier noted how films such as *City Streets* (Rouben Mamoulian, 1931) and *Scarface* (Howard Hawks, 1932) relied on a conjugation of violent narratives taken from the headlines and a visceral *mise-en-scène* which "sacrifices everything for gesture and movement".²³ This tendency to categorise different versions of cinematic urban realism had a wider significance beyond the French film industry's need to compete on an international level with its German and American counterparts. It also fed into the growing tide of cultural xenophobia involving differing notions of where the direction of France's modernity actually lay. In this sense, the dark city film became, in part, a staging ground for a wider set of cultural anxieties. The entertainment and economic model of the United States, for example, was not just applauded for its energetic dynamism, invention and brightness. It was also denigrated for its vulgarity and excesses. Writers such as Paul Achard might praise the efficiency, standardisation and comfort of the American system in glowing texts such as *A New Slant On America*, but for Paul Morand, in *Champions du monde*, the United States was a society "weak in the head, infantile, lacking natural curbs or morality" (qtd. in Weber, 95). Again and again, these anxieties surfaced in moralistic discourses about the cinematic representation of urban life. American cities were seen as too violent and corrupt compared to the likes of Paris. Films like *City Streets* showed the dark criminal excesses of modern urban life which had resulted from a society favouring the individual over the warmer pleasures of the community.

²³Pour Vous 15th September 1932, p. 9.

This emphasis on the fixities of national identity makes for an interesting and almost contradictory situation when it comes to looking at the world of the Parisian *quartier* depicted by those émigrés who had come from Berlin. I want, therefore, to now turn to *Cœur de lilas* as an example of the complexities involved when talking of the representation of Paris in émigré poetic realist cinema. The film derives its title from the name of Lilas (Marcelle Romée), a local girl whose glove is found near the corpse of Novian, a murdered industrialist, on the wasteground of the *fortifications* in the north eastern part of Paris.²⁴ Following what he believes to have been the wrongful arrest of one of Novian's employees, Detective Lucot (André Luguet) adopts the disguise of an unemployed mechanic to penetrate Lilas's milieu and comes into conflict with a former lover of Lilas—the louche *apache* Martousse (Jean Gabin).²⁵ There is a police raid and now in love with the object of his search, Lucot makes off with Lilas to the city centre of Paris. The couple end up on the banks of the River Marne but the law catches up with Lilas and eventually she turns herself into the police.

Unlike many later successful poetic realist films such as *La Bête humaine* and *Quai des brumes*, *Cœur de lilas* was, as we have already seen, based on an original stage production. The film went into production in August 1931. Looking at the full credits for *Cœur de lilas*, apart from the name of Litvak, one sees the names of other Russians such as the set designer Serge Pimenof and assistant director Dimitri Dragomir. Prominent French personnel were also involved such as the composer Maurice Yvain.²⁶ In the words

²⁴According to Nolan (1967) and Conway (1995, 166), the film is set in the Porte des Lilas district of Paris. The area was celebrated in popular Parisian culture for the profusion of flowering lilacs in the local small gardens.

²⁵The term *apache* relates to a bourgeois conception of proletarian Paris as a savage wilderness both in terms of the quality of its living conditions and in terms of the perceived correlation between the working class and criminality. It goes back to the nineteenth century and was formulated perhaps in connection with the popularity then of the American "wilderness" novels of James Fennimore Cooper. By the early years of the twentieth century, *apaches* were increasingly becoming the focus of sensational press coverage. They had "dens" in areas like the Bastille and were even, bizarrely, the focus of tourist interest. According to a book quoted by Schlör (1998, 138), one could actually go on a "Paris By Night" tour and drink a glass of wine with a local specimen. For other details on the figure of the *apache* see Vincendeau (1998, 39-41).

²⁶Co-writer, for example, of the song *Quand on s'promène au bord de l'eau* in *La Belle Equipe* (Julien

of Alexandre Arnoux, Cœur de lilas " is at once a detective story, a sentimental comedy and a picturesque portrait of the underworld. ... It is also a slice of life by Charles-Henry Hirsch, seasoned, perhaps with some underground irony by Tristan Bernard, as a Cornellian tragedy, a debate between passion and duty in the soul of a police agent".²⁷

Duvivier, 1936).

²⁷ L'Intransigeant 20th February 1932.

**ILLUSTRATION ELEVEN—COEUR DE LILAS—SONGSHEET AND
POSTER**



Despite the number of non-French personnel working on the production, Coeur de lilas was, like La Rue sans nom, received in the French press as an example of national cultural specificity. The reason for this may be two-fold. Firstly, there was the aforementioned critical interest in building up a distinctively French sound film output to match the critical prestige of German urban cinema and Hollywood's own dark city features such as City Streets and the frequently referenced Underworld (Joseph von Sternberg, 1927). Many of the film's critics saw Coeur de lilas as a specifically Parisian crime film because it was not so driven by violence and sensation. The film depended on a sense of an urban communalism at the expense of individualistic action. "The Americans have "gangster films"; we have films of the *milieu*", wrote Avenir.²⁸ Georges Champeux in Gringoire also noted that the film "isn't about the gangsters of Broadway. Because it is set in Ménilmontant, it has another style. First of all, there are fewer corpses ... and then material concerns give way to higher things. Thugs, girls, police officers, the *milieu* and all that surround them have only one thing on their mind: love".²⁹ The second means by which the film was perceived as French was due to the way that nationally specific location and acting were prioritised in French critical discourse. Writing in Ciné Miroir, in a later interview with André Luguet, Claude Doré commented in relation to Coeur de lilas that "it is impossible to find the atmosphere of a Parisian street, a *bal musette*, or a restaurant on the banks of the Marne anywhere else than in our home country and with French "Parisian" actors. The success of films of this kind shows that it is possible to make films which, instead of being international, express the character of a particular country town or determining *milieu*".³⁰

²⁸ L'Avenir 12th February 1932.

²⁹ Gringoire 11th March 1932.

³⁰ Ciné-Miroir Almanach (1933). The quotation must also be put into the context of the career of Luguet who had worked previously in Hollywood on French language version and English language version films. Coeur de lilas makes use of its star's linguistic talents in a scene, set in the police station, when he is able to interpret on behalf of a detained American sailor.

The central paradox of poetic realism was that, as the phrase indicates, it meant more than one thing at the same time. It suggested a broad naturalism and interest in ordinary urban lives whilst also presenting a concentrated aestheticising of film form which lent itself to poetic effect and commentary. This notion of a tension regarding the representation of Paris—the geographical locus of poetic realism—is evident in the way in which *Coeur de lilas* specifically deals, as an émigré film, with the picturing of the world of the *quartier*. On the one hand, there is the difference between the use of outside location work and inside studio decor that was typical of French film production of the period. In *Coeur de lilas*, for instance, the pressures on the individual within the social family of the *quartier* are cast in terms of criminality. The film therefore shows an escape from the physical and affective confines of the enclosed built environment to the wider embrace of the heart of the city through the split between studio and location interpretations of Paris. On the other hand, there is also the crucial distinction between inside and outside that emerges because *Coeur de lilas* was made partly by non-Parisian personnel. The film may display a sophisticated awareness of the iconography and popular culture of a typical French urban milieu but it does so in a manner shot through with the faculties of the outsider. By looking at the preliminary section of the film, for example, we can see that it does more than introduce a number of motifs which will reoccur throughout the course of the narrative. There is also evidence of the co-existence of a conventional urban realism and a more self-conscious, modernist visual aesthetic that was noticed previously in émigré Paris films such as Wilder's *Mauvaise graine*.

The film begins in the *zone*—the ring of wasteland which circulated Paris as a barrier of sorts between the walled defences of the *fortifications* and the industrialised inner suburbs spreading out from the borders of the official circumference of the capital. The *fortifications* themselves were built under Prime Minister Adolphe Thiers between 1841 and 1845 to see off the chance of Prussian military invasion. In 1860, Thiers had

extended the capital's boundaries to their edges bringing the string of suburban villages such as Belleville, La Chapelle and Montmartre into the effective orbit of official Parisian culture. Because of the actual failure of the *fortifications* as a defence mechanism, a decision was taken to demolish them after the First World War although the gates of the former wall continued to serve a financial purpose until 1930 through the levying of city-related taxes. At the time of the making of *Coeur de Lilas*, the geographical margins of the *zone* clearly represented a topographical notion of Parisian-ness which was in rapid transition. In fact, they were already included in a cultural mythology of Parisian marginality. As Rifkin (1995) suggests, it was precisely "because these margins were already the myth materials of a literary treatment of city spaces and social differences, and were already signifiers of nostalgia, [that] the threat to their actual existence could only elevate their status in systems of representation" (28).

The first motif that is introduced is that of the world of male social authority which eventually presides over Lilas's fate. This is prefigured in the opening depiction of the marching members of a military unit. Throughout the film, each part of the city is accompanied by a different register of music and in this instance the regimented rhythm of the refrain matches the image of co-ordinated control which the framing of the line of figures represents. The camera moves, in a clockwise pan, away from the soldiers disappearing across a bridge to a gang of boys who are following their elders' example. The youths are kept mainly in the middle distance of the image and we are able to see the spread of industrial wasteground that surrounds them. Their role-play comes to a halt when a younger member of the troupe comes up to the "Major" to say that he doesn't want anymore "war". The gang therefore elect to play "cops and robbers" and they make off to the open ground where in the course of their game a *real* police investigation is instigated through the discovery of a corpse. This switching of roles and play around disguise is another trope which will reoccur throughout the film. The change in game is echoed by a

COEUR DE LILAS

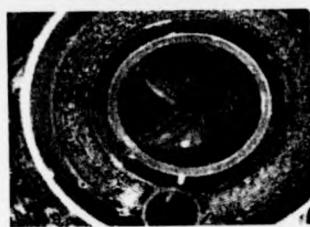
1.1



1.2



1.3



1.4



1.5



COUCHOUX DITE "LILAS"

1.6



new, more informal, musical register. The film at this point cuts to a medium close-up of a blind organ grinder whose haunting and repetitive melody continues as we then see the children spill over the rubble and forlorn open space of the *fortifications*.

As news of the crime spreads (See *Coeur de lilas* Fig. 1.1), another aspect emerges: that of the communalities of the working class milieu in which the film is mainly set. People appear to enter the frame from all sides and in a quite rapid succession of shots, mainly composed of fleeting low-angled impressions of figures, the sense of a social world being pulled together emerges.³¹ As the people gather near the site of the crime, we see the first of many shots which begin with a static image of a character or two from the crowd. This kind of shot then typically starts to track or pan across several other faces to produce a unifying sense of inclusion and shared values. In this case, the camera moves in a gentle circular motion away from two figures conversing to pick up snatches of commentary from other individuals. A sense of a specific social world is enhanced by the uniform dress codes and the way that the characters, as they enter the frame, seem to continue the conversation of the witnesses that have preceded them (Fig. 1.2). The sequence is also distinguished by the fact that it is the only time the community beyond the main characters speak on screen. Partly because of the use of real city location, which adds a dimension of *vérité*, and partly because of this sense of audibly and visually dropping in on a pre-existing milieu, this moment has a peculiarly semi-documentary edge which is absent from the stylisation of the later studio sequences. In one of the film's production reports it is mentioned how locals from the Porte de Clichy area were actually recruited to appear in this scene.³²

³¹The opposite effect is managed later on in the film when the police raid the street. Litvak pictures this subsequent dispersal of figures into the crevices of the built environment through a montage of high-angled shots to underline the fragmentation of something previously whole and seemingly integrated.

³²*Cinemonde* 24th September 1931.

This sense of social documentation is furthered by the inclusion of details of the subsequent police operation. Showing the police photographer and the foregrounding of his work by showing a striking close-up of camera lens opening (to the off-screen sound of the train whistle) achieves two things (Fig. 1.3). Firstly, it draws attention to the recording or documenting of a verifiable reality as if to underline the authentic status of the operations of the film's visual narrative. But, secondly, as a moment of striking visual intensity, it seems to call attention to the pictorial, material nature of the filmic image. After the close-up of the lens, the screen fades to black. We then see a shot of the corpse itself with the feet of the crowd besides it. This image dissolves into a printed, still photographic version on the cover of the Parisian newspaper, L'Intransigeant, with accompanying headlines (Fig. 1.4). This sequence reminds one of the use of the self-conscious conjugation of the frozen image and the newspaper front page in the montage sequence of La Vie parisienne. Litvak then uses a close-up of another newspaper, Le Petit Parisien, to furnish further details of the inquiry. As the camera moves down the page one sees, for the first time, a full-frame picture of Lilas's face (Fig. 1.5). She has already been fixed as an image to be looked at. A synchronicity is established between the look of the film itself and the journalistic look that is shown being constructed within the narrative (Fig. 1.6).³³

Both Coeur de lilas and Dans les rues actually suggest a contradictory perception of the Parisian *quartier* in relation to the depiction of social space. The milieu of the *quartier* is a snapshot of the city, a typical fragment of a greater whole, but it must also be seen as something separate and distinctive with its own modes of representation. This partly gets played out, in cinematic terms, with the transition from a recorded location reality to the crafted visualisation of the Paris of the studios. Crisp (1993, 372) has argued that "given

³³The resulting images also remind one of layouts from Détective, the voyeuristic crime periodical of the time. See Rifkin (1993, 120-127) and Walker (1991) for more on Détective's seminal coverage of "notable crimes and trials ... features on clandestine immigrants, international drug trafficking, the white slave trade, the criminally insane, *les bagnards*, *la pègre*, *les irrégulières*, *les moeurs des quartiers réservés*, and so on" (Walker, 75).

the supreme creative task of designing and building a world, [set designers working in France] found themselves restricted to building one that would be a credible replica of the real world. The décor must pass unnoticed, yet determine the mood and atmosphere of the film." Yet in both of these émigré films there is evidence to suggest that the latter part of the equation gained the upper-hand. Whilst not presenting an overtly ultra stylised version of Paris, the films do both, nonetheless, point to what Bazin (qtd in Crisp, 374) called, in relation to Le Jour se lève, "a formal and poetic transposition" of urban life. Alexandre Trauner's actual dictum that "an interior setting must flow into the street setting which we see through a window" (qtd. in Crisp, 371) appears, for example, to be unrealised in Cœur de lilas. The film's Russian émigré set designer Serge Pimenoff (qtd. in Crisp, 369) had bemoaned the constraints of working in film over theatre by saying that "We might as well note that the scope available for a film decorator's imagination is fairly limited. In the studio it's always a question ... of a *realistic* décor ... of a naturalistic setting, a more or less faithful copy of reality. It's pretty well out of the question for a film decorator to have a spiritual conception of the décor, as is possible in the theater". Yet the transition from the wide spaces and broad daylight of the opening location footage of the *zone* to the picturing of the street is abrupt and this heightens the sense of an enclosed world of criminality and pleasure.³⁴ This is a social world which rather than looking out from à la Trauner, one looks into, as if through a viewing glass darkened by the grime of the locale. Indeed, this immediate textual difference enhances the sense of separateness and enclosure which the progression of the narrative elucidates. Unlike Meerson's set in Quatorze juillet, for example, it is noticeable that there is no identifiable exit to the design of the street. The world beyond the top of the stairs at one end or beyond the corner of the alleyway at the other is never glimpsed. This makes the milieu immediately darker. Whilst the wasteland and railway scenes evoke space through the use of wide-angle lens and the inclusion of

³⁴In his memoirs, René Lucot actually suggests that the atmospheric world of the street outside the Pathé studios at rue Francœur blended neatly with the set inside (Lucot, 1989, 105). He claims that the street in the film is modelled on nearby rue Cyrano-de-Bergerac in Montmartre.

COEUR DE LILAS

2:1



2:4



2:2



2:5



2:3



2:6





significant tracts of sky and cloudscape, there is a tight-knit aspect to the way the street is framed.

This concentration of effect is underscored by the reliance on artificial light sources and the, at times, dramatic and pointed contrasts between darkness and light in Courant's distinctive cinematography. Indeed, this collusion between émigré cinematography and set design was commented upon in another production report which appeared in the film press. The designer and the camera operator "appear to be in the middle of developing a strange world which under the harsh light of the projectors is confounding the separation between fiction and reality" wrote a journalist from Le Courier.³⁵ As in the relationship between Andrejew and the cinematographer Rudolph Maté in Dans les rues, the correlation between the modulated light of Courant and the distinctive space of Pimenoff's street set is particularly noticeable in the treatment of the city at night.

The *mise-en-scène*, as a whole, exemplifies a non-naturalistic novelistic or theatrical approach to the depiction of social space. This is seen in the technically virtuoso introduction to the world of the street which because of its integration of song and mobile camera, exemplifies a kind of consciously staged display. The sequence begins with a close-up of a hand turning the crank of window shutters (See Coeur de l'îles Fig. 2.1). The sound of the organ grinder is heard again. It is almost as if the turn of the shutter and the off-screen turn of the organ are made into one. The sense is of an intense correlation between music and the physical space of the street. As the camera begins to track leftwards the glass of the window begins to fill the picture frame to suggest the opening up of the world to the gaze of the spectator. The light which comes through to the street from the interior of the *bal musette* illuminates the darkness outside. As the track continues, the figure turning the crank reverts to a shadow and the details of the milieu — the familiar

³⁵ Le Courier 26th September 1931.

tropes of net curtain and drink logos—are seen more clearly (Fig. 2.2). Other figures enter the frame (Fig. 2.3), including the organ grinder himself, before the camera begins to tilt upwards and the words of a song begin. The silhouette of a street lamp fills the right-hand part of the frame and in the rear of the image some of the street's occupants exit round the corner of a hidden alley (Fig. 2.4). The strength of the artificial light source coming from down this path, out of view, also reduces these figures to silhouettes. The camera comes down to street level again and begins to rotate leftwards until a stone public stairway fills the frame. A man is seen lighting a cigarette for a girl and as the camera begins to ascend the stairs in conjunction with a passing couple, a pair of women come into view perched on the railings. The female voice is singing about her life as a prostitute and the lives of the people that we are watching. The lyrics of the song *Dans la rue* (Serge Veber, Maurice Yvain) refer to the ending of the day and her work on the street at night.³⁶ The silence of the locals, the hovering sense of gloom and the watchful circumscription of the mobile camera produce a distinctive tone of voyeurism, of examining something ordinarily hidden. Finally, the shot dissolves into a medium close-up of a large middle-aged woman, La Douleur (Fréhel), who is singing and washing her tights on a balcony (Fig. 2.5). At this very point in the song she refers to the appeal of her silk stockings for male customers. La Douleur's gaze is turned downwards to the world that has just been explored. It is as if she is both singing to herself and singing to the street. The camera now turns to track leftwards and through the dramatic perspective of the upper ironwork of the gateway, which borders the street and the apartment block from where she is singing, the street which we have come from reappears. The camera tilts down slightly to watch people coming down the steps. From this aerial vantage point the camera moves leftwards, further across in space and beyond the gate, to gaze down at the entire street as if from a bird's eye

³⁶Dès qu'on a vu se barrer l'soleil / Tous les jours, c'est pareil / Sans hâte, on descend sur le trottoir / Pour chercher les coins noir / Fuyant le regard du flic / On a des espoirs de fric.
As soon as you see the sun setting / Everyday it's the same / You go down to the pavement unhurriedly / In search of darkened corners / Keeping away from the eye of the cops / You hope to make a bit of cash.
(The song is performed again in Litvak's subsequent French émigré film, *Cette Vieille canaille*, in a scene set in a women's prison).

view (Fig. 2.6). The co-ordinates of the whole set have now been made sense of in a complex inclusive fashion which has linked the movement of the residents and the probing camera to the spatial arrangement of the buildings. There is one last cutaway shot to the world beyond — a night-sky view of a factory — before we return to the milieu where the action will now unfold.

André Andrijew's set design for *Dans les rues* also privileges certain viewing relations regarding the world of the street. The film features, for example, a number of high-angle shots looking down from the rooftops at the integrated milieu below. What is even more significant, however, is the way that relationships between domestic space and external street space are managed through the prominent incorporation of the staircase which acts both as a dramatic device and iconographical element. In his perceptive review of the film, Souillac argues that the staircases in *Dans les rues* are "unforgettable"; for him the staircase is the soul of the humble milieu the film represents.³⁷ Souillac is undoubtedly thinking of the way that the film acknowledges the centrality of this communal area in the lived, everyday experience of the Parisian tenement dweller but Trivas's film appropriates Andrijew's designs in more ways than one. Firstly, the staircase is used to link the individual to the community. This is evident in the opening sequence which takes place in the living room of Jacques's family. As with *Coeur de lilas*, the film begins with military marching music, this time on the radio. The music's connotations of patriarchal order and stability underscore the absence represented by the image of Jacques's dead father on the wall in military uniform. Just as *Coeur de lilas* moves from the soldiers to the freedom of the street children at play, *Dans les rues* moves from this settled domesticity to the allure of the street below. There is a cut to a shot from the window of a boy calling from the pavement. When Jacques leaves his home the camera does not move directly to the street. Instead, he is firstly seen on the landing outside and then, afterwards, the camera follows

³⁷Cineopse March 1934, p. 225.

him all the way down. As he descends, a whole world of local residents opens up from a cleaner, children at play, figures on a window sill to the sounds of people in their homes. Jacques is thus seen as part of this. A high angle shot of him sliding down the banister dissolves into a high angle shot of the cobblestones to emphasise his descent from the integrated world of the tenement block onto the world of the street.

The staircase, on the other hand, is also used to connote tension and menace in the Germanic sense of a psychological rendering of ordinary space. One scene, in particular, recalls the many Weimar films such as *Asphalt* (Joe May, Germany, 1928) and *Die Büchse der Pandora* (G.W. Pabst, Germany, 1928) which use the motif of the staircase to suggest a disruptive intensity and feeling of foreboding.³⁸ It is night and Rosalie, Jacques's girlfriend, has rushed back from the *bal musette* to warn her father, *père Schlamp*, that she believes Jacques is getting himself into trouble. There is a high angled shot of *père Schlamp* walking up the shadowy stairway to the apartment where Jacques's brother and mother live. Instead of a communal space of clearly delineated spatial codes of intimacy, there is now a heightened sense of disequilibrium caused by the decision to position the camera at a distorted angle to the regular contours of the staircase and the low level of lighting. *Père Schlamp* is drunk and this adds to the disorientation. When Jacques's family open the door to the visitor, his mother gasps his name and there is a sudden cut to an intensely lit close-up of the troubled criminal on the street. It is to this figure, the criminal, and his intersection with the milieux of night-time entertainment that I shall now turn.

