

Notes on films shown at the French Library, 1977-1978

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L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD (Last Year at Marienbad) 1961

Director:	Alain Resnais	Music:	Francis Seyrig
Script:	Alain Robbe-Grillet	Decors:	Jacques Saulnier
Photography:	Sacha Vierny	Cast:	Delphine Seyrig
Editing:	Henri Colpi		Giorgio Albertazzi
	Jasmine Chasney		Sacha Pitoeff

L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD continues two interests that Alain Resnais began exploring in his first feature, HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR (1959). One concerns the close relation between filmmaker and contemporary writer that, among the New Wave directors, Resnais was the first to exploit successfully. The director found himself with many aesthetic and conceptual ideas in common with such writers of the "nouveau roman" as Marguerite Duras and Alain Robbe-Grillet. It is no coincidence that both of these writers, after having worked as scénarists with Resnais, became filmmakers themselves. Their writing styles are so well-suited to cinematographic representation that Robbe-Grillet, for example, has produced literary works which he terms "ciné-romans"--something between a scenario and a novel--on which he bases his films. Perhaps the most important characteristic of these works is the use of verbal images; these images are used to describe a given incident--a continuum of which make up the novel's plot. They are often presented in anti-chronological fashion, and are infused with the spontaneity and immediacy of their cinematographic counterparts, flash-backs.

The second aspect of continuity in Resnais' films is his preoccupation with the phenomenon of memory, one in which the literary and cinematographic techniques mentioned above of course play an integral role. Robbe-Grillet's script is the story of the meeting between a man and a woman at an elegant, palatial hotel, defined neither in time nor space. The man tries to convince the woman that they had met before, "peut-être à Marienbad," and that she had agreed to leave her husband and run away with him. She remembers and believes nothing of it, but plays along with his "game" nonetheless. The surrealistic nature of the hotel, with its labyrinth of corridors and abundance of rooms (although many, like the bedroom, are never seen), plus the obvious incongruity in the couple's memories, puts the whole notion of reality in question. Robbe-Grillet is credited not only with the scénario, but also with the découpage, the ordering of scenes to form a comprehensive whole. This is essential, in that what is revealed through the development of the film is a gradual breaking down of the female protagonist's own conception of reality. In the progress of the film, the woman's suitor begins to present evidence of their past affair, and seems finally to convince her. All remains unclear however. Resnais' innovative cinematographic techniques leave not only memories (shown through flash-backs) in doubt, but "reality" as well. In this hotel, where time and space have no meaning, the "future" is indistinguishable from the "past," and may be only an endless repetition of the "present."

"L'ANNÉE DERNIÈRE À MARIENBAD, despite its two references--temporal (l'année dernière) and spacial (à Marienbad) -- in reality mixes up time and space: exactly when and where does the action actually take place? The answer seems impossible. Moreover, in his presentation of the film, Robbe-Grillet himself reunites the two notions of time and space. 'And then he (Giorgio Albertazzi) offers her (Delphine Seyrig) the impossible in this labyrinth where time is as if abolished: he offers her a past, a future, and freedom.'"

--RENÉ PRÉDAL

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Sadoul, Georges. Le Cinéma Français. Paris: Flammarion, 1962.
Call Number: 791.430944

ASCENSEUR POUR L'ÉCHAFAUD (Elevator to the Gallows) 1958

Director:	Louis Malle	Cast:	Maurice Ronet
Screenplay:	Roger Nimier		Jeanne Moreau
	Louis Malle		Yori Bertin
	(based on a novel by Noel Calef)		Georges Poujouly
Photography:	Henri Decae		Lino Ventura
Music:	Miles Davis		

Louis Malle directed his first film, L'ASCENSEUR POUR L'ÉCHAFAUD, at the age of 25. He had previously worked with Jacques-Yves Cousteau on many films, including LE MONDE DU SILENCE, which Malle co-directed with Cousteau in 1956. Already having attracted the praise of Jean Renoir for his work with Cousteau, Malle was soon recognized by the entire film community as an innovative and influential New Wave director. Like François Truffaut, Malle was very much inspired by the American film noir of the forties and fifties, and this influence is quite evident in his first film.