³⁸See Eisner (1973, 119-127) for a discussion on the German cinema of the 1920s and its use of stairways and corridors.

III: SPACES OF CRIME AND PLEASURE IN THE CITY OF DARKNESS

I have argued, so far, that the representation of dark Paris in several émigré films reveals the same degree of textual and narrative instability found in the depiction of the City of Light discussed in the previous chapter. Films like *Coeur de lilas* and *Dans les rues* worked within popular realist traditions of depicting the city by relaying an attentive sense of the marginal world of the working class Parisian *quartier*. They thus participated in a depiction of the urban commonplace that has its historical antecedents in French city representations of the nineteenth century. Yet they did more than that. The Paris films of the German émigrés also show an interest in the visual codes of expressive darkness and an overtly realised attention to the way form can manifest feelings of danger, entrapment or unease. At certain moments they fractured a visual continuum of depicting "life as it is" by drawing attention to the processes of film technique or narration. In so doing, they unsettled the debate in French realist cinema about how to counteract the prestigious, and economically powerful, examples of the German and Hollywood cinemas by depicting the city of Paris in a distinctively French way. Somewhat ironically, it was by largely working within pre-existing cultural traditions of Parisian representation that the émigrés were able to participate in the development of a poetic realist cinema which was to hold so much sway, in critical (and export) terms, in the latter part of the decade. *Dans les rues* and *Coeur de lilas* were "poetic", as well as simply "realist" exactly because of the central contribution of non-French personnel who delivered a distinctive congruence between aesthetic effect and social commentary. Crucial to these depictions of social life in the "city of darkness" were the intersecting worlds of crime and entertainment. Unlike the case of the dark and dangerous streets of cinematic Berlin, which connoted a *contemporary* unease with the modern city, Parisian filmic crime often became fused with a safer and less confrontational perspective which looked back at *past* imaginings of the city. One of the ways this perspective worked was by frequently inter-relating the depiction of criminality in French

city films of the 1930s with aspects of popular community pleasure. If we therefore look again at key "dark" émigré texts such as *Cœur de lilas* and *Dans les rues* in relation to these notions, we can see how the émigrés produced something distinctive by, at the same, fitting in.

To uncover the genealogy of the conflation of crime and entertainment in filmic representations of the French capital in the 1930s, it is necessary to return to nineteenth century discourses of the city which depicted the Parisian *quartier* as marginal. As Reid argues, in his introduction to Rancière's *The Nights of Labour* (1989, xxiii), nineteenth century knowledge of the Parisian working class was always mediated "in conversation and confrontation with an apparent bourgeois "other". The identifications and representations that resulted became in turn the sites of ceaseless rounds of exclusion, inclusion, and differentiation that periodically produced confident assertions about *the proletariat, the people*". The world of "*The people*" thus became the subject of a series of mediated cultural representations which ranged from Aristide Bruant's cabaret songs to the poeticised urban tourism of Francis Carco. Carco's own interest in the *quartier* was based, as we have seen, on the specific allure of "the dark streets, the small tobacconists, the cold, the fine rain on the roofs, the bars, the chance meetings, and in the bedrooms, an air of abandoned distress which shook [him] to [his] core" (qtd. in Chevalier, 1980, 187). His words suggest, as did Brassai's photographs, that "the otherness of the city" relied on a literal and figurative transposition of values. The city literally turned from daylight to darkness and this meant that, figuratively, "the social codes of nocturnal life [could] contrast with those of ordinary bourgeois society" (Warehime, 1996, 103). The appeal of the correspondence between crime and entertainment in popular film's depiction of the *quartier* can thus, on the one hand, be explained by the socially privileged view of the allure of the city at night for the bourgeois spectator. On the other hand, however, it is important to recognise the role that popular entertainment itself played in mediating the

dangers and pleasures of the world of the *quartier* to the film audience. As Vincendeau (1987, 115) has pointed out in her discussion of the tradition of the *chanson réaliste* (which was incorporated into both *Cœur de lilas* and *Dans les rues*), singers such as Fréhel did more than just sing about the world of prostitution and petty thieves. They also in real life came from that world and because of this and the visible record of that life on the appearance of their bodies, they sung with the "testimony of authenticity" (124).³⁹ French film of the 1930s, by incorporating self-referential forms of Parisian entertainment into its narratives, therefore described a new collusion between on-screen urban visual space and urban representational mythologies previously contained in literature, song and music. In one sense, this was a progressive accumulation of motifs of meaning but it was also, in a very real sense, a pleasurable recapturing of a version of the city already long gone. The representational mythologies often contained in Parisian song and music, as Vincendeau (112) also points out, were themselves describing a Paris on the point of transition.

The space of the café was central to the construction of the popular community of the *quartier*. In a key sequence in *Dans les rues*, it is used in conjunction with the mediating element of Parisian song to delineate both the growing affection between the two romantic leads of the narrative and a sense of communal interaction. Andrejew's set design is meticulous, right down to the details of the posters and furniture but, in a manner recalling Elsaesser's previously mentioned argument, the *mise-en-scène* also self-consciously foregrounds the process of visual narration. This suggests a secondary level of mediation: that of the émigré with the established tropes of Parisian representation. The sequence begins with a tightly framed shot of Rosalie. Her face is boldly lit. As the camera slowly pulls away, the viewer realises that this image is actually only a reflection. The "real" Rosalie seems to emerge from the mirror as she is pictured at a bar table between

³⁹ See also Kelley Conway (1995) "Les «goualeuses» de l'écran" in Toulet (ed.) (1995), 162-171. Other appearances by Fréhel in "dark" Paris films of the 1930s include *La Rue sans nom* (Pierre Chenal, 1933), *Le Puritain* (Jeff Musso, 1937), *La Rue sans joie* (André Hugon, 1938) and *L'Entraîneuse* (Albert Valentin, 1938).

Jacques to her left and a sleeping boy to her right. Jacques is carefully lit by Courant so that the left-hand side of his face is in shadow. The edges of his side of the image blur into an atmospheric darkness; just the contours of his hand and the glass that it holds are illuminated. This image, like many other such still compositions in émigré features, resembles a photograph by Brassaï. The camera begins to track in again on the face of Rosalie at the point a pianola starts up and the bar lady begins to sing, off-screen, a *chanson réaliste* about two lovers and the cinema. This self-referentiality recalls the sequence I previously described in Trivas's film involving the layered conjugation of the street, the male and female locals of the *quartier* and a cinema poster advertising a Paris crime film. The shot gradually ends with a second close-up of the girl. There is then a cut to a new perspective on the play between reflection and reality. The "real" Rosalie is now framed on the left-hand edge of the shot at an angle whilst to her right, in the mirror, is her reflection and the edges of the figure of Jacques. The rest of the café is slowly assembled into this interaction between visual space and song as the camera starts to track rightwards, as if through the mirror, to include other figures in its circular motion. We pass an elderly bearded man at a table and another seated figure at the bar to arrive at the singer, behind the counter knitting and singing. The sombreness in her voice is matched by the heaviness of Courant's dark, low-key lighting. Eventually, the camera begins to track back to Natalie and Jacques. The fact that there is an obvious correlation between them and the music is underscored by the way the camera now bypasses the other figures and moves in a direct sideways, rather than circular, fashion back to the seated couple. The song finally fades as the couple themselves dissolve into the darkness of the shadows in an embrace.

The introduction to the space of the hotel in *Cœur de lilas* similarly sets up a certain visual detachment before integrating the decor of the social setting with the action of its inhabitants. After the introductory song by Fréhel, the camera comes to a halt at the exterior of the local hotel. Inside, a petit-bourgeois businessman is audibly remonstrating with the

owners about his bill off-screen. His provincial accent marks his difference as an outsider. The camera is initially interested in setting the scene from a slightly detached vantage point. The drama in the ground floor cafe is viewed from the landing above in a wide-angle shot through the banisters of a staircase. This emphasises the dimensions of the social milieu at the expense of depicting any one individual protagonist. The camera descends to ground level following the steps of one of the female prostitutes who evidently works in the hotel. The man, dressed in a formal suit and straw boater, is obviously out of place in this locale. The point of the episode is to set up the social authority of Martousse, the local gang leader, who physically ejects him onto the street. Martousse is differentiated from the psychologically disturbed criminal loners seen in Berlin films such as *M* (Fritz Lang, 1931). He is introduced in a particular way which enables him to be seen as both an emblematic member of the class-based community and a distinctively charismatic and separate figure. This trait which must be the defining characteristic of the French, rather than German, cinematic criminal, is later carried over in the representation of entertainment at the local *bal musette*. We see in a leftwards tracking shot a procession of local faces, both seated and standing, on a level picture plane at an angle to the off-screen argument. The shot comes to a halt with the image of a louche *apache* slouched in a corner.

Martousse is differentiated on two counts. Firstly, in spatial terms, he is separated from the line of figures by the fact that he is seated behind the table which occupies the same plane as the group. He is also neatly framed by the corners of the seating. Secondly, his costume connotes glamourous difference. Throughout the film there is a running attention to the hat that Martousse wears. He tilts it down to affect a dandyish insouciance when a policeman stops him running to the cellar during the raid and he tilts it up at a later moment to allow a particularly menacing lighting effect to fall over his facial features. This sartorial attention, which extends to the distinctive white scarf (used again in key lit sequences for dramatic purpose), works in relation to the prim propriety of the misplaced boater.⁴⁰

⁴⁰Chenoune (1993, 196) explains how the fashions for the Parisian *apache* of the inter-war period were

Courant's distinctive, finely graded lighting maximises the potential of the inter-relationship between Martousse and his milieu. This can be seen, for example, in two key instances which signify a different aspect of Gabin's powerful dramatic persona. Firstly, there is the scene when Lilas has come down to the café. She wants to be alone but Martousse comes over to her table. There is a disturbing low-angled two-shot with a fully lit Lilas to the left of the frame looking intently at Martousse who is gripping her hand. His body is turned at such an angle that his face is caught in near shadow but for the marked outline of the edges of his facial features. Lucot tells Martousse to let the girl go which he does eventually. Martousse begins to walk away from Lilas and as he moves forward the camera tracks back so that the figure of Gabin is kept in the centre of the frame. The figure of Lilas begins to dissolve into a background blur but Martousse is kept in the foreground of the image and he passes through a dense pool of shadow which momentarily washes over his face. It is as if the room has become the personification of the state of his mind. By the time he emerges from this pool, Lucot has entered the frame and the two square up to face each other. Martousse now occupies the left hand side of the image and his menacing and tensed face is fully and boldly lit by a new light source. In the second moment, belonging to the end of the *quartier* sequence when he is on the run from the police, the figure of Martousse becomes a roguish denizen of the underworld whose guile is quite charming. He is chased by the police over the rooftops above the street. This time he strives to remain in the shadows but his body is constantly caught between boundaries of areas of light and darkness. When he is caught he returns to ground level and the bright full lighting of the *bal de musette* where the music of his previously performed number is still playing. A policeman has his arm on Martousse's shoulder as they walk through the

fundamentally a revolt against bourgeois taste. Every sartorial detail was heightened so that "stripes were wider than normal ... ties more colourful, shoulders more pronounced, waists more tailored, hips more marked [and] trouser bottoms floppier". The felt hat, of the kind worn by Martousse, often had a wide ribbon whose colour changed according to the season. All these details "far from operating as camouflage, ultimately functioned like warrior dress".

room. With one swift glance, Martousse comically effects the removal of the hand and in so doing he doffs his hat one last time to return his face to a zone of darkness more befitting of a local *apache*.

From the moment that Lucot penetrates the world of the street, *Coeur de lilas* elaborates on the pattern of disguise and transgression set up by the police officer's appropriation of the social codes of the milieu. The figure of Lucot works not just to further the narrative of detection but because of his disguise, and the mobility this allows, he can also be perceived to collude with the degree of social voyeurism that the *mise-en-scène* itself appears to perpetuate. Thus, although Lucot does break the law, his real transgression is not just a matter of professional misconduct. It is a departure from a stable class identity which is perilously complicated when the object of his pursuit also becomes a figure of desire. This tension actually conforms to the pattern of the conventional Weimar street film such as *Asphalt* but it is rendered equivocal by two factors: the unsettling appeal of the character of Martousse and the ambivalent status of Lilas in the text. The central reason that the character of Martousse is so troubling to the convolutions of the detective text is that he simply represents an allure that Lucot, as a bourgeois in disguise, cannot muster. The Paris that Lucot (and through him, the spectator) has penetrated is not only represented as a dangerous world of illicit criminality, it is also something that is pictured as subversively attractive. This instability is foregrounded by the frequent play of light and darkness not just on the surfaces of the *quartier* such as the pavement, the alleyway or rooftop but on the actual body of its principal agent. It is furthered by the differences signified by the modes of performance of the two male stars. Gabin's success as Martousse stems from the degree of Parisian proletarian authenticity he is able to deliver. Marcel Carné has noted in relation to Gabin's performance style of this period that he showed "a marked taste for a people on the margins and a use of slang dialect embellished with picturesque images. Like

all Parisian kids he [liked] to give himself an air of freedom, of permanent revolt".⁴¹ The suggestion here is that Gabin (unlike Luguet playing Lucot playing an unemployed mechanic) was the person he was playing. As Vincendeau (1993) has convincingly argued "the proletarian register in which Gabin [operated], defined by his voice, his gestures, his clothes, and the decors in which he [moved], [designated] him as more authentic than a bourgeois character, since French proletarian culture distinguishes itself from bourgeois culture ... by its desire to get at the substance of things rather than concentrate on appearances" (28).

Central also to the criminal conception of the Parisian *quartier* was the figure of the female prostitute. Although absent in *Dans les rues*, she lies, as the title of the film suggests, at the heart of *Coeur de lilas*. Crucially, the prostitute is represented twice: through Lilas and then through her older counterpart, La Douleur. Whilst Marcelle Romée is almost silent in the film, Fréhel is distinguished by her earthy physicality and voice. The two embody separate performance traditions and, in turn, separate relationships to the film's conceptions of Parisian space. As already noted, Lilas occupies an ambiguous place regarding the central concerns of the narrative. On the one hand, as the chief murder suspect, she is the focus of the investigation of the male protagonist. This is exemplified by the way she is fixed by the gaze of Lucot in her introduction. But on the other hand, she relays a sense of indeterminate fragility which comes across not only in her positioning within the frame of the image but also in how these images relate to the surrounding world of masculine subordination. Lilas thus comes to represent a particular aspect of the social entrapment that the film constantly alludes to. Just as the setting of Lilas is pictured as separate from the heart of Paris, so the person Lilas is pictured as separate to the conviviality and communalities of the *quartier*. She is frequently shown upstairs, spatially separated from the rest of the community. When she is downstairs, she is normally shown

⁴¹Cinémagazine January 1933.

in one-shots. Her eyes are usually fixed off-screen at some unspecified object of attention and the stillness of her body language not only contrasts with the fluidity of many of the central male characters but it also suggests an internalised sense of containment and isolation. What is more, there are brief moments when an aspect of her subjectivity is privileged to highlight the difficulty of the space that she occupies socially. In the cafe when the group get ready to playfully re-enact the police investigation the camera looks up to the banister and landing. This shot is from no-one's point of view, it simply shows Lilas emerging from the gloom of the upstairs. We then cut to a shot which is from Lilas's point of view. The group below are shown through the bars of the banister. The film intercuts between this image and a disturbing medium close-up shot of a nervous looking Lilas. There is then a medium close-up pan of the main figures laughing downstairs to further emphasise Lilas's separation. Martousse stops laughing, aware of being looked at, and his eyes turn leftwards. We cut to Lilas's reaction and then back again to the group. This time they are all staring upwards. Finally, Litvak cuts to the full-length point of view shot of Lilas standing at the top of the stairs. The fact that this return of the gaze has been so delayed only reinforces its intensity.

This tenuous inter-relation between a momentary feminine subjectivity and the objectification of the powerful male look is absent in the depiction of the older prostitute, *La Douleur*. As the emblematic title of the opening song *Dans la rue* suggests, her identity rests as an almost physical embodiment of a certain kind of Parisian-ness which relies on the now recognisable alliance between night-time crime and entertainment. The fact that she is older and more bulky in figure gives her a subtle kind of physical liberty regarding the space of the *quartier*. She is pictured sitting and joking with the other *apaches* and her body is linked to a bawdiness and vulgarity which can only come with the accretions of life's experiences. In the words of André Maugé: "she manages to seduce you with her good-natured brusqueness and the populist verve that doesn't flinch from the overtly

obscene gesture; the direct brilliance of her make-up laden eyes and the magnificent strength of her low-pitched voice which rumbles and rolls like a storm holds you in her sway".⁴² What is more, the experience of Fréhel herself denotes a secondary layer of pastness to further underscore the current of nostalgic imagining. Fréhel's relationship to the mythical milieu of the Parisian *quartier* was not only given a loaded degree of authenticity because of her own origins, but through the chronology of her career she would have provided an in-built reflexive sense of the past for the French audience of the 1930s. As Vincendeau (1987, 117) points out, Fréhel had two careers. Following an initial spell of stardom in the Parisian music-hall and a tumultuous series of personal tragedies, including a broken romance with Maurice Chevalier, she left France. On her return "prematurely aged, fat and sick" she began the second phase of her popularity. "Thus her life, like most of her songs [which] displayed dialectics of joy and misery, beauty and destitution ... had a similar built-in structure of nostalgia" (117). This structure is signaled in *Coeur de lilas* by the way Fréhel is constantly pictured close to a gramophone in the hotel, even to the point of putting a new record on.

As Chevalier (1980, 196) argues in his study of crime and entertainment in Montmartre, the way different Parisian neighbourhoods were distinguished in terms of criminality was through the formation of gangs. Geographical space was gendered in masculine terms through a particular form of male-centred local patriotism which grew out of distinguishing characteristics such as dialect slang, dress, song and even hairstyle. The way that this can be seen in *Dans les rues* and *Coeur de lilas* suggests, again, the degree in which the émigrés were able to draw upon standards of Parisian representation. In both films, the *bal musette* becomes a staging ground, not just for the male display but also for male control and exchange of the female lead. The *bal musettes* were typical spaces of congregation for popular Paris where the emphasis was on communal singing, drinking

⁴²Pour Vous 21st April 1932, p. 4.

and dancing. In the cinema of the period, their main representational function was to "draw the neighbourhood *visibly* together" (Vincendeau, 1992, 57). Chevalier (409) argues that in the city itself they were the main meeting point for the exchange of information by the local underworld: "it was the place you had to go to be seen". Dans les rues pictures the *bal* in a sequence of tableau-like images with the emphasis on the communality of the space. The location is introduced with an establishing aerial view of the decorations and the interweaving figures on the dancefloor before moving to a series of static shots in which the rotating dancers move in and out of the frame. The human warmth of the setting is underscored by the introduction of bright, on-set electric lighting which markedly contrasts with Maté's chiaroscuro palette for surrounding streets. The spontaneity of the moment is captured by the contrast between the live band and the previously depicted pianola of the café. In terms of the narrative, the *bal* is the place where Rosalie is "traded" by Jacques for another girl. This other woman will unwittingly lead Jacques and his companion in crime to the mansion where the robbery will take place.

In Cœur de lilas the depiction of the *bal* is constructed around a series of visual opposites. Firstly, there is the distinctive émigré contribution which consists again of the vivid alternation between darkness and light. Then, secondly, there is also the difference between the rotating long-takes which manipulate the degrees of space perceived and the brief static shots which punctuate this motion to dramatic effect. The main song number, La même caoutchouc, commences in an unsettling fashion with a full shot of the reflection of the gathering on the angular mirror wall. We see the refracted couples start to rotate before the camera itself begins to circle across the room, picking up the balcony band and the circular motifs of the spot lighting device, the whirling wall fan and the rounded caps of the dancing male partners. It alights on the immobile, seated Lilas and Lucot and follows their conversation until, on the cue of the girl's distracted gaze rightwards, it finishes its rotation across almost the entire space of the room to find the spectacularly pictured figure of

Martousse. His body is literally split by Courant's cinematography into zones of darkness and light with his face a battleground between the two elements. In a fit of controlled temper, he flings a glass to the floor and we see Martousse emerge from behind the edges of the bar wall as if onto his own territorial stage. He is glanced at admiringly by two shadowy criminal types in the background who meet his initial line of vision. Thus, Martousse combines a mastery of the dimensions of the room and a mastery of the gaze of the onlooking community. He briefly comes to a halt, standing next to his burly male companion before breaking through the shadows to stroll across the room. His body is simultaneously integrated and separated from the procession of dancing figures. He belongs spatially to the flow since he occupies an intermediary plane between two lines of dancers who move behind and in front of him but, significantly, he is moving against the crowd in the opposite direction. Briefly, when he comes to a halt again, he occupies the centre of the frame on his own. His face is now fully lit by a new and brighter source of light. Martousse's relationship to the frame alters and he is highlighted in near close-up. After La Douleur's sung retort to his performance, Martousse returns to the couple to confront them. He tells Lucot to leave. The detective rises and there is a cut to a dramatically lit medium close-up of Martousse. Martousse is motionless whilst a posse of men move forward behind him to crowd the frame. In the return shot, Lucot, as in the cafe, is isolated within empty space. The pair of shots is repeated but this time when Lucot glances off-screen we cut to an extraordinary close-up pan of a sea of menacingly lit local faces, all denizens of the world to which Lucot is now insistently made to feel an interloper. It is as if he is defeated twice over: firstly by the charisma of performance and then by the congregation of now darkened faces from the underworld that the performance has unleashed.

Coeur de lilas and Dans les rues thus both demonstrate the powerful allure of a particularly Parisian mode of integrating crime and entertainment with the depiction of the

values of the popular street community. As Rifkin (1993, 123) has argued though, with regards to the multi-layered depiction of Paris in *Détective*, "crime is a relationship of social classes, strata and sexes". To this extent, we should now turn to consider the other key site of the period where danger and pleasure intersected—the Parisian nightclub. In Kurt Bernhardt's *Carrefour*, which was originally to be called *L'Homme de la nuit*, it is possible to see how the topography of the criminal *quartier* coincides with the more luxurious glamour of the Montmartre night-time venue. *Carrefour*, in fact, recalls Rifkin's description of the representational mode of the pages of *Détective*. Like the sensational journal, the film suggests "the interrelatedness of different kinds of history and political and social presents [in which] narratives of crime or vice are ... part of the coming to know and handle the urban (124)".

In the course of *Carrefour*, de Vetheuil (Charles Vanel), a prominent bourgeois industrialist from an exclusive Western *arrondissement* of the capital, discovers that his identity might not be what it seems. A war wound from the First World War has induced amnesia to the extent that he is uncertain whether a Parisian newspaper's claim that he is Jean Pettier, a one-time city criminal, is the truth or not.⁴³ At de Vetheuil's trial, a mysterious stranger, Lucien (Jules Berry), provides evidence to clear him but shortly after Lucien attempts to blackmail de Vetheuil by saying that he had lied on his behalf. Gradually, it is revealed that the blackmailer is telling the truth and de Vetheuil rediscovers his past by meeting the figure of Michèle (Suzy Prim), a nightclub hostess, who as well as being Lucien's current mistress and accomplice was Pettier's former lover. De Vetheuil comes to a psychological and emotional crossroads but is saved from deciding which identity to choose by the actions of Michèle. Michèle shoots Lucien in an argument with him backstage at her Montmartre club. She then commits suicide to save de Vetheuil from

⁴³The figure of the Parisian industrialist who comes across a world of criminal intrigue was a common trope in French "dark city" film dramas. Other examples include the murdered Novian in *Cœur de lila*s and the sober, unwitting husband in *Prisons de femmes* (Roger Richébé, 1937) who discovers the secret past criminal milieu of his wife.

recrimination. Carrefour was lauded in the French entertainment press as a model of national prestige. Suzy Prim, for example, was often referred to in the press as "the French Marlène [Dietrich]"⁴⁴ and Le Matin heralded it as "a French Film Made in France".⁴⁵ But like Coeur de lilas and Dans les rues, the film was very much an émigré production, a product of a crossing of French and German personnel. Apart from the direction by Curtis Bernhardt, who had just returned to Paris after making a multi-language version with Maurice Chevalier in England (The Beloved Vagabond / Le Vagabond Bien Aimé (1936), the script was written by the émigré journalist Hans Kafka, it was edited by Adolf Lantz and it was produced by Eugene Tuscherer, Bernhardt's brother-in-law.⁴⁶ In interviews just after his arrival in France in 1933, Bernhardt had expressed his hopes for the development of collaborative Franco-German film-making, arguing that the arrival of foreign film personnel in Paris was actually a moment of opportunity. "We should intensify the points of contact between the French and German film worlds", he commented. "Together, they could reveal a considerable amount of useful information".⁴⁷ Carrefour can be seen, to some extent, as the outcome of his wishes.

The introductory scene to Michèle's venue indicates how the nightclub was a place of cosmopolitan allure in Parisian filmic representation of the 1930s. In such places, the wealthy, generally male, bourgeois visitor was entertained in a lavish, often feminised, space of performance and illicit temptation. Temptation was coded with prostitution as the names of the establishments run by Françoise Rosay in Jenny (Marcel Carné, 1936)—Chez Jenny—or Michèle Morgan in L'Entraîneuse (Albert Valentin, 1938)—La Dame de Coeur—suggest. The venues were often signaled as feminised in two ways. Firstly, they were usually contrasted with a formal, heavily masculinised commercial or residential

⁴⁴See, for example, Pour Vous 26th November 1936, p. 6.

⁴⁵Le Matin 29th October 1938.

⁴⁶According to Horak (1996, 376–377), Tuscherer was one of the six German émigré producers who was able to set up independent production companies in Paris. The others were Seymour Nebenzahl, Max Glass, Herman Millakowsky, Arnold Pressburger and Gregor Rabinowitzch.

⁴⁷Cinémonde 29th June 1933.

CARREFOUR

1.1



1.2



1.3



1.4



1.5



1.6





space. In L'Entraîneuse, for example, the narrative begins with an all-male business dinner. We move from a dreary, elderly speaker to a shot of the butler opening a window. In similar style to La Vie Parisienne when we glide through the customs' window to the splendour of spectacular Paris, the camera lunges into the new space of the street and the lights of the club beyond. In the case of Carrefour, the first view of the Michèle nightclub is preceded by a tightly framed two-shot of the interior of a taxi carrying the stiff, dinner suited figures of de Vetheuil and his assistant through the city. The second cue before the camera usually moves inside the venue is the postcard image of Paris at night with illuminated neon lettering from the nightclub shining into the darkness of the city. In Carrefour, there is a beautifully composed image of the outside of the club. One part of the frame is taken up with an external view of the building with a line of descending letters spelling the name of Michèle. The other part of the frame shows a view over the rooftops of the city at night to the distant Sacré-Coeur at the peak of the hill of Montmartre. As the pianola music of the club plays, the letters come on, one by one, until the name of Michèle is integrated with its environs (See Carrefour Fig. 1.1). There is a neat touch at the end of the film when after Michèle's death, in the concluding image, this process is reversed and the letters are systematically extinguished.

When we move inside the nightclub in Carrefour the motif of crossing, which has already been signaled in the narrative by different journeys across the city, is materialised in the construction of the *mise-en-scène*. Elsaesser's suggestive notion (1984, 282) of "a preoccupation with disjunction, space and light" in relation to German émigré French cinema, is evident in the way the coherence of the identity of the protagonists becomes distorted with the fragmentation of their bodies by the criss-cross patterning of shadow on their skin and clothing (Fig. 1.2). In comparison to the general whiteness and depth of the space of the club in Jenny, for example, characters are also momentarily fixed or hemmed in by the collusion of the decor and the placing of the camera. Michèle thus leads

de Vetheuil and his companion from behind the lattices of the doorway into the space of the club. Nonetheless, the emphasis on luxury and glamour remains consistent with established tropes of representation. A visit to Michèle's entails a certain class privilege. When the male couple enters we see Michèle telling an assistant who remarks on the eighth bottle of champagne a customer has ordered: "Ah! He knows the superior way to live!". Each surface of the interior of the club connotes excess and glistening luxury.

Montmartre itself can be read as a crossroads. This part of the city had become by the 1930s a meeting point of different Parisian social types. Whilst the nightclubs, cabarets and entertainment venues of the locale played host to performances of Parisian-ness for visiting upper-class and bourgeois audiences, on the streets were the hoodlums and prostitutes beloved by the likes MacOrlan and Carco. Montmartre also signalled a meeting point between French and international entertainment culture. It was a space in the city in which non-French were offered a degree of cultural assimilation not provided elsewhere.⁴⁸ In her opening number at the nightclub a black jazz singer sings a romantic number in a hybrid mixture of English and French. The alterity of the language and musical form that she offers can be read in more than one way. Firstly, it works to simultaneously produce a sense of exoticism and Frenchness.⁴⁹ The crossing of French and English by the *chanteuse* may finally define her against the local onlookers but this performance of two cultures in Paris is actually curiously rather like the performance of Parisian-ness undertaken by the German personnel themselves. Both stage an aural or visual negotiation between two points of reference. This ambiguity thus takes us back to previous cultural representations of the city like La Vie parisienne which define Paris as both being uniquely French and at the same time belonging to the world. Secondly, the way in which the music

⁴⁸This point was made by Ginette Vincendeau at a lecture at the University of Warwick on 14th October 1997.

⁴⁹Another example of the way that the space of the nightclub could often be both French and international is shown in different scenes in L'Entrainseuse. At the beginning of the film, Fréhel is the singer in residence at La Dame de Coeur whilst later on in the narrative the club is pulsating with hot jazz music. There is also a black barbershop quintet at Chez Jenny in Jenny.

works lies in the context of cinematic culture. The crude association between jazz and night-time dangerous desires anticipates the noir American city that Bernhardt was himself to actually picture on his arrival in the United States.

The way in which the representation of the nightclub in Carrefour works suggestively within parameters set by other French films of the period is noticeable particularly in the inter-relationship between space and performance. When we see Michèle lead the two men to their seat it is done through a complexly staged tracking shot which simultaneously depicts the details of the social milieu and privileges the partnership between de Vetheuil and his former mistress. At the moment de Vetheuil says he wants to see Michèle alone their figures almost fill the frame, momentarily erasing the space of the heightened *mise-en-scène*. It is as if they are almost speaking for the inclusive benefit of the spectator (which is of course what they are doing in their simultaneous roles as known stars of Parisian film and theatre). This partnering of two character types is typical of the film. It is evident in the repartee between Prim and Berry (who were married to each other at the time) and in the contrast between the fixity and sobriety of Vanel and the fluid, constantly mobile, gestural performance of Berry. Without an edit, the couple then move back into the middle distance of this visually intoxicating site of spectacle and the men sit down. As we saw in Chapter Two, it has been suggested by Elsaesser (1984, 283) that "the difference between an actor's cinema such as prevailed in France and the German cinema of *mise-en-scène* and space may well have been the biggest obstacle to critical success for the émigrés films". Again, this does not appear to be true in the case of Carrefour. Frequently, throughout the film, the collusion between the known actorly styles of the lead performers and an aspect to the *mise-en-scène* such as a particularly strengthened use of lighting, decor or space works to produce distinctive meanings. As in the case of Gabin in Cœur de lilas, Vanel seems to literally emerge from expressive pools of shadow in key dramatic moments of the drama. The tension produced by the Germanic

heritage of the psychologically motivated lighting set-up in this case works with the particular narrative focus on unreliable identity to destabilise the spectator's perception of the ordinary figure of Vanel's taciturn but reliable persona. In the previously mentioned 1933 interview in the French press, Bernhardt had referred to the commonly perceived difference in performance styles between French and German film actors which I discussed in Chapter One. "German actors put more research into psychological motivation but they tend to be heavier and slower [than the French]", he remarked. "French actors are lighter, less deep but, at the same time, they have a greater degree of naturalness. The ideal would be halfway between one and the other".⁵⁰ One way of looking at Carrefour is to suggest that this ideal was achieved in terms of one seeing the film itself as a crossroads—a meeting between the brio of French performance and the narrative possibilities of Germanic visual style.

⁵⁰Cinémonde 29th June 1933.

IV: PARISIAN JOURNEYS BETWEEN THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

In the previous chapter I argued that La Vie Parisienne, La Crise est finie and Mauvaise graine partly made sense of the French capital by a series of journeys. This is also the case with the films discussed in this chapter which all include the depiction of travel across the city. In so doing, these émigré films produce new perspectives on the centrality of the *quartier* and the worlds of crime and entertainment to the representation of Paris as the city of darkness. Coeur de lilas, Dans les rues and Carrefour suggest, in a number of ways, that one must relate these narrative journeys to historical and textual questions about the travelling inter-relationship between the past and the present. It is this theme that I intend to develop in the concluding part of this chapter.

I have argued in the course of this thesis that a complex layering of nostalgia has to be acknowledged in relation to the representation of Paris in 1930s French cinema. This remains true in the way that nostalgia informs the links between urban crime and entertainment. As mentioned earlier on in this chapter, Parisian film crime of the period differed from that found in the dark and dangerous streets of cinematic Berlin. Instead of connoting a contemporary unease with the modern city, it often became fused with a safer and less confrontational perspective that looked back at past imaginings of the city. By the 1930s, for instance, the pre-World War One figure of the Parisian *apache* was already being widely mythologised within French cultural discourse. We can see émigré examples of this in the song On ne voit ça qu'à Paris in Siodmak's La Crise est finie and in Litvak and Courant's use of the figure of Martousse and the milieu of the criminal *quartier* in Coeur de lilas. The narrative movement away from the mythologised darkness of this environment in Coeur de lilas provides one specific example of a journeying between past and present. If we examine this key sequence closely, it becomes apparent that a different, more contemporary Paris emerges in the light of day. Importantly, we can also see, once

COEUR DE LILAS

3.1



3.2



3.3



3.4



3.5



3.6



again, how the émigrés' sophisticated handling of light helped, in a technical and aesthetic sense, to bring a past prowess in picturing Berlin forward to the present of picturing Paris.

The fact that the *quartier* in *Coeur de lilas* is seen as a world apart from the modern everyday city is developed, first of all, by the narrative transition back to the use of Parisian location footage. This happens soon after Lucot and Lilas leave the intimacy and complex spatial design of Pimenoff's set following the police raid. The couple are pictured in a long-shot of a darkened and deserted rainy street which recalls the potent atmospherics of the empty city at night in *La Chienne*. The intense light source of a lamppost on a corner breaks up the blackness (See *Coeur de lilas* Fig. 3:1). The two fugitives hail a bus and ask to be taken to the end of the line. The idea of the end of the line is a practical reality enabling the couple to go backwards and forwards along the route of the bus until dawn, but it also suggests a metaphorical dimension—there is nowhere else to go. The heightened atmosphere in this scene is derived partly from an almost surreal juxtaposition between the excessive noise and commotion of the raid and the quietude and isolation of this section of the city. It is also produced by Courant and Litvak's delicately staged inter-relationship between space, light and the object of attention of the camera. At one point the couple are framed in a medium close-up. Lucot has his arm around Lilas who is again gazing off-screen. As she speaks, the city passes by behind them through the bus window. The contrast between this flow of framed motion (akin to the progression of a reel of film) and their stillness works not to separate the couple from the city. Rather, the city also passes through them in the form of light which illuminates their features (Figs 3:2-3:4).

The limpidity of this extraordinary sequence is furthered by the preponderance of soft dissolves. After a succession of close-up images of an increasingly over-stuffed breast pocket of bus tickets, there is a dissolve to a view of the daylight city taken from inside the bus as it turns a street corner. Again, the city comes into the bus. At the moment the bus

swings around, the camera swings rightwards "into" the carriage and we see the conductor make his way down to the sleeping couple (**Fig. 3:5**). Paris is pictured full of life in daylight. As the bus pulls away and the passengers spill into the crowded public space of Les Halles, the screen fills with traffic and shouting street traders (**Fig. 3:6**). The sense of a shift to a new and more immediate social reality is effected. It is as if the bus has been a temporal and spatial border-zone between the *quartier* and the city centre. The progression from night to day underlines the fact that the *quartier* is only seen in the film as a night-time space but the destination of the bus is also significant. Les Halles is itself a blurred location, caught between night and day because of its nature as a late night/early morning market with its own set of cultural mythologies.⁵¹

The *quartier*'s version of urban representation relied on the inter-related components of song and music, costume, and the choreography of performance and set design but Paris is now pictured here by means of a succession of documentary style shots of contemporary social reality. The density of auditory and visual signifiers is signaled as other from the *quartier* by the integration of Lilas's individual reaction to this new version of city life. It is as if we are now invited to view the city through her eyes. The close-up of her feet on the pavement which dissolves to a close-up of her eyes flashing rightwards and leftwards invites a reading based on her momentary subjectivity. This is sustained by a succession of tightly framed shots which privilege her sense of her own self in this stimulating landscape. We cut from a shot of bunches of flowers to Lilas looking mutely off-screen right. Her gaze is turned down to the floor and her head appears to bow. The blaring interruption of the sound of a car horn breaks this interiority and the camera cuts to another close-up of Lilas's body. This time she appears to remove a handkerchief from the belt around her waist. We then cut to a shot of Lilas fervently sniffing the flowers. Litvak has briefly shown the newness and sensory impact of the heart of the city on one individual

⁵¹Les Halles was because of its historical proximity to many of the city's leisure and prostitution quarters also a meeting point of the city's classes.

through a filmic monitoring of optical, auditory and smell-related responses. The sense of release from the past class and gender restraints of the *fortifications* is furthered by Lilas's refashioning at the modern boutique. When she exits from the shop onto the Parisian street she exclaims: "Call me madame now!". The showroom dummy which the camera had foregrounded at the end of the previous shot remains in frame throughout the slow dissolve and only disappears at the moment when Lilas crosses the boundary of the shop door and the pavement. This neatly visualises the transition between aspiration and realisation regarding a different model of urban femininity. Lilas's new look removes her from the old marginal codes of the *quartier* and provides her with tentative foothold in the social currency of the present-day urban female consumer.

If the modern city is a place of liberation for Lilas, her past nevertheless comes back to haunt and imprison her. The past literally catches up with the present with the near simultaneous arrival of Martousse and Lucot's police superior at the *guinguette* where she is in hiding with Lucot. The revelation of Lucot's deception and the threat of entrapment prompt Lilas to escape. We see her running in a long shot away from the camera towards the direction of an overhead railway bridge, across which a train is moving. At this point, the fast-paced reprise of a wedding party song heard at the *guinguette* is underscored by an unsettling layer of drumming on the soundtrack. Litvak then cuts to a long series of forward tracking shots which picture Lilas constantly running into forward space, her body held relatively constant in the middle of the frame. The effect of this is giddy as if she is running back into her inescapable past. This notion is further suggested by the Germanic Expressionist-like superimpositions of grotesque and distorted spectral faces—first of people from the wedding reception and then of various male police officers. At the moment the faces of the law appear, the music returns to the theme of *Dans la rue*. In her head, it seems, she is back in the darkened world of the street.

The question which arises from this extended sequence in *Coeur de lilas*, amongst others, is why the "dark" world of the Parisian street was so frequently represented through the gauze of the past. What was the precise allure of seeing cinematic images of Paris being framed by a sense of their own real or imagined history? I argued in Chapter One that one way of understanding the representational difference between Berlin and Paris was in terms of the inter-relationship of place and memory in the two cities. I suggested that in the case of the French capital there was a naturally "accumulated sense of social inheritance" which related to the complex "modulated temporal layerings of Parisian existence". In other words, unlike in the case of Berlin, Paris had always had a more sedimented set of representational mythologies on which to draw upon. One way of reading this recourse to Paris's urban past in the 1930s might be to turn to the example of Benjamin's contemporaneous reading of Baudelaire and his subsequent discussion of the question of subjective experience in relation to city environment.

In his overall discussion of the impact of modernity on the urban individual, Benjamin reinterpreted Baudelaire's perceptual distinction between the eternal and the transitory. He instead examined the notion of memory and private experience in relation to traditional and modern forms of knowledge production. Taking his cue from the work of Bergson, Benjamin claimed that "experience is indeed a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life. It is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data" (1992 ed., 153-4). Benjamin differed from Bergson, however, by arguing that one could not voluntarily activate the re-emergence of this sensory data through the act of contemplation. Instead, he quoted Proust who wrote that the past is "somewhere beyond the reach of the intellect, and unmistakably present in some material object (or in the sensation which an object arouses in us" (qtd. in Benjamin 1992 ed., 155). What Benjamin went on to suggest was that by the 1920s, the impact of modern European city life was such that the traditional

contract between subjective experience and the processes of memory accumulation had been broken. Modernity could be distinguished instead by a particular disruption in subjectivity which rendered the "isolation of information from experience" (155). The oral tradition of the act of storytelling, with its emphasis on the experiential contract between teller and listener, had been broken by the emergence of abbreviated and unrelated data in mass circulation. Benjamin, for example, believed that the sensory shocks of modern urban experience even served the purpose of preparing the modern individual for the stimuli of the recorded moving image. He went as far as suggesting that in the cinematic spectator's experience, "perception in the form of shocks [was actually] established as a formal principle" (171).

Whilst retaining a certain measure of agreement with Benjamin's overall validation of the increasing pressures of contemporary city life, it appears that in the case of the Parisian related French cinema of the 1930s he was wrong. Filmgoing was clearly less a matter of continual perceptual shock than a pleasurable social activity which, through various acts of storytelling and modes of performance, actively engaged the urban audience with notions of an apparent collective past. Rather than being a way of forgetting, the cinema was in fact, as I suggested in Chapter One, a social environment in which to practice remembering. The images of Paris on the screen could even be seen, in one sense, as the Proustian mechanisms for the retrieval of a world which was now in transition. Pierre Nora has argued that the 1930s was a crucial decade in the development of French culture in that it saw a loosening of the grandiose unity between state and nation in favour of a plural notion of memory formation concerned, instead, with the relations between state and society. History became transformed "into a laboratory of past mentalities" (1989, 11). Film culture played a significant role in this. As well as the narrative qualities of the various film texts, one also saw the flowering of a memorialising film culture with the first

publication of Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach's *Histoire du cinéma* in 1935 and the founding of the Cinémathèque Française in 1936.

Despite the general tangible sensations of change in the material quality of the European urban experience, it is still necessary to account for the particularities of 1930s French cinema's relationship with the city and its representational past. We have seen, so far, that an account of the work of the émigrés in the industry can shed useful light on this process. In the early years of their arrival in Paris, the German émigrés were perceived by some, in negative terms, as representatives of a disruptive urban order, at odds with the local Parisian tradition. This anxiety about destabilisation, however, also had economic as well as cultural roots. It has almost become a truism to state that France in the 1930s was a nation in economic and political upheaval, but this sense of insecurity must have played a significant role in the popularity of "safer" depictions of Parisian life in popular entertainment culture. The delayed effects of the Great Depression had hit France hard and urban unemployment soared amidst the backdrop of a succession of short-lived cabinet governments. Since the end of the First World War, national revenue per head of the population had grown by an average figure of five per cent but in the 1930s, the figure fell twice as rapidly as it had just risen.⁵² The material nature of the built environment of Paris was emblematic of the overall nature of stasis in society. In the French capital, building industry contracts, even as late as 1938, were down by 40 per cent of their level a decade previously.⁵³ Added to all this was an important shift in the balance between the populations of the country's urban and rural areas. With the city now overtaking the country in sheer numbers, the role of Paris, as the depository of the nation's central mythologies, arguably became intensified.

⁵²Figure qtd. in Weber (1995, 42).

⁵³Ibid. (48).

What still remains under-recognised regarding French cinematic production of the period, however, is the sheer material and psychological impact of the First World War. As I have already pointed out in Chapter One, the impact was enormous—not least because of the scale of the nation's suffering. Most of the men killed would have actually seen their lives come to fruition in the 1930s. Everybody lived surrounded by veterans—they made up almost fifty per cent of the male population.⁵⁴ In the 1930s, the war was still a constant topic in political and cultural discourse. Many native French film personnel such as Charles Vanel had actually fought in the trenches. Others had lost their lives and thus deprived the post-war industry of their talents. Eugène Dabit was but just one of the many close to the film world in the 1930s who laid claim to the powerful effects of memory in relation to the experience of war. He wrote in his diary that "almost every night since my demobilisation, images of the front came back to haunt me, and—a still worse nightmare—I dreamed that hostilities were starting again" (qtd. in Weber, 12). How then exactly did the war affect the representation of Paris by the émigrés in the French cinema of the period? Did it play the same role as with native personnel, in that it seems to have contributed to the favouring of a safer distance from the problems of the present?