ASCENSEUR POUR L'ÉCHAFAUD is the story of two crimes: one, the premeditated "perfect crime" murder of a rich executive by this assistant, who is having an affair with the victim's wife; the other, a thoughtless, "accidental" murder by a teenaged delinquent caught stealing a car. The two crimes are inextricably intertwined, and much of the success of this film lies in the narrative technique by which Malle unfolds his story. Jeanne Moreau searches for her lover while he is trapped in an elevator after having committed his "perfect crime". She gives a powerful and moving performance as she attempts to exonerate her lover, who is unjustly accused of the other murder. Moreau deliriously wanders the streets of Paris, to the background of Miles Davis's jazz score, which corresponds to and intensifies the film's every mood. Only through Moreau's performance does the director convey the ardor of this love affair that has caused a murder--the two lovers are never seen together on the screen. A comparison between this film and Malle's next, LES AMANTS (which also starred Jeanne Moreau), shows a transition in subject matter from a police story to a love story, and when considered with his later works, clearly indicates another reason for Louis Malle's success as a director--his versatility.

"When I made ASCENSEUR POUR L'ÉCHAFAUD, I didn't know
what directing was. I had the formidable force of naivete."
--LOUIS MALLE

"...[In L'ASCENSEUR] the conventional means of cinematographic rhetoric are all used. But this systematic recourse to all the processes of fiction alone is capable of creating...the sensitive, moral, psychological being--or better, of re-creating it, of evoking it according to those 'sacred laws of the imagination'..." --ALBERT CERVONI

L'ATALANTE 1934

Director: Jean Vigo
Screenplay: Jean Guinée
Albert Riera
Jean Vigo

Photography: Boris Kaufman
Louis Berger
Music: Maurice Jaubert

Cast: Michel Simon, Dita Parlo, Jean Daste, Louis Lefèvre, Gilles Margaritis

In the brief twenty-nine years that he lived, Jean Vigo completed four films, only one of which--L'Atalante--was of feature length. It is all the more astounding then that his influence has been evident in so many diverse movements within French cinema, from the surrealists of the 1930's to the realists and neo-realists of the following decades, up to such New Wave and contemporary filmmakers as François Truffaut. That Vigo's films defy categorization is made clear through a consideration of the diversity of critical responses to his last film, L'Atalante.

In regarding this story of a young barge captain and his new wife, a peasant girl from Normandy, film critics have often used the term "naturalism," and made references to the work of Jean Renoir and Marcel Carné. Certainly many aspects of the film lend credence to such observations, particularly the scenes of the barge L'Atalante on its maiden voyage, crawling up the Seine toward Paris. On the other hand, the film abounds with surrealist images, and although Vigo was never a part of the movement which includes filmmakers and artists such as Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí, his films are often included in retrospectives of surrealist and dadaist cinema. The influence of Vigo's work on his contemporaries was not insignificant. Many of the surrealist scenes of L'Atalante center around the character of Père Jules (Michel Simon), an eccentric and comical old sailor and second mate of the barge. His picturesque cabin is almost a dream sequence in itself, with Père's bizarre collection of bric-à-brac, including a friend's two amputated hands in a jar of alcohol ("C'est tout ce qui me reste de lui."). At the risk of creating yet another category, Alain Virmaux has referred to L'Atalante as "une sorte de réalisme poétique" (a phrase often used in reference to the films of Jean Cocteau). The term in a sense suggests both the naturalist and surrealist aspects of L'Atalante. Yet only in viewing Vigo's films can one begin to understand that which categories can never convey--the beauty and force of the young director's oeuvre that has made him a legend in the history of French cinema.

"Of course the roots of the unusual, the surreal, the fantastic, are in the preceding films of Vigo, but if, in L'Atalante there is, moreover, a poetry and a lyricism which constitute a novelty, it is, I believe, because the film introduces new themes, the spontaneous carriers of poetry and lyricism...poetry at once sad and profound, to which Jaubert's marvelous score gives a third dimension, a constant presence of the unusual and the wondrous, all of which confers on L'Atalante its prodigious power of enchantment."