For the many émigrés who arrived in the Paris studios, the impact of the First World War firstly coloured both the welcome and the hostility that they experienced. On the one hand, their skills and training served a compensatory purpose, making up for perceived native weaknesses due to war-related economic under-development. On the other hand, however, they were constant reminders of a past enemy and, for some, they even signalled the trouble of a potential enemy to come. In terms of the relationship between memory and the picturing of Paris as the city of darkness we can discern two trends. One was largely concerned with uncovering the dark city and still representing it as it was once thought to be. This is largely the mode of *Dans les rues* and *Coeur de lilas* although, as we have seen,

⁵⁴Ibid. (12).

there may also be a complex interchange between notions of the urban past and the present. The second trend was where the past of the war literally caught up with the present so that the site of the battleground became the mind. Here, the past literally was dark because it remained unknown. This is the case in Bernhardt's Carrefour.

It has not been sufficiently recognised that Carrefour was actually based on a real-life war-time incident. According to an interview with the film's émigré scriptwriter, Hans Kafka, the film was inspired by the Bruneri- Canella case which had shocked Italian society in the 1920s. At the end of the First World War, two physically similar Italian soldiers had disappeared in Macedonia—one previously a Paduan professor (Bruneri), the other a wanted former Roman street criminal (Canella). A derelict and identityless man was found and claimed respectively by the "widow" of the professor and the father of the crook. Each city campaigned for the identity of "their own" man until, by chance, the old fingerprints of Canella were also found by the Rome police. The match was made and the case proven that the amnesiac really did have a criminal past. Despite all of this though, Bruneri's widow refused to accept the decision and after Canella was released from prison he eventually went to live as "Bruneri" with his "wife" in Padua. Hans Kafka, perhaps because of his German cultural heritage, was fascinated with this narrative motif of the *Doppelgänger* and went to visit "Bruneri" when preparing the script for Carrefour. He likened it to other similar examples in Germany and France. What fascinated him, he said, "was how an individual is impregnated by his milieu".⁵⁵ Kafka's comments remain forceful, not least in terms of the subtle awareness of his own situation as a German émigré still working in a largely alien environment and having to contribute to the production of a "French film".

⁵⁵Cinémonde 27th October 1938.

In *Carrefour*, the crossing of past and present is achieved through the central figure of Vetheuil. When the war veteran first appears at Michèle's nightclub, it is clear that he is not so much entering a novel world of danger and cosmopolitan allure, rather he is returning to his past—to the world he came from. It is not surprising that this mingling of past and present takes place in Montmartre. As I argued in Chapter Two, much Parisian music-hall entertainment which took place in this section of the capital explicitly projected an interpretation of past pleasure for a contemporary audience. Vetheuil is, in one sense, emblematic of the way in which Parisian film culture of the period also made use of past city mythologies by reconstituting them in contemporary filmic contexts. If we look, for example, at the conclusion to the cabaret sequence in the film, we may see how the film draws meaning from a sense of the past coming back to unsettle the spectacle of contemporary Parisian pleasure.

When de Vetheuil goes through the separating curtain to visit Michèle in her living quarters above the cabaret, he first of all enters the transitional, empty space of the foot of a staircase. Unlike the staircase of the *quartier* which integrates different levels of the community, this passageway separates the past and the present as well as the public and the private. Because of the shot's carefully constructed lighting set up, the spectator even appears to see the shadow of de Vetheuil's former self literally catch up with him on the wall as he mounts the stairs (**Fig. 1.3**). By the time de Vetheuil enters Michèle's room, he therefore also does so as Pettier, the Parisian criminal. The worlds of crime and entertainment fuse yet again. Like Jenny's quarters in the film *Jenny* (also designed by Jean d'Eaubonne), Michèle's room is decorated with a range of lightly coloured, soft, prominently expensive fabrics (**Fig. 1.4**). The zebra skin print on the floor connotes a different class reading of luxury from the sensible and discrete version of design found in de Vetheuil's bourgeois mansion. As Michèle recalls her romance with Pettier off-screen, the space is detailed in an extraordinarily rich, slow circular pan. We pass a vast window

showing the night-time cityscape (**Fig. 1.5**). An illuminated cinema sign breaks up the darkness outside. The camera also details a prominent photograph of Michèle's younger days before resting on a medium long-shot of the couple—de Vetheuil/Pettier seated on the sofa and Michèle resting at its edge on the floor. Whilst the dance music continues to be heard from downstairs, the camera moves in. She reminiscences about a *bistro* they used to frequent and their lives together in an apartment in the emblematic working class district of Belleville (**Fig. 1.6**). The sequence's powerful emphasis on visuality and remembering comes to the fore at the moment when this picture of shared nostalgia is punctuated by a fierce close-up of Vanel. Suddenly the dance music is broken by the sound of an interiorised soundtrack of music from Pettier's past. Belleville collides with Montmartre—the dark Parisian past enters the light Parisian present.

V: CONCLUSION

In an interview with the émigré director Kurt Bernhardt in the Summer of 1933, the French film journalist Henri Calef commented that "the cinema is an excellent vehicle for the intensification of relations between two nations—it permits not only a richer mutual knowledge but also a greater mutual understanding".⁵⁶ Calef's utopian ideals were apparently matched by the future director of Carrefour who, in another meeting with the Parisian press, argued that the presence of foreign filmmakers in France "was the only means by which to achieve an international cinema".⁵⁷ This chapter has examined what happened to these aspirations in relation to the émigré filmmakers' encounter with the French capital as the city of darkness.

We have seen that far from helping to create a completely new practice of international co-production, the émigrés actually colluded with existing French modes of "dark" cultural representation. Just as they helped to consolidate discourses of "light" contained in pre-existing Parisian entertainments, so the new arrivals from the Berlin studios turned, in this instance, to nineteenth and early twentieth conceptions of the city and the night. We have noted, for example, how they participated in the detailed depiction of the apparently authentic working class milieu of the Parisian street. They did this by relaying the same sense of social concern and investigative curiosity found in other traditions of representing the French capital. The émigrés also fitted into an established pattern of picturing the correspondence between criminality and entertainment in the city of darkness. Having said this though the émigrés noticeably mediated these tropes with an incoming awareness of the expressive possibilities of film form. In some cases this meant a new attention to the processes of filmic narration, in others this meant a sophisticated

⁵⁶Paris Midi 19th June 1933.

⁵⁷Cinémonde 29th June 1933.

handling of light. This awareness had been shaped through the output of the Berlin studios where a predilection for a more unsettling and modern-day kind of cinematic urban darkness had resulted in a number of successfully exported films in the 1920s and early 1930s. Ironically, it was partly the very success of such films that lent weight to the outbreak of xenophobic French voices protesting the arrival of the post-1933 wave of émigrés. By conflating German Jewishness with urban disorder and "morbidity", the French right-wing turned what might have just been an economic argument into a critical and political dispute over the direction of how one should understand the city.

In his interview with Paris Midi, Kurt Bernhardt suggested himself that one of the major faults of the German cinema had been to give an over visible place to technique. "A good film should make the audience forget the presence of the camera", he declared.⁵⁸ Elsaesser (1984) has largely concurred with this assessment, arguing that the French films of the German émigrés suffered from an over-determined sense of form in which objects and visual effect may have mattered more than actorly performance. I have argued differently in the case of the émigrés' handling of the depiction of Paris as the city of darkness. The émigrés' awareness of film form actually served the needs of this kind of film. It privileged both a sense of uncovering and looking and a particularly concentrated and intense awareness of the interplay between light and shadow in relation to the urban decor. In so doing it allowed the émigrés to fit in by at the same time being different.

Bernhardt's comments about cinematic cooperation remind us of one further reason why a discussion of the Parisian work of the German émigrés is so important. The émigrés' involvement in the exploration of the streets of "dark Paris" also mattered because of the increasing threat to European cinema from the Hollywood studios. Instead of helping to shape Bernhardt's aspiration of a real international counterbalance to American hegemony,

⁵⁸Paris Midi 19th June 1933.

the émigrés' technical prowess actually played a key role in the resurgence of the French film industry. This was most noticeable in the urban-based model of filmmaking known as poetic realism of which Dans les rues and Coeur de lilas are important early, though previously largely neglected, examples.

Like the features examined in Chapter Two, these émigré films which represent Paris as the city of darkness can best be seen as hybrid productions. They were hybrid not just in the sense that they were made by personnel from different countries but also because of their historically specific awareness of an inter-relationship between the Parisian past and the Parisian present. I have argued that this return to urban memory may have been due, in part, to a particular representational culture which looked back to past mythologies of dark Paris at the expense of the dark consequences of contemporary economic and political instability. Further, I have underlined, again, the importance of the dark shadow of the First World War in the portrayal of the city. It remains a further irony that the former enemy colluded with native French personnel in this process of picturing the site of so much symbolic national meaning. Overall, it seems, as I suggested in Chapter Two, that the émigrés were divided in more ways than one. I shall now turn, in the final chapter, to examine how some émigrés actually portrayed their own place of exile as divided by considering the representation of Paris itself as "the divided city".



Chapter Four

Divided City

I: INTRODUCTION

In the preceding chapters, I have shown that an analysis of the representation of Paris in the films made by the émigrés can best be sustained by paying close attention to a number of dualities. I argued that the films in question made detailed reference to an ongoing pattern of Parisian representation which related to historically specific cultural notions of either light or darkness. I suggested, however, that whilst a number of émigré features did pay close attention to this dichotomy, they also introduced a secondary set of mainly stylistic attributes which helped refract the conventions of 1930s French cinematic urban representation in new ways. I presented evidence, for example, of a heightened insistence on the plasticity of the film image which at significant moments in the course of the film draws attention, in a modernist sense, to cinematic technique. These effects may still, nonetheless, collude with diegetic concerns. Linked to this point was the importance of the émigré cinematographic manipulation of expressive levels of light and darkness for sophisticated narrative purposes relating to the depiction of the French capital. I showed how these effects might work specifically with the urban-related set design to present a psychologically enhanced sense of place. The textual instability suggested in this stylistic borrowing from the past of Berlin to represent the present of Paris frequently worked along side a secondary set of diegetic journeyings between past and present. In this sense, the texts I have considered can best be described as hybrid or somehow multiple.

I now want to consolidate an understanding of the ways in which Paris can be seen in terms of darkness and light by looking in detail at two émigré films which at the time of their original reception were also described as hybrid. Writing in Gringoire, the critic Georges Champeaux noted that Pièges (1939) (See Appendix 14), Robert Siodmak's final film made in France before departure to the United States, seemed like a dark Parisian police drama but it wasn't. "Pièges has neither the cut nor the rhythm of a police film" he

stated. "What it seems is a succession of sketches destined to bring its comical or bizarre characters to life in front of us. The slowness and, it has to be said, the talent with which the director Robert Siodmak describes the social milieu of each of his characters scarcely contributes to strengthening the film's illusion".¹ Fritz Lang's only film made in France, Liliom (1934) (See Appendix 15), was similarly seen as divided, not least because halfway through the film's proceedings the eponymous lead, a Parisian *mauvais garçon* played by Charles Boyer, leaves the milieu of the Parisian *zone* and is transported in a fantastic journey to heaven. Many of Liliom's critics also made specific reference to the national hybridity of a film which was based on a play by the Hungarian playwright Molnar, produced by the renowned U.F.A. name Erich Pommer and directed by Germany's most famous director Fritz Lang. For the right wing cultural press, for example, Liliom stood as an exemplary model of the dangers of a multi-cultural film culture based in France. The virulently anti-Semitic François Vinneuil saw "this French-Jewish-Hungarian collaboration" as a return to "that bizarre and boring cinematic country produced by U.F.A.'s French-German dramas [which was] a «no man's land» alot closer to the Sprée than to the Seine, a Babel emptied of all character".²

¹ Gringoire 21st December 1940.

² Action Française, 28th April 1934.

ILLUSTRATION TWELVE—PRESS ADVERTISEMENT FOR LILION



Pièges and Liliom are examples of a particular strand of émigré picturing of the French capital which consolidated, in part, what has been discussed in the preceding chapters regarding the cities of light and darkness. At the same time, however, these two films also express a more fragmented notion of the conventions of Parisian representation. In this sense, they are both divided. I will look at them in relation to three overlapping contexts. Firstly, I want to consider the way in which the two productions, to a certain extent, frame the period in question. Fritz Lang's Liliom follows on from the work of the émigrés who came to Paris for economically or technically related reasons in the 1930s, but it may be seen as a snapshot of the opening wave of the primarily politically minded emigration of Berlin film personnel after the Nazi consolidation of power in 1933. It was the first film produced by the French subsidiary of the American Fox Film Corporation under the head of fellow émigré, Erich Pommer, former production head of U.F.A. in Berlin. Robert Siodmak's Pièges, on the other hand, was completed just before his departure for Hollywood and did not receive a Parisian release until December 1939 by which time its director was already in the United States. In one sense, it was a passport film with one eye on the future as well as the present. Through a survey of the production histories of the two separate features, I thus want to redefine more clearly the work of the émigrés whilst they were in France. How do the films relate to the apparent division between the idea of Paris as the centre of domestic film production and the idea of Paris as the place of temporary exile? Secondly, I wish to look at the question of performance and identity. Both films, for example, starred lead male actors who had had international careers but were, at the same time, closely connected in the public sphere to specific notions of Frenchness and Parisian culture. How were Maurice Chevalier and Charles Boyer used in the two features in relation to the specific question of the representation of Paris? Did their own "divided status" inform an understanding of the way the French capital was pictured? My third frame of reference follows on from these two points. Through close textual analysis, I will take up the question of travel and return to the notion

of journeying which has been a central metaphor in this thesis. How does the evident mobility in the films' narratives relate to the representation of place and location? In other words, if one is to characterise the Paris of Pièges and Liliom as divided, in what ways was the city itself split and how was this division informed by the matter of emigration?

II: THE DIVIDED CITY IN CONTEXT

As we saw in Chapter One, Josef Goebbels called for a boycott of all Jewish businesses soon after Adolf Hitler had become Chancellor on January 30th 1933. It was clear that the Nazis had the extensive popularity of the national cinema industry in their sights for immediate political and ideological reorientation. On March 29th, two days after the Hotel Kaiserhof meeting between Goebbels and an invited group of film industry professionals, Fritz Lang's most recent German film, Das Testament der Doctor Mabuse (1933), was formally banned for German exhibition by the German Board of Film Censors. As well as dismissing all Jewish employees, U.F.A.'s board authorised that two films of "purely German character" be given immediate production priority over previously scheduled French language versions.³ It is a paradox that Liliom, Pommer and Lang's first émigré film project in France, distinctively played on a sense of national hybridity to the point where the formal qualities of the film's depiction of Paris were actually criticised in the French press for being too heavily "German". Jean Laury even commented, for example, that "the concern of the director might have been to make a French film, but in fact Liliom is a German film par excellence".⁴

According to the legend, repeated not least by Lang himself, Germany's most celebrated film director fled Berlin on the night train to Paris after being asked by Goebbels to head a new Nazi film agency in early April. It has recently been verified, however, that Lang's movements prior to his final stay in Paris were more fluid and less conducive to the dramatic scenario hitherto painted (McGilligan, 173). Like his friend, Erich Pommer, it appears that, as an elite member of the German film industry, Lang was able to make extensive preparations for departure from the increasingly anti-Semitic and xenophobic

³See Hardt (1996, 138).

⁴Le Figaro 29th April 1934.

culture of Berlin. He did leave for Paris in June 1933 but actually returned to Germany before finally leaving his native country on July 31st 1933. An indication of Lang's status and economic mobility is the fact that, unlike many of his exiled compatriots who stayed in poorer lodgings like the Hotel Ansonia, 8 rue de Saigon, Lang was provided with a luxurious room at the Hotel George V. Curt Riess, in fact, called him "an emigrant deluxe" (qtd. in McGilligan, 191). Pommer, as we saw in Chapter One, had earlier in the year made detailed financial arrangements in the United States with Fox Film Corporation's president Sidney Kent to set up a film production division based in Europe. He was therefore able to leave Germany for France with the knowledge that he had business to attend to. Originally, of course, Fox Film Europa was to be based in Germany. By August, however, announcements were being made in the French film press that Pommer had established a *modus operandi* which would stimulate French film production by producing French and English language films in Paris.⁵ One of the directors he wished to work with was his compatriot, Fritz Lang.

It is ironic that Pommer should chose such a determinedly cosmopolitan project for Fox Europa's first foray in France. *Liliom* was closely based on the successful Hungarian play by Frederic Molnar which had been performed with Georges Pitoëff at the Comédie des Champs-Elysées in Paris in 1923. Interestingly, the production had been, at the time, situated in the context of the dark tradition of urban representation. For one critic, it was reminiscent of the work of Francis Carco and, for another anonymous writer, it had a *mise-en-scène* heavily influenced by the Berlin cinema "with an accumulation of heavy and clumsy details in the German taste". Lang had actually seen the Berlin production with Hans Albers in the 1920s and a previous film adaptation had been made by Frank Borzage for Fox in 1930 with Charles Farrel in the lead. The national origins of the production crew were heterogeneous. Lang's assistant was Gilbert Mandelik, a German Jewish film

⁵It is somewhat appropriate, therefore, that the offices for Fox Europa were in the New York Herald Tribune building.

professional; the cinematographer was Rudolph Maté (who had completed Dans les rues the same year); the composer was Franz Wachsmann (who had arranged the score for Der blaue Engel and was to work on La Crise est finie and Mauvaise graine) and the script was co-written by former U.F.A. employee Robert Liebmann.⁶ Liliom was nonetheless very much a project designed for Lang. The director's particular credentials were heavily signalled in Nino Franck's contemporaneous interview which mentioned: "a German build" combined with "the elegance of a Parisian *bon viveur* ... in short, a curious mixture on first sight of a man of the North and a man of the South—of German and Latin culture".⁷

Liliom began shooting in November at the Studios des Réservoirs at Joinville and it was released in Paris the following Spring. The film's plot concerns the life and death of Liliom (Charles Boyer), a *mauvais garçon* who lives in the *zone* on the outskirts of Paris. Liliom works as a hawker at a local fairground for Mme Moscat (Florelle), the owner of a merry-go-round. One evening he decides to approach two girls who have been coming regularly to the fair. He later begins a love affair with one of them. Julie (Madelaine Ozeray) and Liliom set up home with Julie's aunt Madame Menoux (Maximilienne) and they establish a photographic business. Liliom is frequently moody and short-tempered at home. Julie becomes pregnant and, short of money, Liliom plans a robbery with his former criminal friend Alfred (Pierre Alcover). The scheme goes wrong and in desperation Liliom kills himself. Liliom is taken to the judicial sector of heaven and watches a film recording of his earthly domestic temper before being put in purgatory. Many years later he is allowed briefly to return to earth where he meets his daughter. Liliom's tears back in heaven restore the scales of justice so that he is finally absolved of his crime.

⁶Liebmann's Berlin credits include Voruntersuchung (Robert Siodmak, 1931) and Stürme der Leidenschaft (Robert Siodmak, 1931).

⁷Pour Vous, 31st August 1933.

In a number of production reports which appeared in the French film press, the interest generated in the film was two-fold. Firstly, as was the case when the film was eventually released, many noted the contribution of a particularly German aesthetic to the depiction of life in the French capital. Paul Reboux was typical when he wrote of the "rather dark cinematography" and the "habitual slowness in the rhythm often found in German films" in relation to *Liliom*.⁸ Interestingly, at the same time as recognising difference, commentators were also keen to evoke the verisimilitude of the production's depiction of Paris. In a previous report in *Paris-Midi*, Claude Jahni claimed that the atmosphere on the film set captured the exact "sentiments of anguish and melancholy" that he claimed to feel when he came across a *fête foraine de quartier* (local fairground). "All that was missing for the illusion to be perfect was the smell of chips. ... Fritz Lang has masterfully reconstructed in the finest detail an ambience so French, so much of the people, that one is left confounded".⁹ This conflation of the Parisian quotidian and a certain externalised weight, gloom and shadow to aspects of the *mise-en-scène* is, as we saw in the previous chapter, a central facet of the émigrés representation of the city of darkness.

According to Dumont, Robert Siodmak actually worked as an émigré in France between 1933 and 1939 without a work permit.¹⁰ During the shooting of *Pièges* Siodmak discovered, by chance, that he had not in fact lost his original American nationality. After many years of professional insecurity and anxiety caused, not least, by sometime hostile resentment of his continuing presence in the French film industry, he therefore seized his chance to aim for a more settled existence in the United States. He left Europe on August 31st sailing aboard the French liner Champlain with a copy of *Pièges* in his luggage. He originally had plans to return briefly the following year and complete a proposed project in Holland but war broke out the next day.

⁸*Paris-Midi*, January 20th 1934.

⁹9th December 1933.

¹⁰See Dumont (1981, 122-128).

Siódmak's final French film was a heterogeneous film in more than one sense. Firstly, according to some critics, it looks backwards and forwards at the same time. Dumont, for instance, claims that "Pièges returns at times to the climate of Siódmak's early films at U.F.A. with their fascination with sordid detail and their pitiless lighting, whereas certain harrowing parts ... already pre-empt American work such as The Spiral Staircase" (125).¹¹ This may be true but it is also useful, secondly, to situate Pièges within the hitherto relatively ignored historical context of Siódmak's French work. The film's narrative and aesthetic framework relies on the motif of detection to knit together a series of sequences and episodes set in Paris. This particular instance of disparity is in fact indicative of the variety of the whole of Siódmak's exile career during which he made films, as we have seen, in a number of genres. What is more, despite the fact that Pièges was seen as an authored film by Siódmak at the time of its release at the end of 1939 in Paris, it was an "international" production in the sense that, like so many émigré films made in France, it was a compilation of joint creative efforts from varying national backgrounds. The multiplicity of sets—which signalled the prestige of the production as well as the geographical scope of the representation of Paris—was, for example, managed by the Russian émigré Georges Wakhévitch. Wakhévitch had been working in Paris since 1921. He designed the noirish Montparnasse interiors for Duvivier's version of Simenon's La Tête d'un homme, as well as the sets for the James L. Cain adaptation Le Dernier tournant (Pierre Chenal, 1939) which appeared the same year as Pièges. The complicated lighting set ups which had to range from extensive scenes of Parisian high-life to the nocturnal shadows of city streets and back rooms were organised by the team of Michel Kelber and Ted Pahle who had worked together previously on other French productions in the 1930s. Both were not native to France; Pahle was an American of German origin and Kelber, though educated in France, originally hailed from Russia. One of the screenwriters, Ernest

¹¹ Elsaesser (1996, 140) even suggests that the film "should really have been made in Hollywood, and by Lubitsch ... because it illustrates to perfection the "misrecognition" factor of Austro-Germans as directors of Hapsburg decadence or Parisian operetta, given the prominent presence in Pièges of both Erich von Stroheim and Maurice Chevalier".

Neuville, was also an émigré from Berlin. Under the name of Ernest Neubach he had worked with Siodmak on der Mann der Seinen Mörder Sucht (Robert Siodmak, 1930).

Pièges was based on a stage play by Norbert Garay but it had its origins in the sensational Eugen Weidman affair that had gripped the attentions of the Parisian public in 1937. Weidman had been a linguistically gifted German intellectual residing in the city. He also turned out to be the serial killer wanted by the French police after a spate of widely publicised murders of Parisian tourists. The aunt of one of his victims was forced to place contact messages in the Paris edition of the Herald Tribune—hence the use of the newspaper motif in the film. His trial was covered in the press by the likes of Colette and even attended, according to Dumont, by Maurice Chevalier—the film's main star. Weidman's was the last public beheading in France.¹² When the film was released, it was thus reviewed in the French press as a *policier*. It is, indeed, a detective mystery in the sense that it concerns the efforts of the Parisian police to catch a mysterious assassin who has been murdering young women in the capital. Confounded by a number of teasing letters from the killer, commissaire Ténier (André Brunot) enlists the help of a young woman, Adrienne Charpentier (Marie Déa), who worked as a "taxi-girl"¹³ with the most recent victim. Adrienne is sent in disguise to answer a number of personnel announcements in the city press where the police believe the killer is locating his victims. She meets Pears (Erich von Stroheim), an insane former celebrated Parisian fashion designer, who invites her to his "latest collection" in his empty mansion. Adrienne escapes when Pears sets fire to his home in despair. A mysterious music lover invites her to a classical concert where she meets Robert Fleury (Maurice Chevalier), a suave night-club owner and his assistant Brémontière (Pierre Renoir). Adrienne takes up employment as a maid in a large house run by the sinister head butler Maxime (Jacques Varennes). One evening she meets Fleury

¹²See Flanner (1988 edition, 206-217).

¹³The "taxi-girls" in the film work in a dance hall where they are "on hire" to male visitors as dance partners. Billy Wilder had been a taxi-dancer in Berlin at the time when he met Robert Siodmak in the 1920s.

again as one of the house guests. He invites her out but she declines as she has promised to go the "Cordon Bleu" dance with the housekeeper. At the dance, Adrienne is surprised by the appearance of Fleury in disguise. The same evening, she uncovers the female white-slave racket run by Maxime and the housekeeper which explains the mysterious number of young girls who had "left" the household previously. Adrienne and Fleury marry. The case appears solved but for the subsequent discovery of a number of incriminating photographs and mementos in Fleury's house. Fleury is arrested and is only saved from the death penalty by the proven suspicion of Ténier that Brémontière was the true killer after all.

Despite the fact that *Pièges* was advertised as an investigative police drama, it was conceived, according to the director's contemporaneous interviews, as more a film in line with the 1930s vogue for "episode films" such as the internationally successful *Un Carnet de bal* (Julien Duvivier, 1937). In an interview with *Le Jour*, Siodmak described how he saw the detective theme as the framework for an exploration of the multiple milieux of Parisian society. "Circumstances lead us into lifting the curtain which masks the private life of individuals ... who belong to very different social backgrounds", he claimed. This framework also meant a looser generic structure to the film. "There is the chance of not being strictly locked into one kind of film. On the contrary, one can touch on the differing rhythms of comedy, drama, adventure comedy and develop sketches with either happy, sad or humourous ambiences".¹⁴ In a later interview, the director went on to argue that *Pièges* was a psychological film, claiming that he had chosen his cast for reasons of psychological and physical veracity. These are the words of an experienced professional who had, by now, after several years, formed an intimate knowledge of the repertoire of French film and stage acting talents but Siodmak's comments also point to the central contradiction of the film. Whilst the surface of the film presents a gallery of distinctively recognisable Parisian character types and locales, the narrative also draws attention to the unreliability of such

¹⁴*Le Jour*. 18th January 1939.

appearances. In fact, most of the central characters are shown to be engaged in some form of duplicitous performance and these performances are cues for an exploration of another kind of Paris, another kind of reality. Just as Liliom hovers between a minutely detailed, if somewhat stylised realist drama of "dark Paris" and a "lighter", more fanciful and metaphysical version of the city, so does Pièges play with the Paris "we know". A mysterious and shadowy encounter on a Parisian street corner between Adrienne and an unnamed stranger turns from a conventionally noirish encounter to the revelation that the stranger is the comic, buffoonish police protector Batol (Jean Temerson) who lives in an ordinary Parisian apartment with his mother. The constrained and ordered world of a bourgeois Parisian mansion is the setting for an intricately structured ring of international prostitution. Central to these sets of parallels is the way that the "virtuous" duplicity of the female lead is seemingly mirrored by the shocking and murderous duplicities of the male lead character played by Chevalier. By casting Chevalier, apparently against type as a criminal, we come to the greatest play on the question of performance that the film contends with. And so it is to the matter of stardom, identity and performance, in relation to Paris, that I shall now turn.

III: DIVIDED CHARACTERS, DIVIDED CITY

An understanding of the way that the performances of Maurice Chevalier and Charles Boyer figure in *Pièges* and *Liliom* is crucial to the broader issue of the two films' depiction of the French capital. Both stars either at home or abroad, on stage or on screen, were associated in the 1920s and 1930s with particular versions of Parisian-ness which, in turn, also meant differently inflected forms of French masculinity. The two men were friends and their careers dovetailed each other in the realm of international film stardom. They had both become successful in Hollywood in the early years of the sound era since French speaking actors were required in French language versions that were shot in the United States. Boyer, for example, made the hugely successful French language version *Big House* (Paul Fejos, 1930) as well as English language version films such as *The Magnificent Lie* (Berthold Viertel, 1931). Chevalier starred in English and French language versions of the same film such as *Paramount on Parade* (Arzner, Goulding, Lubitsch et al, 1928).¹⁵ Chevalier's part in *Folies Bergère/L'Homme des Folies Bergère* (Roy Del Ruth, 1935) was even originally intended for Boyer.

According to his memoirs (1946, 198), Chevalier looked to Boyer for intellectual guidance in their friendship. This fact points to the critical cultural difference between the Parisian personas of the two men—one of class and location. Boyer came from a highbrow tradition of theatrical training combined with a formal university education at the Sorbonne. His smooth, rounded facial features suggest a polished and groomed version of the French male which in his overseas persona became inflected, notoriously, with stereotypical notions of the allure of the French Latin lover. Writing in *Cinémagazine*, Jean Vidal noted that "French cinema possessed in Charles Boyer one of its finest actors or rather it would possess him if it had known how to keep him. ... [Boyer] has a bright and vivacious

¹⁵The French language version of this film was actually shot in Joinville, France.

sensibility but one subject to a willful and penetrating intelligence".¹⁶ If Boyer represented a more timeless, cultivated tradition of Parisian culture, Chevalier, fashioned a complex identity in relation to the French capital that had its origins in the working class milieux of the 19th and 20th *arrondissements*. Chevalier was born in Ménilmontant, on the edge of Belleville and so, according to his self mythology, his character was informed, from the beginning, with a sense of geographical and cultural division. Belleville, he wrote, was "a swarming rabble [which] seemed like the capital of the *faubourgs* of Paris. ... Brave and honest lads were used to rubbing shoulders with the pimp suspected of the most awful deeds. Ménilmontant, in comparison, was a bit like a calm parent; gentle and in some way, poetic" (198). Chevalier's first stage identity, at local *café-concerts*, was as an earthy comic singer in the tradition of Dranem. Only after the First World War, when he learned English in a German prisoner-of-war camp, did he begin to play on his origins and appear as the archetypal Parisian *gavroche* for the bourgeois, grand music-hall venue audience. The persona he developed was a complex negotiation between nostalgia and modernity, between a past and a contemporary urban identity. On the one hand, Chevalier "affirmed the image of the cheeky Parisian ... with his *gouaille* (cocky Parisian banter), his accent and his gestural arsenal: the swaying gait, the putting on for show, the shrugging of the shoulders, the raising of his hat with his hands in his pockets or the armholes of his waistcoat" (Vincendeau, 1996, 95); yet, on the other, he signalled something more contemporary. By also adopting the recognisable trademarks of the bowtie and boater and a looser, more syncopated orchestration to his melodies, he embodied the more metropolitan sophistication of the urban dandy who was at home as much amongst upscale modern milieux, such as the casino or luxury art deco music-hall, as the working class street. Central to this modernity were two other inter-related factors which also contributed to Chevalier's subsequent success as a film star—technology and international travel. Through the twin media of gramophone recordings and radio, the star's rendition of Paris

¹⁶February 1932.

was performed and circulated for audiences beyond the contours of the city's geographical boundaries. Chevalier, in the printed fan press, was also associated with other signifiers of modern life such as the automobile and jazz and this fuelled his integration into an internationalised discourse of Parisian identity which was then reinserted into popular performances on-stage for tourists at leading French venues.

Charles Boyer and Maurice Chevalier were both, therefore, conventionally cast in the light Parisian tradition of representation. They shared a dual form of cinematic appeal which meant something identifiably Parisian, and thus French, to both the national and the international film audience. For the domestic spectator, this appeal could mean a sense of intimate recognition and pride—Chevalier was called "*notre Maurice national*".¹⁷ To the international public, Boyer and Chevalier were the signifiers of an exportable version of national identity. Boyer, for instance, was called "the ambassador of French film to the United States".¹⁸ In *Liliom* and *Pièges* the two male lead stars were, however, seemingly cast against type. In Lang's film, Boyer is a rough but somewhat lovable Parisian former petty criminal whereas, in the Siodmak vehicle, Chevalier, cast as a raffish and well-connected night-club owner, actually spends a good deal of the film under heavy suspicion of multiple murder. What I want to examine now, is how these reversals actually foreground the means by which the two films, as émigré productions, stage a sense of division between the city of darkness and the city of light.

Vincendeau (1996, 95) has argued that Chevalier's French films of the 1930s reconcile the dichotomy in his star persona between the world of luxury and the world of popular Paris by situating the narratives within the sphere of urban spectacle or

¹⁷Pour Vous, 7th June 1939. The "loyalty" of Chevalier to his home country needed promotion however. For the French language version of *Innocents of Paris* (Richard Wallace, 1929), *La Chanson de Paris* (Richard Wallace, 1929), for example, Paramount added a special prologue by Chevalier to reassure the French public that he was still a *gars de faubourg* (lad of the *faubourg*). See Rearick (1997, 120).

¹⁸Mon Film, May 1937.

performance. This is true if we look at *Avec le sourire* (Maurice Tourneur, 1936), for example. At the beginning of the film, we see Chevalier strike a Chaplin-esque pose on a road to Paris to seek his fortune. He is dressed in a conventional, proletarian cloth cap and working man's clothes. By the end of the film, by dint of his élan and natural cheek, he has worked his way up from doorman to theatrical revue to directorship of the Paris Opéra. Although Chevalier is now habitually found in a dinner suit, the fluidity and ease of his body language and character still mark him as separate from the dour, stiffened bourgeois male he has replaced in the job. In *Pièges*, Robert Fleury is already a man at the top but, as with *Avec le sourire*, one not readily identified with urban high culture. At the classical concert, at which he is introduced in the narrative, he complains to his friend that there are no pretty women. "Be quiet and listen to the music!", his companion retorts. "Without lyrics?", Chevalier wants to know, in surprise. Later, in the interval to the concert, Fleury is called "our ambassador to Parisian night life". These remarks are the hallmark of the conflation of man of spectacle and archetypal Parisian dandy/lover that Vincendeau argues ultimately leaves Fleury positioned in the narrative as an "empty shell" (97). In a film in which the motifs of disguise and transgression are paramount, Fleury's "tragedy", she points out, "is not that of a judicial error but that of the myth of the Parisian seducer" (97).

The core of Vincendeau's argument rests in the way that *Pièges* manages the luxury/popular dichotomy in Chevalier's persona through the integration of the two songs that the star performs and the milieux in which they are set. The first song, *Mon amour*, is sung in Fleury's flagship nightclub whilst the second, *Il pleurait comme une madeleine*, takes place at the more modest Bal du Cordon Bleu with a decor of muralled trellises and chains of bobbing lights and decorations reminiscent of the popular milieu of a *guinguette*. At the nightclub, Fleury sings as "himself" (even though we are, of course, cued to recognise this as "a Chevalier moment") but at the Bal he plays, in disguise, a singing working class chauffeur. In a neat twist on the play between appearance and reality that the

film perpetuates, Fleury the "chauffeur" is matched here with Adrienne, in disguise, as not the "taxi-girl". Vincendeau is right in saying that, in terms of the inter-relationship between *mise-en-scène* and performance, both songs are, in fact, very similar. Both showcase the same gestural charm and mobility of the performer. Both use the diegetic audience not only to position the body of the star as the central component of the screen frame but also as participants in the energy and communality of the moment. Chevalier gets the night club guests to sing-a-long in a cued refrain, for example, whilst at the *bal*, the song is a cue for everyone to start dancing. The point of this similarity is to emphasise the predictable nature of the Fleury persona as a somewhat hollow (and unreliable) man of spectacle, but Vincendeau then goes on to underline this fixity with recourse to two other fundamental tropes of Parisian representation—the *tradition comique-grivoise* and the depiction of male poetic realist hero. The song that Chevalier sings at the *bal*, about a man who cannot stop weeping, even at orgasm, belongs to the live tradition of Parisian ribald humour which places the question of sexuality literally onto the field of the body itself where it then becomes an object—the externalised focus of derisive pleasure. When Chevalier, performing in disguise as a member of the popular classes, also, simultaneously, performs the actions of a man who cannot stop crying in front of the audience; he is, thus, merely reaffirming the superficial, surface nature of his particular male identity. As a result of this emphasis on performance, Fleury/Chevalier is thus denied the interiorised version of male subjectivity carried, for example, by the tragic Parisian proletarian hero embodied by Gabin in poetic realist dramas like *Le Jour se lève*. The Gabin persona, in these films, Vincendeau argues, was allowed to be both agent and object of romantic sexual desire. In *Pièges*, on the other hand, Chevalier remains truly divided, caught "halfway between the comics of the *café-concert* and the tragic image of a Gabin" (97). The identity of "the man of spectacle" becomes, according to these terms, a meeting point—the site where division occurs and rests.

Pièges, it appears, had a sure hold, as an émigré film, on a range of meanings in Parisian popular culture. However, I now want to argue that it was also because of its émigré status that it presented a particular conception of the Chevalier Parisian persona. By looking further at the way in which the *mise-en-scène* elaborates on the theme of division outlined so far, we can see more clearly how the figure of Chevalier/Fleury works in relation to the separation between the city of darkness and the city of light. In her article on Pièges, Vincendeau suggests that the characters of Fleury and Brémontière work as a kind of couple in the film to the extent that they double one another. An example of this is the way in which Brémontière is seen as the serial killer, "the man of shadow" whilst Fleury is seen as the serial seducer, "the man of spectacle". This is certainly true in relation to the way the film contrasts the conventionally bright jocular banter of Fleury in his natural milieu and the noirish psychology of the office scene when Brémontière is finally unmasked. The distinction that is being made here is also a matter of the difference in performances between the two actors. The solidity and gravity of Pierre Renoir serves as a counterweight to the extreme mobility and lightness of Chevalier's body language. However, I also want to argue that the figure of Chevalier is further divided in the sense that the film, whilst accommodating his "natural" milieu of performance and light spectacle, also "performs darkness" on him. If we contrast the way, for example, Fleury is pictured in his nightclub and the way he is pictured when taken to the police we see more than a commentary on the inherent hollowness of his persona, we uncover a particular mode of choreography and artifice which chimes with Elsaesser's previously referred to discussion of the character of French German émigré cinema.

Fleury's nightclub is associated with space, light, whiteness and depth. There is an emphasis on round forms which is exemplified by the way that the milieu is established. Siodmak opens the sequence with a high-angle shot with a considerable depth of field. We see an extravagant decor of spiralling columns, a central oval stage and, in the foreground,

a set of tables and spectators which encircle the space of performance. A flamenco dancer begins to move rightwards across the stage. This motif is continued in the subsequent medium long-shot in which we see Adrienne descend one of the stairways in the same direction. The camera commences a slow rightwards, circular tracking motion at the moment when a waiter meets her and starts to take her to a table at which Fleury is sitting. In the course of this, the luxurious, brightly lit features of the nightclub are deliberately detailed. The setting comes before the owner. In this sense, the *mise-en-scène* fits Elsaesser's notion of a typical émigré "double focus of attention" between "narrative intrigue" and the "playing for effect of set pieces" (1984, 279). However, this disparity is subsequently abandoned in Chevalier's performance of Mon amour. Through its inherent energy and fusion of melody and physical display, Chevalier's performance brings fellow guests together to form part of a whole. The star moves his body and eyes to catch the gaze of the diegetic spectators. Even his hands re-iterate the circularity of the afore-mentioned decor in an inclusive fashion. The lighting too is softer in the sense that there are no harsh edges and the features of the performer are well highlighted.

In the case of Fleury's interrogation in the offices of the police all of this is reversed. The emphasis here is on fragmentation and dislocation to the point when even Chevalier's trademark evening wear disintegrates with his shirt buttons undone, his hair ruffled, and his bowtie dangling loosely around the neck. It is as if the Paris with which the performer has become identified has been overtaken by a different, darker urban identity—an identity which looks forward to the noirish investigations of Siodmak's subsequent film career in Hollywood. Again, we return to Elsaesser's remarks on the "use of cinematic *mise en scène* as an instrument of abstraction" and the "ability to treat lighting or editing effects ... as cinematic signifiers in their own right" (281). The space in the room is compressed and shallow; there is no sense of integration based on the inter-relationship of decor, light and actor. Instead the lighting set-ups work independently and unrealistically in

the form of a heightened commentary on the proceedings. The figure of the police inspector in medium close-up is surrounded by pools of darkness; the overall intensity of the light is dim but there is the dramatic use of a hard side-light to project a sense of the expressive contours of the man's face in relief. When we cut to Fleury it is as if he is pinned down. His body language is inert. Whilst the discussion proceeds, the lighting takes on a life of its own. Siodmak frequently cuts back to a slightly tilted downwards medium close-up of Fleury in which Chevalier's former brightened facial features are flatly lit as if through a greyish gauze. A black shadow is cast onto the top part of his forebrow. As the interrogation reaches its denouement and it appears that, according to the circumstantial evidence, Fleury is guilty after all, this shadow moves across the bulk of Chevalier's face. His eyes, now blank and still, register disbelief. Whilst this disbelief is undoubtedly expected to be shared by the viewing audience, the overall effect of the sequence is to unsettle the fixity of the "light" Paris embodied by Chevalier as "man of spectacle".

If Pièges is concerned with the figure of the moneyed male Parisian seducer, Liliom is centred around the world of another familiar trope of Parisian masculinity, the impoverished *mauvais garçon*. More or less a synonym of the figure of the *apache* discussed in the previous chapter, the *mauvais garçon* was another incarnation of the criminal Parisian tough found in popular film and literature of the period. The term was such a clear signifier of a certain Parisian culture that it even became celebrated in the light social comedy of disguise Un Mauvais garçon (Jean Boyer, 1936) which featured Henri Garat singing a song of the same name. If Siodmak's film works with the notion of "light Paris" being troubled by criminality and darkness, Lang's drama examines the disruption of the conventions of the "city of darkness" by the metaphysics or mysticism of light and redemption. As stated previously, Charles Boyer was cast against type in Liliom although in fact he had already played a denizen of Berlin's underworld in the French language version of Siodmak's Tumultes. In Lang's film he plays a boyish, exuberant ex-small

criminal closely associated with the city milieux of fairground life and the rough terrain and small wooden houses of the *zone*. As with Chevalier in *Pièges*, the physical performance of Boyer is intimately linked with the social setting he occupies—in this case, the familiar milieu of dark Paris where popular urban entertainment and criminality meet.

The film begins with a medium long-shot of Madame Moscat, played by Florelle, at her booth. Moscat is lit distinctively by a strong, non-naturalistic light source from below which highlights her features against the shuffling shadows of local punters in the foreground. We first of all hear Liliom off-screen since it is through the thick volume of his voice that he makes his living. Guided by Moscat's gaze turning rightward, we cut to a long-shot of Liliom at the edge of the merry-go-round calling out to his audience. He is clearly the centre of attention. This is underlined in a subsequent shot taken from the window of the nearby hotel when we see Liliom framed in the rear of the image, surrounded by the local community, whilst in the foreground, the more or less soundless strongman stands ignored. The reason for the hawker's success is not just the attraction of his voice, although his ability to break out into raucous song is part of it. As Lang's fluid camerawork demonstrates, it rests in the lithe inter-relationship between Liliom's "natural environment" and Boyer's charismatic gestural physicality. In this sense, Boyer's performance is a "fit" with the requirements of this part of the role. A good example of this is in the single shot in which Liliom lifts up a drunkard who has been stumbling around the outdoor tables of the cafe nearby. The ineptitude of the latter is signalled by his diminutive frame and the comic effect of his pom-pom hat. In contrast, Liliom's virility is underlined by the way his close-fitting striped jersey seems designed to display his musculature. As Liliom tugs at the man and moves him forward onto the merry-go-round, the camera simultaneously pulls back giving a sensation of Boyer's mastery of the space around him. Everyone is watching him perform and the chaos of balloons and streamers add to the heightened atmosphere. The camera halts momentarily as the man stumbles into a woman

seated on a nearby horse. With her help he is finally lifted onto his seat by Liliom. Liliom then turns around and the camera tracks his movement into the rear space of the merry-go-round whilst maintaining Boyer's position in the centre of the frame. His body is constantly turning, his arms swinging or raised in energetic gesturing at the laughing crowd. Liliom continues to collect his money and moves to the left of the merry-go-round so that he is positioned midway between the horses and the surrounding locals on the ground. He raises his arms and puts his hands to his ears then suddenly his attention is taken by something at a diagonal to him off-screen right. When he points and moves in the direction of his eyeline, the camera this time does not move forward with Liliom. The effect of this is to heighten the intensity of Liliom's desire and to complete the single shot with an intensely focussed close-up of Boyer gazing at the object of his attention. In the subsequent shot this is revealed to be Julie and her female companion.