--MARCEL MARTIN

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BALLET MECANIQUE (1924)

Director: Fernand Léger

Assistant: Dudley Murphy

Ballet Mécanique is the only film which the painter Léger completed, although he worked on an animated film in 1920 which he called Charlot Cubiste (a fragment from it appears in this film). Léger was moved to temporarily forsake his paintbrush for the camera, partly under the inspiration of Abel Gance's film La Roue (1922), and for reasons which he outlines below:

"The idea for the film came to me in order to reassure me of the plastic value of these new elements in a mobile expression. The repetitions of forms, slowed or rapid rhythms permit extremely rich possibilities. An object can become by itself a tragic spectacle, a comic one, a spectacular one. It was adventure in the land of marvels. I would have wanted to construct the film with fragments of objects. But it would have become too abstract an experiment, inaccessible to the general public. For this reason, the editing alternates fragments with present realities. True cinema is the image of the object totally unknown to my eyes."

Léger's film, although not affiliated with any particular movement, has much in common with the early Dada films of Man Ray and Marcel Duchamps, in fact more so than later so-called Dada works, which by incorporating elements of dreams and the unconscious, come closer to the related Surrealist movement. Léger's motives lie clearly in artistic experimentation, and, his concessions to the general public aside, Ballet Mécanique, even by contemporary standards, belongs uncontestably in the sphere of the avant-garde.

LA BÊTE HUMAINE (1938)

Director:	Jean Renoir	Cast:	Jean Gabin
Script:	Jean Renoir (after the novel of Émile Zola)		Simone Simon
Photography:	Curt Courant, Claude Renoir		Fernand Ledoux
Editing:	Marguerite Renoir		Julien Carette
Music:	Joseph Kosma		Blanchette Brunoy
Production:	Paris-Film-Production		Gérard Landry
			Jean Renoir

Jean Renoir directed *LA BÊTE HUMAINE* in 1938, during the extremely creative period of his career in which he produced such film classics as *LA GRANDE ILLUSION* and *LA RÈGLE DU JEU*. Considerably overshadowed by these other works, *LA BÊTE HUMAINE* is only recently being recognized for the masterpiece that it is. Renoir is at his most innovative with visual images and experimentation with sound. His choice of subject matter and cast were matters of inspiration: Émile Zola's novel was as perfectly suited to Renoir's cinematographic concepts at that time as was Jean Gabin for the lead rôle. Renoir had long admired Gabin, who was at the height of his career in 1938: "Gabin is an Actor with a capital A. I've directed a lot of people in my life, but have never met such a powerful cinematographic personality."

Renoir had originally selected Gabin for a rôle in a film to be called *TRAIN D'ENFER* (Train of Hell), but receiving no support from his producers, he was forced to abandon the project. Renoir accepted the suggestion of a film version of Zola's novel instead, and wrote the screenplay in two weeks. The link between Renoir's original idea and the film he completed, and indeed the key to understanding this film, lie in the image of the train. In *LA BÊTE HUMAINE*, Jean Gabin plays a railroad engineer, Jacques Lantier, who leads a life of drunkenness and crime, until he falls in love with the wife of a railroad executive (Simone Simon). Even this love cannot halt the tragic course of his life. While Zola emphasizes Lantier's bitterness over his heritage (his parents and grandparents were all alcoholics), Renoir stresses the role of fate, and presents both Gabin and Simon as victims of a destiny no less impossible to alter than the course of a speeding locomotive.

The role of the train is equally central in regard to the conceptual aspects of the film. Rhythm and continuity are established as major themes already in the opening scenes of the train on its run from Paris to Le Havre. The conception is that of a symphony of sound and image. In an interview with Jacques Rivette and François Truffaut, Renoir expressed his desire in making *LA BÊTE HUMAINE* "to escape almost entirely from naturalism, in order to try to approach a genre more classical and more poetic." That these ends are achieved in a milieu as bleak and desperate as that of Zola's novel is a tribute to the humanism and compassion of Renoir's personal vision.