The problem with Boyer's performance in *Liliom* is that it rests on the level of gesturality and mannerism. It forsakes the pull of interiority, the seal of "authenticity" which would allow the film's depiction of the popular milieux of Paris to move closer to the currents of poetic realism. The matter is complicated by the inter-relationship between the differing registers of performance in the film and the contributions of Lang and Maté to the film's visual style. *Liliom* feels divided between a conventionally dark realist representation of the city and a moralistic and mystical sensibility which combines moments of calculated theatrical abstraction with Elsaesser's perception of the German émigrés' disparity between "narrative intrigue" and the "playing for effect of set pieces" (279). The difference between Madeleine Ozeray's interiority and Boyer's exteriority, for example, is evident in a key moment at the beginning of the film after the two have left the fairground and moved to a deserted park bench. By looking more closely at the sequence, we can also see how the émigré interest in the processes of visual narration counteracts rather than complements aspects of Boyer's persona. Liliom and Julie have just been interrupted by a

police raid and they are now alone in front of the seat under a lamp-post. Julie has been warned by the police that Liliom is just after her money. The setting is an area of rough ground on the edge of the city. We can see the painted silhouettes of apartment blocks and factories in the rear of the image but the action takes place on a very shallow spatial plane which allows for a prominently marked manipulation of the levels of light on the faces of the couple. At first, the camera maintains the same position of distance from the couple that it did when the figures of the police agents filled the frame just previously. This effect of empty space reinforces the theatricality of the moment by creating a sense of a proscenium stage set. Throughout the sequence, the camera does not depart from the frontal position it now occupies. A chance to mark space in a more fluid, cinematic way is avoided. Whilst Julie stands inert and silent gazing at Liliom, Boyer turns around on his heels and paces deliberately towards her. He shrugs his shoulders dramatically and turns self-consciously to sit down. As Julie also sits down, Lang cuts closer, eliminating the foreground so that the couple fill the most part of the frame. The bulk of their bodies is well lit and in the chiaroscuro manner typical of Maté's cinematography, the edges of their features are juxtaposed sharply with the flattened black shadow behind. Julie tells Liliom that if she had any money she would gladly give it to Liliom. Startled by this, Liliom turns to her and the camera starts to track in. Whilst Ozeray is relatively still and her eyes move slowly and certainly, Boyer raises his arms and shakes his partner in disbelief. Suddenly, the pitch of the light diminishes and the couple are bathed in more prominent shadow. We cut to a long shot of a man responsible for switching off the gas in the lamps. Liliom points to the lamp next to him and asks if that will be extinguished but the man replies that it is only one lamp in two that gets turned off. This disruption of the narrative by the deliberate emphasis on the processes of light manipulation works in a two-fold way. Both circumvent the centrality of Boyer in the sequence. Firstly, the foregrounding of light and darkness works in a textual way. Our attention is drawn to the matter of visual style rather than character and speech. Secondly, it pre-empts the metaphysical motif which separates the film into two—

that between the darkness of Paris and the light of the afterlife and heaven from which the earthly world of the city can be reviewed and reassessed. As Liliom continues his seduction of Julie, teasing her about being "a dangerous seducer of maids", the camera slowly tracks in to a remarkable full close-up of the faces of the couple. There is more light on the face of Ozeray, as Boyer is kept in side profile. Her eyes are turned towards the night sky as she declares that she doesn't have any fear, not even of death. The screen goes suddenly black, as if in a premonition of what is to come. What could have been an intensely modulated exchange rendering the ordinary city at night a place of poeticised desire (as in Marcel Carne's *Hotel du Nord*, for example) becomes, instead, something more deliberate and abstract.

IV: JOURNEYS IN THE DIVIDED CITY

In *Pièges* and *Liliom*, the two main protagonists, Adrienne and Liliom, undertake significant journeys in relation to the city of Paris. Adrienne, by turning from "taxi-girl" to police informer, is given a form of mobility which allows her to escape her proximity to the world of the urban prostitute. She encounters, in disguise, a dark side to the surface of the Paris of luxury, wealth and glamour before finally joining that milieu as married partner to the man hitherto suspected of the murders which she was sent to investigate. Liliom, on the other hand, is denied the escape from the Parisian *faubourg* to the United States which he dreams of. His death, however, takes him literally above the city and at the fantastic world in which he arrives, he is given a chance to rediscover the values of mundane domesticity which he previously denied in favour of street crime and the dark world of the city's night-life. What I want to investigate here is how the two films stage these movements in relation to the matter of their status of émigré productions. In conjunction with this, I will argue that this discussion can shed light on certain prevalent mythologies of the city concerning the issue of gender and place.

The noir sensibility of *Pièges* is apparent from the opening shots of the film which, in the manner of the 1940s Hollywood film noirs to come, present the night-time city as an abstract site of dangerous motifs highlighted by a stylised conjugation of light and shadow. There are, at first, no discernible symbols or mentions of Paris to locate the audience. Instead, we begin with footsteps in the dark and a torch casting its beam on a discarded newspaper on the floor before shining its light on a nearby brick wall on which are illuminated the names of the cast of the drama. Following the credits, a Parisian newspaper headline fills the screen announcing the mysterious disappearance of a number of young girls. The newspaper is a key feature of the film. It has two aspects which Siodmak has used in his previous émigré productions. Firstly, it works as a cinematic emblem of the

PIEGES

1.1

ON DEMANDE
jeune fille seule dans
vie. Travail facile.
Discretion absolue

Ecrire au journal N° 5

PARIS PARIS

1.2



1.3



You followed me?
—Looks like it. You never even notice

1.4



1.5



Can I have this?

1.6



modern city. Its speed and modernity in conveying urban information is matched by the nature of the film medium. Secondly, it is also, somehow, the voice of the city—the means by which the film suggests that the fabric of Paris is involved in the drama as an audience and as a voice of comment. In *Pièges* a third dimension is introduced. The newspaper is also the means by which the killer and other men attract young women to service their desires (See *Pièges* Fig. 1:1).

We next see the shadow of a male figure passing across the doorways and walls of a darkened street. This is followed by a dramatically lit close-up of a gloved hand putting a letter addressed to the Paris police in a post-box. The chain of the film's detective enquiry is established. The rest of the film will concern the task of uncovering the identity of the stranger. At the police station, the film dissolves from a close-up of the letter's final line "You will leave for your last dance" to a flashing neon sign advertising "Taxi-girls. Dancing. La Danse. 2f". This form of urban display suggests more than the kind of seedy marginality found in the "city of darkness". The notion of the "taxi-girl" is a curious extension of the themes of the film since this coded synonym for prostitution can be read to evoke the sense of journeying across the city which the film's narrative is mainly concerned with. The key to this journeying is the consistently uneven and dangerous share in relationships of power between Adrienne and the men of the city. In the dance hall, for example, Adrienne's job is to sell a "ride" across the dance floor to an unknown male customer. In front of this space is an extensive mural depicting the splendours of the Place de la Concorde. When Adrienne's real life journey across the city begins, the mural's suggestion of Parisian luxury, fashion and glamour actually comes to life as she meets Fleury and others. Her position remains the same though. She still is the one who is led by a male stranger across the sights of the French capital.

I want to examine two Parisian car journeys that Adrienne makes in the film and relate them to the theme of division that the film sets up between the city of darkness and the city of light. In the first, Adrienne has just left the bridge over the Seine where she has had her first mysterious encounter with Pears. Previous to this meeting she had met with another stranger at a jazz-club. The scene with Von Stroheim is shot as a Gothic melodrama, entirely at odds with the night-time modernity of the jazz venue. The lighting is low key and the intentions of Pears are vague as he makes an appointment with Adrienne for a rendez-vous the next afternoon. As their conversation concludes, there is a cut-away shot to the stranger at the jazz-club waiting next to a car. After moving away from the bridge, Adrienne enters the frame of a shot of the man waiting. Her features emerge from the shadows (See **Pièges Fig. 1:2**). She accepts his offer to get into the vehicle and the shot fades out to black before swiftly fading into a two shot of the couple driving through the city (Fig. 1:3). This dynamic of a pick-up on the street between a male and a female stranger, and the sense of motion through an unmarked urban environment at night, seems a strikingly modern anticipation of the iconography of the American film noirs which Siodmak was going to make after concluding his French film career. Quite incidentally, this aspect of cultural translation is signalled by Adrienne's real occupation as a German - French - English translator which is, of course, an exact mirror of Siodmak's professional career.¹⁹ As other cars flash by, the occupants of the vehicle are momentarily illuminated but the male's features remain barely visible. The frame of the windscreen window, like that of the railway carriage used in La Crise est finie, is used as a secondary frame within the overall frame of the moving image. Adrienne tries to escape but she can't.

¹⁹For further speculation on this trajectory between Berlin, Paris and Hollywood, especially in relation to the vexed question of the determinants of film noir, see Vincendeau (1992); Andrew (1996); Morgan (1996) and Elsaesser (1996).

The scene cuts to another noir motif—the apartment staircase on which the troubled relationship between protagonists is underscored by disturbing sets of angles and the use of shadow. The journey to the top of the staircase takes even longer than the one in the car. This emphasises the way that the city of darkness, as fashioned by the contribution of the émigrés, can work as a signifying element in its own right, rather than as a simple backdrop to the processes of character interaction. In the first shot, for example, the pair enter the frame at a diagonal from the left of the frame. As they turn rightwards onto another level of stairs, their enlarged shadows follow them on the wall behind. As they pause, Adrienne turns around and looks down at the man following her. Her face is completely blackened as she asks the stranger why he lied to her. "Don't play the innocent", comes the reply, "you were a taxi-dancer". As they continue up, the level of light diminishes so that the effect is of the characters now engaged as an element in a highly choreographed interplay of shapes and abstract formal compositions. At another key moment, the shadow of one of the banisters falls across the face of Adrienne as she speaks. This reproduces the sensation of division and disguise which the narrative has set up. The stranger then literally pulls her into the shadows when he reveals that he knows she is with the police. It is only when Adrienne is pushed inside the apartment that it is revealed that the stranger is actually Inspector Batol who has been assigned as Adrienne's protector. The effect of this sequence is multiple. Firstly, it sets up the motif of disparity in relation to the place of Adrienne and Paris. Her fluency at reading the desires of Parisian men, established at the dance hall "picking up male passengers", is thwarted. Instead, it is she who has been taken for a ride (literally and metaphorically). Paris now becomes a place where she is as vulnerable as the next victim of the killer. Secondly, the idea of hidden surfaces is also developed with the police and their agent working in disguise both against and with each other. Finally, in another aspect of the complex patterning of the narrative, just as Brémontière doubles Fleury, so Batol is set up here as competitor to Ténier.

Adrienne's mobility in the city is exemplified in the montage sequence involving "light Paris" which follows her decision to marry Fleury after, it appears, the case has been solved. The couple tour the capital on a shopping spree in an open-top car (See Pièges Fig. 1:4-1:5). Adrienne, to comic effect in the nightclub sequence, has always known the correct champagne to drink and now she is able, with the help of her new husband, to purchase the city lifestyle she has aspired to. What distinguishes the rapidly edited sequence of familiar touristic locations and luxury commercial establishments is the ironic ease by which Siodmak undermines the Chevalier persona. He is seen literally as a Parisian performer relaying his act as a seducer/dandy diegetically to the characters whilst at the same time, breaking the bounds of convention, by involving the screen audience in a wink at the end of the sequence. The lightness of the tone, the fluency of the montage, the witty interaction between image and score, the sense of space and movement all contrast with the darkness and menace of the previous intrigues. But it is this very ironic tone, along with a subtle commentary on the mechanics of visual display which mark a sense of the sequence's distinctiveness. It is as if Siodmak is also lightly sending up the very artifice of the notions of Paris that the city itself likes, supposedly, to hold dear. Firstly, the sequence deals in surfaces. The imagery and the use of the chauffeur-driven open-top car all connote a sense of the touristic postcard Paris that has graced so many, particularly foreign, depictions of the French capital. We see the Arc de Triomphe, the Opéra, the Rue de Rivoli and so on flash by. This dynamic inclusion of the differentiated aspects of the daylight city as an obvious part of the image works in strong contrast to the way the city at night was excluded and rendered abstract in the previous noirish car journey. Then, secondly, there is a preponderance of mirrors in the *mise-en-scène* and obvious filmic devices such as wipe cuts, dissolves of all kinds (See Pièges Fig. 1:6). In the fur salon, because of the large mirror at the rear on the wall we see how the parade of models links together to form a blur of reflection and reality. Each women featured in succession in the overall montage

displays an item taken by Adrienne; yet each of the same women has also been taken by Fleury setting up a knowing chain of consumption that is both sexual and material.

Liliom's "journey" from the city begins with his suicide. The milieu of the railway bridge and the wasteground of the *zone*, combined with the act of crime, mark out a similarity to the opening scenes of *Coeur de lilas*. Lang, however, is more interested in the spiritual, metaphysical bond between the dying man and his wife than the tragic-heroic fate of the poetic realist male. He cuts immediately to a shot of Julie sewing at home. She clutches her chest in pain as if she is concurrently registering Liliom's suffering. From this moment, the film's depiction of the city also becomes more stylised with Maté's cinematography increasingly working against the currents of dark realism in favour of a more heightened display of technique. The contrasting worlds of Julie and Moscat, the two women in Liliom's life, are now marked with more exaggerated relief. At the fairground, for example, where Alfred goes to tell Moscat about what has happened, the shadows of the rotating poles of the merry-go-round on which Liliom used to work swirl disturbingly across the harshly lit features of the attraction's owner. One is reminded of Elsaesser's evocative phrasing regarding the particular way in which space and light in émigré films can define time "as emotional intensity, as the passage from innocence to knowledge and regret" (282). Outside the worker's cottage where she lived with Liliom, Julie is framed in a surrounding pool of shadow. Her muteness and the stillness of her body work in direct contrast to the shrill banter and emotional arm waving of Florelle's Moscat. In a sense, these two women embody the two versions of the city that the film consists of. In a not untypical association between femininity and Paris, Lang's film seems not only divided in terms of its metaphysics—between heaven and earth—but also in terms of its burdensome morality which contrasts the danger and pleasures of the fairground with the safety and order of the home. It is unsurprising then that it is at this point that popular Paris "dies",

LILION

1.1



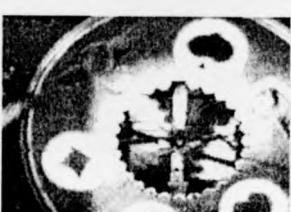
1.2



1.3



1.4



1.5



1.6



along with Liliom, whilst the spirituality and enduring values of Julie's domestic world endures.



The "death" of popular Paris is managed in a heavily stylised sequence which reveals the apparent umbilical relationship between Liliom and the city. As Julie holds Liliom's arm on the ground outside the home, the sounds of the fairground gradually enter the soundtrack (See **Liliom Fig. 1:1**). We cut to a shot of a pensive Moscat who is approached screen right by the shadow of a police agent. The rotating shadows of Liliom's merry-go-round continue to flicker across her features. As she hears the news of the death (**Fig. 1:2**), Moscat almost collapses but she moves down the stairs to tell the rest of the fair's members. The urban entertainment world, to which Liliom once belonged, then comes to a halt in a succession of tableaux shots. These images range from an abstract interest in decor and fairground machinery to a semi-documentary like depiction of the sorrow of the ordinary Parisian community. They suggest, in this way, a formal division between two "Germanic" and "French" modes of capturing the details of urban life.

We firstly see a carefully composed close-up of three of the merry-go-round's mechanical musical figures as they come to a halt. Lang then cuts to a complex shot depicting the slowing down of the merry-go-round's shadow on the walls of a nearby hotel (**Fig. 1:3**). There is a couple in the right-hand top corner watching and also listening to the stop in the flow of music and energy. The picture of the revolving figures on the wall suggests a ghostly transference of the real bodies of the local city dwellers onto the actual body surface of the city itself. Next we see a man stop the spinning of a fortune wheel (**Fig. 1:4**). Lang uses another near abstract mechanical image of a gramophone horn before cutting to a shot of one of the fairground workers informing customers of Liliom's death. A succession of images then re-enacts this passing away by depicting various clockwork toy devices spontaneously coming to a silent standstill (**Fig. 1:5**). The

LILION

1.7



1.8



1.9



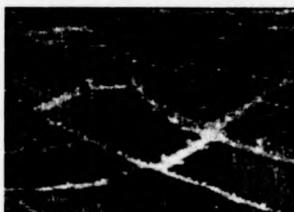
1.10



1.11



1.12





fairground seems to have a life of its own. This sense of the uncanny sits uneasily with the following near still-life shots of local faces caught in introspective mourning (**Fig. 1:6**). One particular image, of a group of figures in a local city bar, looks as if it has been taken from an illustrated feature article rather than the worked-over formal vision of a Fritz Lang drama.

This specific disjuncture in the picturing of Paris may account for the relative failure of the film at the box office. Lang and his fellow émigrés, as many critics noted, simply got their tone wrong. The film was, in this sense, too heterogeneous. Jean Fayard, for example, suggested that "the old commonplaces of populist cinema [were] badly situated"²⁰ whilst Jean Laury, as already noted, argued that Liliom was in fact a German film which was "at once realist and mystical".²¹ The key to this conflation of the "realist" and the "mystical" rests in the way that Liliom's narrative is divided between the city of Paris and "the city of God". The manner in which Lang blends the urban ordinary and extraordinary in the journey from earth to heaven recalls the director's use of the uncanny in his preceding film, Das Testament der Doctor Mabuse. There is, however, a significant difference here due to the important inclusion of the French capital as a site of meaning. Mabuse represented an unsettling of the general artefacts of urban modernity such as railway lines, gasworks and chemical factories. Liliom works, instead, with the specificities of a Parisian male *mauvais garçon* who is trapped in the film between an abstract form of moral redemption and the particularly French fatalism of the poetic realist hero .

²⁰Candide 10th March 1934.

²¹Le Figaro 29th April 1934.

This conjugation of the bizarre and the everyday is most apparent when the celestial messengers, dressed in black with white faces and gloves, arrive to take the film's eponymous hero away (**Figs. 1:7-1:8**). Their visitation is accompanied by an unreal, mechanised humming sound. One of the figures raises a hand and in the next shot Liliom rises from the ground (**Fig. 1:9**). As the camera pulls away, the rear lighting fades so by the time Liliom is upright, the background is completely dark. The messengers then lift Liliom and are seen to rise with him, leaving the empty shell of Liliom's body behind (**Figs. 1:10-1:11**). As the trio rise higher and higher, the diminishing figure of Liliom remains centre-frame until the image fades into a mottled blur. The point which he occupied in the frame is then replaced by the outlines of a building. The camera begins to move across an aerial view of the city at night. Street lamps are seen through the nocturnal gloom though Paris remains indistinct—there is no formal point of reference. Suddenly, we are high enough to be able to make out the familiar grid of the French capital with the River Seine and its islands (**Fig. 1:12**). For a moment Paris returns but we are, by now, far away from the *quartier populaire*. This is the iconic city one would see as a visitor. This is the Paris, indeed, one would see as if on a journey—the city of someone who, like Fritz Lang himself, was on a journey to another destination.

V: CONCLUSION

I have argued that the Berlin émigrés in the French cinema of the 1930s were in some senses hybrid or divided figures. They fitted in by being at the same time different. As we have seen throughout the course of this thesis, nowhere can this claim be better sustained than in the filmic depiction of the city which was their temporary home. This final chapter has provided an extended understanding of the émigré representation of Paris by looking at the specific question of how Paris may itself be seen as divided in a number of émigré films. Through two case studies, I have examined a number of inter-related questions which shed further historical light on how the émigrés helped refract existing representational mythologies of the city in new, and hitherto unexplored, ways.

Most written accounts of the careers of Fritz Lang and Robert Siodmak, if they choose to consider the directors' French work at all, have tended to situate these films in relation to the Hollywood careers which followed. I have largely argued against this viewpoint by situating the examples of *Liliom* and *Pièges* in relation to their place as attempts to provide European alternatives to the American model. I have suggested that the evident disparity in these films, already identified at the time of their critical reception, was a result of this attempt but not because they were insufficiently American. The films were seen as divided, and the films' picturing of Paris was itself divided, because as émigré texts they had to negotiate their "Frenchness" differently.

Central to this question was the way in which the two films negotiated differing versions of Parisian masculinity by incorporating the performances of Charles Boyer and Maurice Chevalier. We have seen how the two stars played roles which in diegetic terms were split or rendered unstable, but I have suggested that *Liliom*'s and *Pièges*'s émigré qualities problematise this division. Siodmak's film deliberately plays with received notions

of Chevalier's stardom by questioning the integrity of his appearance as a dandyish man in the light tradition of urban spectacle. Through its carefully worked over *mise-en-scène* it elaborates on this to suggest an incompleteness and sense of unreliability to the extent that the Parisian male that Chevalier plays is consistently exposed as fragmented or even unknowable. In a different way, the conventional representation of the Parisian *mauvais garçon* is complicated in *Liliom* by the way the émigré cinematography in the film enhances both the split in Boyer's performance and split in geographical location his performance occupies.

Finally, I have also argued that *Pièges* and *Liliom*, like many other émigré features made in France, rely on aspects of a narrative journey to make sense of Paris. I have suggested that during both of these voyages, there is a sense of knowing that things are not what they quite seem. Both films, to some extent, trade on this sense of urban appearance and surface to reveal a disparity not just between the Parisian mythologies of lightness and dark, but also between which parts of the city may be said to be accessible to different sectors of its population. This dichotomy of belonging and not belonging may be said to be part of the émigré filmmakers' own overall experience of encountering a different culture. Furthermore, it points conclusively to the idea that, as outsiders, the émigrés were particularly adept at both meeting and contravening expectations of what a "French film" about Paris should look like.

Conclusion

In his study of ethnographic discourse, James Clifford (1992) notes how many of the French Surrealists spent their time in hotels or hotel-like accommodation. He extends this observation to suggest that, in many ways, the cultural history of Paris in the early twentieth century can be written in terms of seeing the city as "a place of departures, arrivals and transits" (104). To some degree, all cities, at all times, have been "sites of dwelling and travel" (105) but, as we have seen in the course of this thesis, the question of journeying has particular significance for any discussion of the representation of the French capital by the waves of German émigré filmmakers in the 1930s.