"LA BÊTE HUMAINE only affirmed in me the desire for poetic realism. The iron mass of the locomotive became, in my imagination, the flying carpet of Eastern tales. Zola, from the bottom of his tomb, helped me powerfully to maintain myself in this ideal plan. His novel is formulated from delicious passages of popular poetry... it's the atmosphere of trains, train tracks, the release of steam which furnished me with this poetry, and especially which furnished the actors with it, which gave them the essence of their rôles better than any explanations could."

--JEAN RENOIR

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BOUDU SAUVE DES EAUX (Boud Saved From Drowning) 1932

Director:	Jean Renoir	Photography:	Marcel Lucien
Producers:	Michel Simon		Asselin
	Jean Gehret	Décors:	Laurent
Screenplay:	Jean Renoir		Jean Castanier
	Albert Valentin	Editor:	Suzanne de Troeye
	(from the play of René Fauchois)	Music:	Raphael
		Assistant:	Jacques Becker

Cast: Michel Simon, Charles Granval, Marcelle Hainia, Severine Lerezinska, Jean Dasté, Jean Gehret, Max Dalban.

With BOUDU, Jean Renoir took a play which dealt with the transformation of a tramp into an acceptable member of the bourgeoisie and turned it around. In order to do this, Renoir simply relied on his own personal vision and changed the end of the story, not allowing his hero to lose his freedom through conformity. This sense of freedom is evident in every aspect of the film: artistically, philosophically, and technically.

Michel Simon plays Boudu, the poor tramp whose suicide attempt is foiled when he is rescued from the Seine by Lestingois, a middle-class Parisian bookseller. Boudu insists that Lestingois must now take responsibility for him, and he goes to live in the book-seller's house. Finding bourgeois proprieties alien to his sensibilities, Boudu proceeds to wreak havoc on his benefactor's household. He seduces both Mme. Lestingois and the maid. Consequently, the former once again begins to interest her husband, who leaves the latter (with whom he was having an affair) to Boudu, in hopes that a marriage will finally reform the tramp. For Renoir, this is out of the question.

The director gave Simon full reign in determining the character of Boudu, and he was certainly a natural for this kind of part, as he was to prove again in later roles (Vigo's L'ATALANTE, 1934; Carné's DROLE DE DRAME, 1936). Renoir emphasizes his theme of freedom through the use of image and sound, and in contrasting Boudu's carefree attitude with the staid routine of the Lestingois' bourgeois household. In his cinematic approach, Renoir concentrates on "depth of field." He rarely isolates his characters, preferring to present them in a context of detailed interiors or naturalistic landscapes. In his use of sound, Renoir reveals his usual talent for innovation, with emphasis on off-screen effects (such as Lestingois' neighbor's flute-playing). These unorthodox and inventive techniques are much akin to René Clair's early experimentation in sound film. All of these aspects enhance to such a great extent the atmosphere of freedom in BOUDU: SAUVE DES EAUX, that the viewer cannot bear to see Boudu sacrifice this freedom to bourgeois conformity. Thanks to Renoir's sensitivity, we are spared this vision. The circle is complete, and Boudu is again saved, not from the water, but by it.

"These last scenes of BOUDU are already LA PARTIE DE CAMPAGNE, the green banks of the river, the breath of things which fill the soul with happiness. But in order to get there, in order to attain this fulfillment, Boudu had to throw down not only his suitcoat and bourgeois marriage, but all that they encompass: vanity, egoism, greed, the entire society which men have made according to their mediocrity and poverty. The pastoral is also a satire."

Pierre Leprohon

GERVAISE (1956)

Director: René Clément
Screenplay: Jean Aurenche
Pierre Bost
(from Emile Zola's novel,
L'Assommoir)

Cast: Maria Schell
François Perrier
Suzy Delair
Jany Holt
Jacques Harden
Armand Mestral

René Clément as a filmmaker is most noted for his precision of direction, his successful handling of actors, even the most inexperienced, his minute attention to detail, and his studied development of characters. He is a realist par excellence whose work, beginning in the mid-30's, has undergone a constant evolution through incorporating, selectively, aspects of modern cinematic movements such as The New Wave. One critic has described his style as "modern, but without excess."