Firstly, I have argued that the arrival in Paris of various film personnel from the studios of Berlin, must be seen within the context of a complex history of travel and exchange between France and Germany that has been framed by a pattern of ambivalence. This ambivalence informed the way that the two countries' respective film industries tilted between mutual rivalry and mutual concern, as they responded to the increasingly hegemonic position of the United States on the world film market in the early sound era. I have suggested that the city was as an important location from which to understand this process; not least because of the fact that each country's capital had long been central to any definition of a national cinema in terms of production, exhibition and representation. The cinematic city was a key site of national belonging in the years following the traumatic devastation of World War One. The urban-based films which had emanated from the Berlin studios in the 1920s were admired by the French for their technical sophistication and complex handling of visual style; but they were also, simultaneously, seen as harbingers of a particular response to modernity which French film culture seemed unwilling to make. The arrival of émigré filmmakers on French soil was therefore also viewed ambiguously. On the one hand, the travellers were welcomed for the degree of proficiency that they would bring to an under-resourced native industry; but on the other they were regarded with suspicion—for their threat to an already precarious employment situation and for their potential to disrupt governing notions of what constituted French cultural identity.

A study of the work of the German émigrés in Paris consequently raises fascinating historical questions about both the nature of European film culture and the wider terrain of national political life. Paris may have been a natural destination for fellow European filmmakers to take advantage of a pre-existing web of contacts, but it was also, for many, a place of refuge on account of ethnic identity. Most of the journeys made to the French capital after 1933 were made for political reasons by Jewish personnel. Because of this, their arrival helped to raise important questions about assimilation and cultural difference which went beyond the immediacies of the French film industry. For the nation's right-wing, Jews in general were seen negatively as symbols of the perils of mass industrialisation. They were the locus for resentments about the heterogeneous nature of urban culture which were fed, in turn, into general fears of instability engendered by economic recession. Any account of the representation of the city by the émigrés, therefore, matters in more ways than one. My title foregrounds the cultural conventions of lightness and darkness surrounding Parisian representation, but it also has a set of other immediately relevant historical resonances.

In my investigation of the émigrés' representation of the city, I have shown that the journeying foregrounded by the real experience of the filmmakers was also paralleled by wider notions of transition in the films themselves. We saw in Chapter Two, for example, that the recurring narrative thread of a journey to or across the capital suggested the sense of Paris as a destination to be viewed as bright spectacle. In Chapter Three, various journeys of exploration were made to uncover the previously hidden side of the dark streets of the city. In this sense, the films were making specific use of pre-existing Parisian mythologies which dated back to nineteenth century practices of picturing the city. Many of the films which I have discussed then went on to extend this analogous relationship to pre-cinematic forms of urban representation. Instead of turning to the immediacies of the present day city, as might be expected, they actually travelled back into a continuum of remembering and nostalgia to evoke a familiar and frequently pleasurable sense of past urban community. Through detailed and original textual analysis, I have demonstrated that, to some extent, the émigrés

did adjust to prevalent French film norms in order to fit in with their place of temporary work or exile. In the light films we saw evidence of this in both the blurring between stage and real experience and the sense in which the city was performed in relation to Parisian theatrical tradition. These émigré features also linked the bodies of known Parisian stars with the contours of the body of the city in ways which followed conventional notions of gender and class. In the dark films, we saw a similar reliance on previously established modes of viewing and picturing the French capital. The émigré city films discussed revealed a clear convergence between the depiction of communal places like the *bal* and the *café* and Parisian representational tropes previously contained in literature, song and music.

Nonetheless, I have also shown, in the course of my thesis, that this turn to the past was inflected differently by those new to the French capital. The reason for this lies in the fact that the émigré filmmakers were unlike other figures in the overall history of departure from Germany in the 1930s. Importantly, they did not need to rely so heavily on the professional significance of the written word. The distinguishing features of the film émigrés' settlement within the host culture of Paris are hard to place because the émigrés were part of an already functioning European-wide trade network. On their arrival they were also subject to the fitful and often precarious commercial nature of 1930s French filmmaking. I have argued that one way of understanding the specificity of many émigré city productions is to describe them as hybrid or multiple on the basis of their singular contribution to visual style. The émigré films were made by a heterogeneous range of personnel, many of whom had successful prior experience in the Berlin studios. This inevitably meant a localised shift in how Paris was pictured. The most noticeable way in which the French films of the émigrés stand out is in their particular formal qualities of visual abstraction or design. As we have seen, at times this was integrated unobtrusively, but elsewhere this meant a heightened attention to the processes of visual storytelling and an overt awareness of film form.

The importance of the émigrés' attention to the expressive visual possibilities of the medium went beyond the hollow mechanics of any formalistic argument. Their contribution rests in the fact it went to the heart of an ongoing debate over the direction that a competitive French sound cinema should take. As we saw in the discussion of Anatole Litvak's notion of "real cinema" in Chapter One, French critics were divided between the relative significance of the image and the spoken word in relation to the new technology. As newcomers to France and to French cinema, the émigrés were naturally inclined to favour visual language over an indigenous interest in the cultural specificities of written dialogue. Especially in the field of lighting and cinematography they made a lasting contribution. Thanks to sustained investment and training in the Berlin studios, cinematographers such as Curt Courant and Eugen Schüfftan had been able to attain a level of technical expertise which was unrivalled in Europe. They were able to experiment effectively with faster film stocks and new forms of lighting technology. The results of this sophisticated learning showed not just in the films that they made, but also in the beneficial role they took on as educators to native professionals.

Litvak's notion of "real cinema" meant more than enhancing the surface look of the French capital. It also chimed with a renewed interest within French film culture of how best to depict the authentic social world of the city. The émigrés' privileging of seeing and uncovering in relation to Paris immediately suited these concerns especially within the type of popular film which pictured urban space after dark. We have seen how adept the émigrés were at depicting the narrative possibilities of the intersections between the worlds of Parisian crime and entertainment. Through a particularly effective use of the expressive play between light and shadow on features of the urban decor, they made a seminal contribution to the development of poetic realism. This type of filmmaking went on to achieve particular critical and commercial success towards the end of the decade. It remains an interesting irony that the efforts of the French to create a viable, internationally successful cinema were so explicitly aided by personnel from one of their leading industrial rivals.

To conclude finally, my work on the arrival of so many émigré filmmakers on French soil in the 1930s has forced us to revise untroubled assumptions about what constituted French national cinema of the period. Through extensive new textual and contextual analysis in relation to the émigrés' cinematic representation of the Paris, I have uncovered the wide-ranging cultural, social and political significance of the French capital as a site of meaning for both the migrant and the native. The importance of the relationship between cinema and the depiction of place has been relatively unexplored until now. As I have shown in this thesis, I believe that it provides film history with a fruitful and challenging way of interpreting the deceptively simple question of how we may all best make sense of our social and cultural environment at any one given moment in time.

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Filmography

- Allo Berlin, ici Paris (Julien Duvivier, 1931)
- Asphalt (Joe May, 1928)
- L'Atalante (Jean Vigo, 1934)
- Avec le sourire (Maurice Tourneur, 1936)
- Les Bas fonds (Jean Renoir, 1936)
- Berlin-Alexanderplatz (Piel Jützi, 1931)
- Berlin Symphonie des einer grosse stadt (Walter Ruttmann, 1927)
- La Bête humaine (Jean Renoir, 1938)
- Die Blaue Ange (Josef Sternberg,)
- Boudu sauvé des eaux (Jean Renoir, 1932)
- Die Büchse der Pandora (G.W. Pabst, 1928)
- Carrefour (Kurt Bernhardt, 1938)
- Cette vieille canaille (Anatole Litvak, 1933)
- Chacun sa chance (Hans Steinhoff, 1930)
- La Chienne (Jean Renoir, 1931)
- Coeur de lilas (Anatole Litvak, 1931)
- Le Crime de M. Lange (Jean Renoir, 1936)
- Crime et châtiment (Pierre Chenal,)
- La Crise est finie (Robert Siodmak, 1934)
- Dans les rues (Victor Trivas, 1933)
- Die Dreigroschenoper/L'Opéra de Quat'sous/The Threepenny Opera (G.W. Pabst, 1931)
- Du haut en bas (G.W. Pabst, 1934)
- L'Entraîneuse (Albert Valentin, 1938)
- Fantômas (Paul Fejos, 1932)
- Faubourg-Montmartre (Raymond Bernard, 1931)
- Gardez le sourrire (Paul Fejos, 1933)
- La Goualeuse (Fernand Rivers, 1938)
- Gueule d'amour (Jean Grémillon, 1937)

- Hôtel du Nord (Marcel Carné, 1938)
Jenny (Marcel Carné, 1936)
Le Jour se lève (Marcel Carné, 1939)
Liliom (Fritz Lang, 1933)
Lumières de Paris (Richard Pottier, 1938)
M (Fritz Lang, 1931)
Mam'zelle Nitouche (Carl Lamac, 1931)
La Maternelle (Jean Benoit-Levy and Marie Epstein, 1933)
Mauvaise graine (Billy Wilder, 1933)
Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1926)
Mütter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück (Piel Jütsi, 1929)
Paris (Jean Choux, 1936)
Paris-Béguin (Alberto Genina, 1931)
Paris, Méditerranée (Joe May, 1931)
Paris la Nuit (Henri Diamont-Berger, 1930)
La Petite Lise (Jean Grémillon, 1931)
Pépé le Moko (Julien Duvivier,)
Pièges (Robert Siodmak, 1939)
Prisons de femmes (Roger Richebé, 1938)
Prix de beauté (Genina, 1931)
Quatorze Juillet (René Clair, 1932)
Rue sans joie (André Hugon, 1938)
La sexe faible (Robert Siodmak, 1933)
Sous les toits de Paris (René Clair, 1930)
Das Tagebuch einer Verlorenen (G.W. Pabst, 1929)
Das Testament des Dr. Mabuse/Le Testament du docteur Mabuse (Fritz Lang, 1933)
Tumultes/Stürme der Leidenschaft (Robert Siodmak, 1931)
Le Tunnel (Kurt Bernhardt, 1933)

La Vie Parisienne (Robert Siodmak, 1935)

Zou-Zou (Marc Allégret, 1934)

Appendices

APPENDIX ONE: TOBIS IN PARIS FILMOGRAPHY 1929-1939**1929**Le Requin (Henri Chomette)**1930**Sous les toits de Paris (René Clair)**1931**Àло Berlin, ici Paris (Julien Duvivier)A Nous la liberté (René Clair)Le Million (René Clair)**1932**La Femme en homme (Augusto Genina)Quatorze juillet (René Clair)**1933**L'Ange gardien (Jean Choux)Du haut en bas (Georg-Wilhelm Pabst)Primerose (René Guissart)Toi que j'adore (Geza von Balvary and Albert Valentin); glv Ich Kenn' Dich nicht und liebe Dich (Geza von Balvary)**1934**La Banque Nemo (Marguerite Viel)Pension Mimosas (Jacques Feyder)**1935**La Kermesse héroïque (Jacques Feyder); glv Die klugen Frauen (Jacques Feyder)Stradivarius (Geza von Balvary and Albert Valentin), glv Stradivari (Geza von Balvary)**1937**Les Gens du voyage (Jacques Feyder); glv Fahrendes Volk (Jacques Feyder)Le Tigre du Bengale (Richard Eichberg); glv Der Tiger von Eschnapur (Richard Eichberg)**1938**Le Joueur (Gerhard Lamprecht and Louis Daquin); glv der Spieler or Roman eines Spielers (Gerhard Lamprecht)

APPENDIX TWO: OSSO FILMOGRAPHY 1930-1939

(glv signifies German language version)

1930

Arthur (Léonce Perret)
Méphisto (Henri Debain)
Mystère de la chambre jaune (Marcel l'Herbier)
Parfum de la dame en noir (Marcel l'Herbier)

1931

L'Aiglon (Victor Tourjansky); glv Der Herzog von Reichstag (Victor Tourjansky)
Le Chant du marin (Carmine Gallone)
Circulez! (Jean de Limur)
Le Costaud des P.T.T. (Jean Bertin, Rudolph Maté)
La Femme de mes rêves (Jean Bertin); glv Eine Nacht im Grandhotel (Max Neufeld)
Je Serai seule après minuit (Jacques de Baroncelli)
Ma Cousine de Varsovie (Carmine Gallone); glv Meine Cousine aus Warschau (Carl Boese)
Paris-Béguin (Augusto Genina)
Un Soir au front (Alexandre Ryder)
Un Soir de rafle (Carmine Gallone)
Tout s'arrange (Henri Diamant-Berger)

1932

le Dernier choc (Jacques de Baroncelli)
Faut-il les marier? (Carl Lamac); glv Die grausame Freundin (Carl Lamac)
Un Fils d'Amérique (Carmine Gallone)
L'Homme qui ne sait pas dire son nom (Heinz Hilpert); glv Ich Will Dich Liebe lehren
(Heinz Hilpert)*
Une Jeune fille et un million (Max Neufeld and Fred Ellis); glv Sehnsucht 202 (Max
Neufeld)
Marie, légende hongroise (Paul Féjos); glv Marie (Paul Féjos)**
le Roi des palaces (Carmine Gallone)***
Rouletabille aviateur (Istvan Szekely)****

1937L'Amour veille (Henri Roussel)

* French version never released in France because the German actress wanted to play both versions and her French accent was too lamentable

** Also shot in Hungarian, Rumanian and English versions

*** Also shot in English version

**** Also shot in Hungarian version

APPENDIX THREE: ANATOLE LITVAK FILMOGRAPHY 1930-1936**1930**Dolly macht Karriere**1931****Berlin**Calais Douvres: glv Nie wieder Liebe**Paris**Coeur de lilas**1932****Vienna**Chanson d'une nuit: glv Das Lied einer Nacht***1933****Paris**Cette vieille canaille**1935**L'Equipage ****1936**Mayerling

* also shot in English language version. The film was remade in the United States as Be Mine Tonight (Anatole Litvak)

** remake of L'Equipage (Maurice Tourneur, 1927). The film was remade in the United States as The Woman I Love (Anatole Litvak)

APPENDIX FOUR: CURT COURANT FILMOGRAPHY 1929-1939

1929

Berlin

Das brennende Herz (Ludwig Berger)
Die Frau im Mond (Fritz Lang)

1930

Paris

Le Roi de Paris (Leo Mittler); glv Der König von Paris (Leo Mittler)

Berlin

L'Homme qui assassina (Kurt Bernhardt and Jean Tarride); glv Der Mann, der den Mord beging (Kurt Bernhardt)
Die singende Stadt (Carmine Gallone)
Der weisse Teufel (Wolkoff)
Der Hampelmann (Emo)

1931

Paris

Son Altesse d'amour (Erich Schmidt and Robert Péguy); glv Ihre Majestät die Liebe (Joe May, 1930) (Berlin)

Le Chanteur inconnu (Victor Tourjansky) (decor Serge Pimenoff)

Coeur de lilas (Anatole Litvak) (decor Serge Pimenoff)

Berlin

Ma Cousine de Varsovie (Carmine Gallone); glv Meine Cousine aus Warschau (Carl Boese)
Wer nimmt die Liebe ernst? (Engel)

1932

Berlin

L'Homme qui ne sait pas dire non (Heinz Hilpert); glv Ich Will Dich Liebe lehren (Heinz Hilpert) (French version unreleased)

Scampolo ein kind der Strasse (Hans Steinhoff)*

Gitta entdeckt ihr Herz (Carl Froelich)

Die—oder Keine (Carl Froelich)

Rasputin (Der Dämon der Frauen) (Trotz)

Budapest

Un Fils d'Amérique (Carmine Gallone) (decor Serge Pimenoff)

1933

Paris

Ces messieurs de la santé (Pierre Colombier) (flv of Scampolo ein kind der Strasse)

Cette vieille canaille (Anatole Litvak) (decor Serge Pimenoff)

Ciboulette (Claude Autant Lara)

Un Peu d'amour (Hans Steinhoff)

Le Voleur (Maurice Tourneur)

Britain

The Perfect Understanding (Gardner)

1934

Paris

Amok (Fédor Ozep)

Britain

The Man Who Knew Too Much (Alfred Hitchcock)

The Iron Duke (Victor Saville)

1935

Britain

The Passing of the Third Floor (Bernard Viertel)

1936

Britain

Broken Blossoms (Septan)

Spy of Napoleon (Knowles)

The Man in the Mirror (Maurice Elvey)

1937

Paris

Le Mensonge de Nina Petrovna (Victor Tourjansky) (decor Serge Pimenoff)

Le Puritain (Jeff Musso, 1937)

1938

La Bête humaine (Jean Renoir)

Le Drame de Shanghai (G.W. Pabst)

Lumières de Paris (Richard Pottier)

La Maison de Malte (Pierre Chenal)

Tarakanowa (Fédor Ozep)

1939

Le Jour se lève (Marcel Carné)

Louise (Abel Gance)

Monsieur Bretonneau (Alexandre Esway)

* also shot in Austrian language film version

APPENDIX FIVE: ERICH POMMER: FRENCH LANGUAGE FILMOGRAPHY
1930-1934

1930
Berlin

Le Chemin du paradis (Wilhelm Thiele); glv Die Drei von der Tankstelle (Wilhelm Thiele)
Flagrant délit (Hanns Schwartz); glv Einbrecher

1931

Autour d'une enquête (Robert Siodmak); glv Vorentersuchung (Robert Siodmak)
Le Congrès s'amuse (Eric Charell); glv Der Kongress tanzt (Eric Charell)
La Fille et le garçon (Wilhelm Thiele); glv Zwei Herzen und ein Schlag (Wilhelm Thiele)
Tumultes (Robert Siodmak); glv Stürme der Leidenschaft

1932

À Moi le jour, à toi la nuit (Ludwig Berger and Claude Heymann); glv Ich bin Tag Und Du bei Nacht (Ludwig Berger)
I.F.I. ne répond pas (Karl Hartl); glv E.P.I. antwortet nicht (Karl Hartl)
Moi et l'impératrice (Friedrich Hollaender); glv Ich und die Kaiserin (Friedrich Hollaender)
Quick (Robert Siodmak); glv Quick (Robert Siodmak)
Un Rêve blond (Paul Martin); glv Ein blonder Traum (Paul Martin)
Le Vainqueur (Hans Hinrich); glv Der Sieger ((Hans Hinrich))

1933
Paris

On a volé un homme (Max Ophuls)

1934

Liliom (Fritz Lang)

APPENDIX SIX: ROBERT SIODMAK FRENCH LANGUAGE FILMOGRAPHY
1931-1939

1931

Autour d'une enquête: glv Voruntersuchung

1932

Tumultes: glv Stürme der Leidenschaft
Quick: glv Quick, König der Clowns

1933

Le Sexe faible

1934

La Crise est finie
Le Roi des Champs-Elysées (uncredited)

1935

La Vie Parisienne

1936

Le Grand refrain
Mister Flow
Le Chemin de Rio

1937

Mollenard

1938

Ultimatum
Les Frères Corses (uncredited)

1939

Pièges

APPENDIX SEVEN: NERO FILMS FILMOGRAPHY 1930-1939**1930**Les Saltimbanques (Jacquelux and Robert Land)**1931**La Tragédie de la mine (G.W. Pabst)**1932**L'Atlantide (G.W. Pabst)**1933**Le Sexe faible (Robert Siodmak)Le Testament du Dr. Mabuse (Fritz Lang)**1934**La Crise est finie (Robert Siodmak)Le Roi des Champs-Elysées (Max Nosseck and Robert Siodmak)**1935**La Vie Parisienne (Robert Siodmak)**1936**Mayerling (Anatole Litvak)Le Chemin de Rio (Robert Siodmak)**1938**Le Roman de Werther (Max Ophuls)Takaranowa (Féodor Ozep)**1939**Les Otages (Raymond Bernard)

APPENDIX EIGHT: LA CRISE EST FINIE

Nero Film, 1934

Distributed by S.A.F. Paramount

Director: Robert Siodmak
Producer: Seymour Nebenzahl
Script: Jacques Constant (after novel by Frédéric Kohner and Kurt Siodmak)
Cinematography: Eugen Schüfftan
Decor: Renoux
Music: Jean Lenoir and Waxman
Costume: Elkins and Mme. Laget
Sound: Wilmarth
Cast: Danielle Darrieux (Nicole)
Albert Préjean (Marcel)
Suzanne Dehelly (Mme. Olga)
René Lestelly (René)
Jeanne Loury (Mme. Bernouillin)
Marcel Carpenter (Emile Bernouillin)
Milly Mathis (la concierge)
Pitoutot (Hercule)
Paul Velsa (le machiniste)
Paul Escoffier (le manager)
The girls: Donell, Barcella, Belly, De Silva, Sherry,
Ossipova, Trinkel, Wendler

PLOT SYNOPSIS:

A troupe of theatrical performers, led by Parisian old hands Olga and Marcel, decide to seek their fortunes in the capital following the collapse of their show in the provinces. They arrive to find no work available. Down on their luck, the troupe make their shelter in a disused theatre. Nicole, a young novice, and Marcel try to trick M. Bernouillon, a lecherous piano seller, into lending them a piano to put on a show. Eventually Olga uses her savings to purchase the piano but Bernouillon buys up the theatre with the aim of turning it into a cinema. Desperate measures are called for to ensure that the first night can live up to its promise and the crisis is really over. The troupe trap Bernouillon under the stage of the theatre and enlist the support of the working population of the city to be a make-shift audience. The film ends with the performance of the show "La Crise est finie".

REVIEWS:

"After *Le Chemin du paradis*, *le Congrès s'amuse*, *Symphonie inachevie*, *le 42e rue*, it was difficult to avoid repetition, to invent a new tone to the musical comedy. Siodmak has managed it with ease. Three rousing and heady songs promise success and are intimately linked to the action. All of this is managed with a fast pace and a clownish sense of fantasy which mixes strong jokes and a slightly crazy sense of humour".

Pour Vous

"Siodmak has succeeded in giving us a lively and pleasing spectacle. In ten minutes, one can see more original ideas on the screen than you would ever find in two hours of spectacle in one of our large music-halls".

Candide

APPENDIX NINE: LA VIE PARISIENNE

Nero Film, 1935

95 mins

Director:	Robert Siodmak
Producer:	Seymour Nebenzahl
Script:	Emmerich Pressburger, Marcel Carré, Bruno Vigny (based on operetta by Meilhac and Halévy)
Cinematography:	Armand Thirard, Jean Ismard
Decor:	Jacques Colombier
Music:	Jacques Offenbach (adaptation and original music: Maurice Jaubert)
Costume:	Jean Patou, Marcel Roches, Elkins
Choreography:	Ernst Matray
Cast:	Max Dearly (Don Ramiro de Mendoza) Conchita Montenegro (Helenita) Georges Rigaud (Jacques Mendoza) Marcelle Praince (Liane d'Ysigny) Germaine Aussey (Simone) Jean Périer, Roger Dann, Jacques Henley, Jane Lamy, Austin Trevor, Claude Roussel, Enrico Glori

PLOT SYNOPSIS:

Paris 1900. At the "La Vie Parisienne" revue Don Ramiro makes his farewells to Paris and to his mistress Liane. Paris 1935. Don Ramiro returns to the capital with his innocent granddaughter Helenita and installs himself at the "Hôtel-Mondial". The current management of the "La Vie Parisienne" hope that Don Ramiro will help sort out their financial affairs. Jacques, an impecunious aristocrat, makes himself known to the couple. Much to the disapproval of Helenita's actual father, who also arrives in the city, Jacques and Helenita fall in love. Don Ramiro, by chance, meets Liane again at the theatre. The two set about hatching a plan which involves the ordinary population of Paris to thwart the father's resistance to the romance. In the end, all is resolved: Jacques and Helenita stay together and Don Ramiro decides never to leave Paris again.

REVIEWS:

"You could certainly shoot *la Vie Parisienne* in the way that Offenbach, Meilhac and Halévy are famous for by trying to recreate the atmosphere of 1867 which was Paris's most merry and brilliant year. But wasn't it even more interesting in the film of *la Vie Parisienne* to compare the former *la Vie Parisienne* with that of today, to use the brio, the spirit and situations of the operetta but transpose them into a modern setting? ... What especially makes the film not any old drama, freely adapting a previous success by exploiting the title, is the fact that Maurice Jaubert has taken up the famous manner of the operetta to accompany, underline and comment on the action with exactly the same mocking verve as that of Offenbach".

***Figaro* (19th August 1935)**

APPENDIX TEN: MAUVAISE GRAINE

Compagnie Nouvelle Cinématographique, 1933

Distributed by C.N.C.

80 mins.

Director:	Billy Wilder and Alexandre Esway
Producer:	M. Corniglion-Molinier
Script:	Alexander Esway and H.G. Lustig
Cinematography:	Paul Coteret, Maurice Delattre
Production Design:	Jacqueline Gys
Music:	Walter Gray and Franz Waxman
Cast:	Danielle Darrieux (Jeannette) Pierre Mingand (Pasquier) Raymond Galle (Jean) Jean Wall ("The Zebra") Michel Duran ("The Chief") Paul Escoffier (Dr. Pasquier) Maupi (Man in Panama hat)

PLOT SYNOPSIS:

Pasquier, the spoilt son of a prominent *haute-bourgeois* doctor, is forced by his father to relinquish his cherished automobile. He later sees a car of the same model on the street and decides to steal it. He is seen though by a gang of car thieves who had their own eyes on the vehicle. A spectacular chase ensues through the city streets. After the chase concludes, the thieves decide to offer Pasquier work and he falls in with their line of business. Pasquier befriends one of the young members of the gang called Jean and falls in love with Jean's sister, Jeannette. When Pasquier criticises the way the boss of the gang behaves, he and Jeannette are sent on a mission to Marseilles. They make it, despite a car that has been tampered with, and decide to set sail overseas. Meanwhile, the gang's headquarters is raided and Jean dies in a shootout.

REVIEWS:

"René Clair has already struck a youthful note in his stories of smart and resourceful types which suit well the tag of being "made in France" ... With *Mauvaise graine* which will be shown next at the Paramount Theatre, the public will get to know a style of direction which represents a real effort of renewal, a reaction against the "Pagnolisation" of cinema".

Source unknown

"With the charming music of Alan Gray and Franz Wachsmann which we have already tasted with *Emil et les DéTECTIVES*, with a completely innovative use of sound which promises us mars of passionately created rhythm, with the work of these young actors and technicians we'll see new kinds of images unfurl of a sharp and vivacious style".

Comédia (8th October 1934)

APPENDIX ELEVEN: COEUR DE LILAS

Fifra Film, 1931

Distributed by United Artists

Date of First Screening: 3rd March 1932 (Paris)

Director:	Anatole Litvak
Assistant Directors:	Dimitri Dragomir and H. Blanchon
Producer:	Dorothy Farnum and Maurice Barber
Script:	Dorothy Farnum, Anatole Litvak and Serge Veber, based on a play by Charles-Henry Hirsch and Tristan Bernard
Cinematography:	Curt Courant
Assistant Camera:	Louis Née
Decor:	Serge Pimenoff
Music:	Maurice Yvain
Sound:	Loirel
Cast:	Marcelle Romée (Coeur de Lilas) André Luguet (André Lucot) Jean Gabin (Martousse) Madelaine Guitty (Mme. Charignoul) Carlotta Conti (Mme. Novion) Marcel Delâitre (Darny) Georges Paulais (le juge d'instruction) Fréhel (la Douleur) Lydie Villars (La Crevette) Fordyce (Mme. Darny) Paul Amiot (Merlu) Fernandel (le garçon d'honneur) Pierre Labry (Charignoul) Georges Pally, René Maupré, Edouard Rousseau

PLOT SYNOPSIS:

Novion, a Parisian industrialist, is found murdered in "*la zone*". Darny, one of his employees is arrested but Inspector André Lucot doesn't share the opinion of the examining judge and decides to make his own personal enquiries. A glove belonging to Coeur de Lilas, a well-known girl from the *bals musettes*, is found near the corpse. Under the identity of an unemployed mechanic, Lucot takes a room at the local Charignoul lodgings so that he can meet her. He fights over Lilas with Martousse, a local *apache* and former lover of the girl. Martousse is arrested in the course of a police raid. Lucot takes Lilas with him to a pleasure hotel by the banks of the Marne. Martousse escapes from prison, finds them and reveals to Lilas that her new lover is a police officer charged with arresting her. Struck sideways by the revelation she makes off but eventually turns herself in to be charged with the offence.

REVIEWS:

"It is at once a detective story, a sentimental comedy and a picturesque portrait of the criminal underworld with heroes and heroines which will please both the adolescent and the rather more mature bourgeois. Honest people will be able to pleasurable breathe here the romance of the slums as well as the odour of crimes they have not committed and risks they have not run because of family obligations and educational goals. It is also a slice of life by Charles-Henry Hirsch, seasoned, perhaps with some underground irony by Tristan Bernard, as a Cornellian tragedy, a debate between passion and duty in the soul of a police agent ... All of this is facilitated pictorially with great ease. There is a wealth of just and piquant images integrated with fertile invention and a precise sense of cinema by the director Anatole Litvak. ... Jean Gabin, the *apache*, has achieved an admirable creation. It would be impossible to come up with a personality which carried more truth and conviction. The felt hat balanced on the head in the best style, the fixed cigarette butt, the fold of the scarf, the shrug of the shoulders, the cleanshaven face, the forelock of hair, the slow accent, the voice with a delayed sense of cocky cheek, the loose abandon of the body leaning on the counter of the bar; a certain sympathy and at the same time squalour all go to complete the idea that we have formed of the criminal type which converges in this flawless silhouette. I have met many rogues in the course of my life none of whom could have given Jean Gabin a lesson."

Alexandre Arnoux in L'Intransigeant (20th February 1932)

APPENDIX TWELVE: DANS LES RUES

Société Internationale Cinématographique, 1933

90 minutes

Filmed at Studios Films Sonores Tobis Paris, Epinay-sur-Seine

Date of First Screening: 26th July 1933 (Paris)

Director:	Victor Trivas
Producer:	Pierre O' Connell
Script:	Victor Trivas, Alexandre Arnoux, Henri Duvernois after a novel by Joseph-Henry Rosny aîné
Cinematography:	Rudolph Maté
Assistant Camera:	Louis Née
Decor:	Andrej Andrejew
Music:	Hanns Eisler
Sound:	Hermann Storr, Georges Leblond
Cast:	Vladimir Sokoloff (père Schlamp) Madelaine Ozeray (Rosalie) Marcelle-Jean Worms (Mme Lérande) Jean-Pierre Aumont (Jacques) Lucien Paris (Maurice) Paulette Dubost (Pauline) Charlotte Dauvia (Jeanne) Germaine Michel (concierge) Patachou (Moustique) Humbert (Cigare) Roger Legris (Moutarde) Emile Rosen (Gobiche) François Llénas (Main Droite) René Prat (Main Gauche) Pierre Lugan (Rosengart) Rose Mai (child) Jean Marais (child)

PLOT SYNOPSIS:

Maurice and Jacques are the two sons of a war widow living in the tenements of a *quartier* in Paris. Maurice, a worker, is resigned to his lot but his younger brother, Jacques, is dissatisfied with the terms of his life. Jacques is involved with a band of petty criminals who regularly fall foul of the law. The object of his affections is Rosalie—the daughter of Father Schlamp, a second-hand goods dealer. The gang steal a car and pass a day in the country. Cigare, a rival gang-leader, is snubbed by Rosalie. A party at Father Schlamp's storeroom is raided by Cigare's gang and a heated scuffle ensues. Jacques decides to burgle the property of a wealthy local widow. He enters the property by seducing the maid at a *bal*. Startled by the intruders, the widow dies and Jacques is forced to take to the streets on the run from the

law. The young man is released from prison on account of his mother's pleas for clemency which cite his tormented upbringing.

REVIEWS:

"A film by Victor Trivas is always an event. The creator of No Man's Land has proven himself such a master that we know full well that a production bearing his imprint will contain certain qualities. ... The script of Dans les rues has a theme of incontestable value. It was inspired by the novel of J.-H. Rosny the elder of the Académie Goncourt. ... In it Rosny the elder knows how to express with feeling and humanity the kind of vague melancholy which in the adolescent of the *faubourg*, is freely translated into a hesitation regarding which path to take. ... Trivas knows admirably how to tackle our attention. At the screening at the Marignan cinema a difficult public were united and held captive in the auditorium from the first images. ... This masterly technique which we find constantly throughout the film never weakens or strikes a false note. This is particularly true in the atmosphere. Perhaps it was difficult to create the atmosphere of a Parisian *quartier* on the screen. At the very least a popular milieu has been skillfully created. It is somewhat disturbing, a bit too low in social standing, even lower than Quatorze juillet, but it makes good use of its elements: the images of a fairground, the astonishing shambles of père Schlamp, second-hand goods dealer and receiver and especially the interiors of the houses with their principle element, the soul of these humble areas: the staircase".

Le Cinéoscope (March 1934)

"The atmosphere here is so heavy, so dark, the scenes are so poorly aerated that one is frustrated. I believe that the principle fault of the film ... is that there are a succession of too rigorously compartmentalised scenes, heaped up one after the other and separated by an over rigorous visual punctuation. The staging, similarly fragmented, reminds one strongly of a certain Russian-German theatricality which one finds in Grand Hotel and Crime and Punishment. ... In any case this film is a masterpiece of photographic interpretation. ... Certain exteriors such as the grey dawn over the Seine with Notre Dame in the distance are especially really miraculous. ... Dans les rues is a succession of passably banal anecdotes, swiftly treated and crowned by a pompous, pseudo-social and falsely humanist ending served up with imitation pity and sugary tears.

Mon Ciné (7th December 1933)

APPENDIX THIRTEEN: CARREFOUR

British Unity Pictures, 1938

Director:	Curtis Bernhardt
Producer:	Eugène Tuscherer
Script:	M. Kafka, André-Paul Antoine
Cinematography:	Léonce-Henry Burel, Henri Tiquet, Georges Régnier
Decor:	Jean d'Eaubonne, Raymond Gabutti
Music:	Michel Emer
Sound:	Marcel Courmes
Editor:	Lantz
Cast:	Suzy Prim (Michèle Allain) Tania Féodor (Mme de Vétheuil) Marcelle Géniat (Mme Pelletier) Charles Vanel (Roger de Vétheuil) Jules Berry (Lucien Sarrou) Jean Claudio (le petit Paul) Christian Argentin (l'avocat) Pierre Palau (le duc) Robert Rollys (un élève) Marcel Duhamel (le domestique) Liliane Lesaffre Otto Wallburg Auguste Boverio Jean Tissier Jenny Hecquet Paul Amiot Edy Debray Marcel Péres Jacques Cléry Pierre de Ramey

PLOT SYNOPSIS:

Roger de Vetheuil, a prominent Parisian industrialist, is accused by a newspaper of actually being Jean Pelletier, a one-time criminal. At a trial which ensues, a mysterious stranger called Lucien provides evidence to clear Vetheuil. Shortly after, Lucien attempts to blackmail Vetheuil by saying that he had lied on his behalf. Vetheuil, who is suffering from amnesia caused by a war wound, visits a Montmartre nightclub and meets its hostess, Michèle, who recognises him. Michèle is now Lucien's mistress and accomplice but was Pelettier's former lover. Realising the truth, Vetheuil/Pelletier is caught in a quandary. Eventually, he is saved from his plight by Michèle who shoots Lucien after an argument. She allows him to return to his new post-war identity.

REVIEWS:

"It has been said and written that Carrefour is a good and fine piece of work. Far be it for me to contradict such affirmation which with deserved credit must go to the director Kurt Bernhardt. I would, however, like to rectify the word "work" which may have a perjorative sense when applied to a cinematic production. I would like to draw out its real meaning which I am sure colleagues would have liked to have used. No confusion must be produced when one finds oneself in the presence of a film which is as coherent and as finely and scrupulously observed as Carrefour. ... [Kurt Bernhardt and A.P. Antoine] have conserved on film through the immense possibilities of cinema a unity of danger and menace that presents itself as a moving, poignant, human drama. Each of the characters from the victim of the atrocious amnesia to the unscrupulous blackmailer combine to create an atmosphere admirably maintained by the succession of images."

Jean Néry (publication unknown, 16th November 1938)

"Carrefour. C'est le <Siegfried> de Jean Giraudoux pour non-intellectuels."

René Jeanne (Le Petit Journal, 28th October 1938)

APPENDIX FOURTEEN: PIÈGES

Speva Films, 1939

99 minutes

Director:

Robert Siodmak

Producer:

Michel Safran

Script:

Jacques Companeez, Ernest Neuville, Simon Gantillon

Cinematography:

Michel Kelber, Jacques Mercanton, Marcel Fredetal

Decor:

Georges Wakhévitch

Music:

Michel Michelet

Sound:

Pierre Calvet

Editor:

Yvonne Martin

Cast:

Marie Déa (Adrienne Charpentier)

Maurice Chevalier (Robert Fleury)

Pierre Renoir (Brémontière)

André Brunot (le commissaire Ténier)

Jean Temerson (Batal)

Erich von Stroheim (Pears)

Jacques Varennes (Maxime)

Mady Berry (Sidonie)

Milly Mathis (Rose)

Madelaine Geoffrey (Valérie)

Catherine Farel (Lucie Barral)

Yvonne Yma (Mme. Batal)

Henri Bry (Oglou Vacopoulos)

Robert Seller (Carioni)

Raymond Rognoni, André Nicolle (les inspecteurs)

Pierre Magnier (l'homme d'affaires)

André Numès fils (le spectateur barbu)

Jean Brochard (le speaker)

Pierre Labry (le danseur)

André Carnège (le juge d'instruction)

Nicolas Rimsky (Rouski)

Philippe Richard (l'avocat)

Léon Arvel (le greffier)

Albert Malbert (le chauffeur)

Anthony Gildès (le jardinier)

Jacques Beauvais (le chef-cuisinier)

Julienne Paroli

Liliane Lesaffre

Robert Berri

Eugène Stuber

Charles Vissières

PLOT SYNOPSIS:

A serial killer loose in Paris is sending mysterious notes to the police. Commissaire Ténier and his assistant Batol recruit a young girl, Adrienne, to help them in their efforts to track down the criminal. Adrienne answers a series of anonymous announcements in the papers and comes across a number of individuals including the failed fashion designer Pears and the head butler of a large household, Maxime. She also meets the nightclub owner Robert Fleury and his assistant, Brémontière. Fleury pursues Adrienne and they decide to marry after the arrest of Maxime for his involvement in the disappearance of a number of young girls for the purposes of sexual slavery. The killer continues to strike, however, and with Adrienne's help suspicion falls on Fleury. Fleury is arrested but Ténier remains dissatisfied and eventually Brémontière is unmasked as the real killer. Adrienne and Fleury are reunited.

REVIEWS:

"The grumpy ones will say perhaps that there are some implausibilities in the script by Jacques Companez and Ernest Neuville. This isn't false but it nonetheless remains true to say that *Pièges* is an excellent film, well constructed, never boring and perfectly played by Maurice Chevalier, Pierre Renoir, André Brunot, Temerson, Jacques Varenne, Erich von Stroheim and a newcomer, Marie Déa who is fresh, ravishing, adroit and wears her clothes beautifully".

Pour Vous, 27th December 1939

"*Pièges* by Robert Siodmak isn't a great film but it is a very good production that merits attention being kept by the public for its well constructed script and the mystery and intrigue which are not uncovered until the final images. ... Marie Déa who plays the principal role is a revelation. She has a simple, nuanced and meticulous manner of acting and a clarity in her gestures and language that affirm a real gift for the screen".

Candide, 20th December 1939

"You could say that it is a matter of a police film ... but *Pièges* has neither the cut nor the rhythm of a police film. What it seems is a succession of sketches destined to bring its comical or bizarre characters to life in front of us. The slowness and, it has to be said, the talent with which the director Robert Siodmak describes the social milieu of each of his characters scarcely contributes to strengthening the film's illusion".

Georges Champeux, Gringoire, 21st December 1939

"Here is one of the greatest French films released since the war. ... Its intrigue is well constructed, composed as a rising movement of mystery and violence which is nuanced, however, by charm and humour. ... Throughout there is a dramatic atmosphere which is admirably composed as much by the well researched decor of Wakhévitch as the knowing shadows of the beautiful cinematography of Michel Kelber".

La Cinématographie Française, 23rd December 1939

APPENDIX FIFTEEN: LILIOUM

Fox Europa, 1934

120 minutes

Director:	Fritz Lang
Assistant Director:	Jean-Pierre Feydeau
Producer:	Erich Pommer
Script:	Fritz Lang, Robert Liebmann, Bernard Zimmer after the play by Ferenc Molnar
Cinematography:	Rudi Maté, Louis Née
Decor:	Paul Colin, René Renoux, Ferdinand Earle
Music:	Jean Lenoir, Franz Wachsmann
Costume:	René Hubert
Sound:	E. Zylberberg
Cast:	Charles Boyer (Liliom) Madelaine Ozeray (Julie) Florelle (Mme Moscat) Pierre Alcover (Alfred) Vivianne Romance (la marchande de cigarettes) Maximilienne (Mme Menoux) Roland Toutain (le marin) Mimi Funès (Marie) Alexandre Rignault (Hollinger) Mila Parély (le dactylo) Robert Arnoux (le tourneur) Henry Richard (le commissaire) Raoul Marco (l'inspecteur) Barencey (le policier) Antonin Artaud (le rémouleur) René Stern (le caissier) Léon Arvel (l'employé) Josiane Lisbey Blanche Estival

PLOT SYNOPSIS:

Liliom is a hawker for a merry-go-round at a fairground in the Parisian *zone*. His boss, Mme Moscat, has strong feelings for him but he falls in love with the demure and innocent Julie. The couple establish a home and a photographic business with Julie's aunt, Mme Menoux, who harbours strongly voiced doubts about Liliom's character. Liliom frequently loses his temper with his partner. Julie becomes pregnant and because they are short of money, Liliom plans a robbery with his criminal friend Alfred. The scheme goes wrong and Liliom kills himself. He goes to heaven where he is reprimanded for his actions. Many years later, Liliom is allowed to return to Earth where he meets his daughter. Back in heaven again, because of his tears, Liliom is absolved.

REVIEWS:

"The screen is currently taking up an interest in Liliom and the version that Fritz Lang has given us is both loose with and faithful to the original. It has a flavour of humanity which the cinema is unused to. Situated within the particular order that realism has so often painted with its minutiae and taste for telling detail, Liliom escapes from the simplistic art which attempts to just photograph life. Molnar is a poet and it is from the basis of the poetry that his fantasy evolves".

Comoedia, 28th April 1934

"The Parisian public is not going to welcome the first French work by Fritz Lang unanimously ... the Judeo-Hungarian collaboration between Lang and Molnar doesn't treat the metaphysical jokes with enough lightness. ... The first part of the film offers nothing original and there is an accumulation of the old commonplaces of populist cinema: the fair, the merry-go-rounds, the *bistro*, the *zone* and so on. The greatest fault of all of this is that it is false, stiff and badly situated. The action, we are told, unfolds in Paris but all the characters have a profoundly forlorn and pessimistic German disposition to the point of obsession".

Jean Fayard, Candide, 10th March 1934

"The first scenes make you think directly of Francis Carco ... the lighting is in this dark manner of the German studios which worsens still further the over considered style of the visuals. The effect is to sacrifice the whole for a number of less important effects".

Le Journal, 4th May 1934

"The concern of the director was, it appears, to make a French film where in fact Liliom is a German film par excellence, at once realist and mystical. The first part unwinds in the "*zone internationale*" with the banal decor of the fair and the *fortifs*. The second, takes place at the gateway to heaven and is inspired by that marvellous form of fantasy whose typical form of expression is the Germanic Christmas tree".

Jean Laury, Le Figaro, 29th April 1934

"Because of the "cleaning" of the German studios, the Jew Erich Pommer has settled in our country. ... These crude details of *faubourg* life: the turned up nose of Florelle, the *gavroche* like air of Roland Toutain are lost under the weight of the lighting of the Berlin studios so that the result is nothing but a heterogeneous spectacle. ... this French-Jewish-Hungarian collaboration doesn't create a breathable atmosphere. We return to that bizarre and boring cinematic country produced by UFA's French-German dramas, a "no man's land" alot closer to the Spree than to the Seine, a Babel emptied of all character".

François Vinneuil, Action Française, 28th April 1934

"Those that will be taken in by Liliom will go up in the skies with him. They will see the angels and the heavens. They will hear the song of the stars. The others will remain on earth. They will only see in the film the rather banal story of a carefree and lazy fairground hawker who has a bad head but a good heart and doesn't know very well how to manage his life. ... A rather too slow pace spoils the movement of the film. Each image is on the screen rather too long. It is too insistent on details. In particular, there is too much dialogue when the lighting and sound effects would suffice to create the atmosphere. Bernard Zimmer's dialogue is too literary ... what a relief the images are! Fritz Lang and his cinematographer Maté have understood how to express the tragedy of the *faubourgs* with an ambiguous and painfully emotional *clair-obscur* light".

Jean Vidal, Pour Vous, 3rd May 1934