Clément's most successful period as a director was the decade or so following the Second World War in which he produced over half of his major feature films including the anti-war classic, JEUX INTERDITS (Forbidden Games). This film, made at the height of the first Cold War, in 1951, was boycotted by French officials and excluded from the Cannes Film Festival. The public, however, was receptive to Clément's message, and upon release the film achieved enormous international success. Five years later, in 1956, Clément undertook a project focusing on more personal and immediate concerns of individuals--a film version of Emile Zola's novel, L'Assommoir, the tragic story of the laundress Gervaise, her alcoholic husband, Coupeau, and her former lover Lantier.

Zola's novel deals with one of his most popular themes--the effects of heredity and environment on the working class of 19th century Paris. As the film's title indicates, GERVAISE concentrates more on the character of the laundress herself and less on Zola's preoccupation with the tragic effects of alcoholism on the two men. In this respect, Clément exhibits in the person of Gervaise that exacting character development for which he is famous, and which one critic describes in the following way: "...in following the narrative which the character develops little by little, we can at the same time watch the character herself, thus discovering in her a facet of her personality of which she herself is ignorant; this then allows us to be slightly ahead of the film." This is the most striking way in which Clément takes advantage of that most obvious aspect of his medium which distinguishes it from literature. This visual aspect on the one hand, in its attention to realism and detail, remains strongly faithful to Zola; on the other hand, in its use as a method of character development it gives GERVAISE that certain quality of Clément originality.

The perfection of GERVAISE'S form makes us swallow, without distaste, the glasses of foul red wine and the whimpering of Maria Schell (Gervaise). This was quite a good film. The solidity of the structure, the depth of direction, the presence of actors directed with a master's hand constitute the film's most evident qualities.

Tristan Renaud

HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR (1959)

Director:	Alain Resnais	Music:	Giovanni Fusco
Screenplay:	Marguerite Duras		Georges Delarue
Photography:	Sacha Vierny	Editors:	Henri Colpi
	Michie Takahaschi		Jasmine Chasney

Cast: Emmanuelle Riva, Eiji Okada, Bernard Fresson, Stella Dallas, Pierre Barbaud

Alain Resnais' first feature, *HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR*, exhibits a level of complexity and sophistication which is rarely achieved, even by mature filmmakers at the height of their careers. At the same time, the film is startling in its originality and innovation. According to Georges Sadoul, "This is the sort of film that can renew and change the art of the cinema." It is no surprise that film critics approach the work of Resnais in literary terms. The director relies heavily on detailed scenarios, sometimes based on literary works, sometimes created specifically for the screen. His films encourage the same kind of close attention and detailed analyses as any great work of fiction.

HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR has often been compared to the novels of Proust. Memory plays the key role in revealing the characters of two lovers, a French actress and a Japanese architect, who meet and fall in love in post-World War II Tokyo, during the making of an anti-war film. Much as Proust's narration encompasses decades while describing minutes, Resnais, through the use of flash-backs reveals the past lives of his characters, whose time together is of such short duration: "Lui," during the war in Japan, understanding, though not having witnessed the insanity of the Hiroshima bombing; "Elle," knowing nothing of Hiroshima, but knowing well the consequences of loving "the enemy" from her experience at Nevers during the German occupation of France, having fallen in love with "l'Allemand." Resnais' flash-backs contain much of the lyricism of Proust's descriptions of memory, but his montage adds yet another dimension. It creates a sort of dynamism and immediacy that finds its literary parallel in the works of many contemporary French authors (among them, Marguerite Duras, on whose novel the film is based), who were in a sense writing in reaction to the novelistic tradition, of which Proust's oeuvre is the epitome. But the role of Proustian memory is only one aspect, albeit the central one, of Resnais' film.

Resnais' approach is to depict the subtleties and complexities of life on many levels, and to utilize equally as many levels of artistic expression. Emmanuelle Riva's role as an actress playing an actress, making an anti-war film within an anti-war film only hints at the kinds of complex ideas on which Resnais builds his film. Social and artistic issues are explored on every level as Resnais treats several themes: the psychological role of memory in the unconscious; the musical nature of dialogue and image; the political responsibility of the cinema. Resnais continues his pursuit of these themes in his later films, because they are certainly more than any single film could encompass. Nonetheless, *HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR* is the kind of film one could see again and again, and each time find something else, thought-provoking, engrossing, astonishing.

" /In *HIROSHIMA MON AMOUR*,/ text and image complement each other without becoming mixed, go side by side as lines of a counterpoint, creating an additional dimension, which is like the consciousness of past events, superimposed on the present... one of the most engaging works of cinema today."
--JEAN MITRY

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Call Number: 791.430944

JENNY (1936)

Director: Marcel Carné
 Producer: R.A.C.
 Screenplay: Jacques Prévert, Jacques Constant
 (from the novel by Pierre Rocher,
Prison de Velours)

Photography: Roger Hupert
 Editor: Ernest Hajos
 Music: Joseph Kosma
 Lionel Cozeau

Cast: Françoise Rosay, Lisette Lanvin, Albert Préjean, Jean-Louis Barrault.

In 1936, on the recommendation of Jacques Feyder, Marcel Carné completed his first feature film, JENNY. Carné had assisted Feyder on four films, including LA KERMESSE HEROIQUE (1935). Now the director encouraged his young assistant to pursue an independent career. With the success of his short film, NOGENT, ELDORADO DU DIMANCHE (1929), and with continuing support of Françoise Rosay and other actors and actresses with whom he had worked, Carné found a producer and set to work on JENNY. At last could Carné abandon the nickname which his colleagues had bestowed upon him: "La Reine sans Palais."

JENNY marks another first for Carné. In his choice of Jacques Prévert as script writer, a successful partnership was formed which would span ten years and eight films, concluding in 1946 with LES PORTES DE LA NUIT (see program for Feb.22-24, 1980). Even in this early film, those characteristics which define the later works of Carné and Prévert (LES ENFANTS DU PARADIS, LES VISITEURS DU SOIR) are everywhere evident: the power of destiny, the role of coincidence, a gradual character development, and a sensitive portrayal of relationships. These characteristics define a genre of film which became known as le réalisme poétique, and of which Carné and Prévert were among the earliest purveyors. This film--the story of Madame Jenny and her attempts to hide from her daughter her profession as proprietess of an exclusive boite de nuit--although rarely shown, is of considerable importance in following the development of Marcel Carné into one of France's foremost directors.

"...at the denouement, a beautiful image of Françoise Rosay on a railroad bridge in an outside quarter of Paris, demonstrates that after Jasset, Feuillade, Clair, Renoir, Marcel Carné would know how to be a lyric poet of the Parisian suburbs, in a tone which was his alone."

GEORGES SADOUL

NOGENT, ELDORADO DU DIMANCHE (1929)

Director: Marcel Carné co-director: Michel Sanvoisin

Marcel Canré's first film, a documentary on the Parisian suburb of Nogent, was not, according to the director, ever intended to be shown publically. However, when the management of a Parisian cinema, Studio des Ursulines, expressed interest in NOGENT, Carné agreed to have it released. Presented in the improbable company of an American gangster movie and Man Ray's surrealist MYSTERE DU CHATEAU DU DE, Carné's film received the most attention from the press, and caught the eye of René Clair, who subsequently invited Carné to assist him on SOUS LES TOITS DE PARIS (1929). As a silent film, NOGENT is most valuable for the insights it offers into Carné's cinematographic skills and his sense of image and montage.

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 Call #: 791.430944

LA KERMESSE HEROIQUE (Carnival in Flanders) 1935

Director:	Jacques Feyder	Cast:	Françoise Rosay
Assistants:	Marcel Carné, Charles Barrois		Jean Marat
Screenplay:	Jacques Feyder, Charles Spaak (based on Spaak's novel)		Louis Jourvet
Cinematography:	Harry Stradling		Andre Alerme
Art Director:	Lazare Meerson		Bernard Laucrot
Music:	Louis Beydts		Micheline Cheirel
Production:	Tobis		Alfred Adam

La Kermesse Heroique marks the culmination of Marcel Carné's work with Jacques Feyder. Carné had served as Feyder's assistant on three previous films, and on this last one, as "directeur de production," was also given the responsibility for organizing and preparing the sets and actors (in this case two groups of actors, since the film was made in both a French and German version). Through this work, Carné had developed such a rapport with the actors that many of them had expressed interest in working with him when he began to direct in his own right. In fact, by way of encouragement, leading lady Françoise Rosay offered to play for free in his first film.

In 1935, when La Kermesse Heroique was released, the political climate in France was such that it could not but be perceived as an allegory to the contemporary situation. The story of a small town in Flanders threatened by an approaching Spanish army was and continues to be compared to the situation of Europe and France in particular, during the rise of Nazi Germany. The cowardly pacifism of the Flemish merchants and the mayor of the town (who decides to stage a funeral for himself, hoping that the Spaniards will spare a town in mourning) is assumed to reflect the strong pacifist sentiment of a large segment of the French population. Even the heroic efforts of the Burgomeister's wife (Rosay) and her companions, who save the town through more aggressive means (i.e. charming and seducing the Spanish invaders) are only compared to the policies of the Daladier and Petain regimes. The director's approach to this question is ambiguous, and his genre of comedy hardly demands such interpretations. In fact, Feyder himself had consistently denied any "inspiration nazie" for his film. It was conceived rather as a tribute to and celebration of the painters of Feyder's native Flanders, among them, Breughel, Rubens, and Franz Hals. As such, it succeeds on two counts, as a farcical comedy and as a visual extravaganza, relegating political and social implications to the role of "icing on the cake." Marcel Carné's only regret concerning this film was that it could not have been made in color.

"...a sumptuous décor of a Flemish village of the 17th century, where the scenes are arranged as admirable paintings. Feyder's sense of modeling revived historical cinema, and this important and exceptionally beautiful work would have been able to be compared to a calvacade or a ballet, had the anecdote, which was believed to be a pretext, not been found taking on, because of world politics, a violent, real presence."
-- GEORGES SADOUL

"I will not say that Feyder taught me everything. Wouldn't this be because still today, while directing a film, I am always learning something... But, certainly he gave me a profound knowledge of the basics of the profession. And more yet-how to say it?- the cinematographic "execution."
-- MARCEL CARNE

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Director: Jean Cocteau
Screenplay: Jean Cocteau
Photography: Nicolas Hayer

Music: Georges Auric
Décors: d'Eaubonne
Costumes: Escoffier

CAST: Jean Marais, Maria Casarès, Marie Déa, François Périer, Henri Crémieux, Juliette Gréco

Jean Cocteau, writer, poet, artist, playwright, and director, completed only five feature films from 1930 until his death in 1963. He collaborated, however, on over a dozen others, writing screenplays and dialogues and adapting his own works for such noted directors as Marcel Carné, Jean-Pierre Melville, Robert Bresson, and André Zwoboda among many others. Cocteau's first film, *LE SANG D'UN POÈTE* (1930), was made thanks to a million francs given him by a rich French aristocrat, Charles de Noailles. This same viscount gave Luis Buñuel another million francs that year in order to make the classic *L'ÂGE D'OR*. In much the same way as all of Buñuel's later work finds its source in *L'ÂGE D'OR*, so too does *LE SANG D'UN POÈTE* present a theme which is found throughout Cocteau's work. In fact, many critics suggest a kind of trilogy, starting with this first film, ending with his last, *LE TESTAMENT D'ORPHEE* (1960), and including as its central work *ORPHEE*.

ORPHEE uses a modern version of the Greek myth of Orpheus to delve into the nature of poetry and death--themes which *ORPHEE* shares with the other two films of the trilogy. Although these themes are amply represented in Cocteau's written works, his films cannot be considered merely adaptations of those works. Cocteau thought of film as an art form independent of literature, a substitute for writing: "The image machine, to me, has only been a means of saying certain things in the visual language, instead of saying them through ink and paper."

Cocteau transports the legend of Orpheus to a modern city where Death is incarnated as a Princess who rides in a Rolls Royce; Hell is called "the Zone" and is represented by the ruins of St.-Cyr which were bombed out during World War II. Cocteau combines the realism of a detective story with elements of fantasy and mythology, making use of such visual techniques as reverse images (through the frequent appearance of mirrors and the use of film negatives). The total effect was too much for the film-going public of 1950. According to Georges Sadoul, this "complete commercial failure kept Cocteau away from the studios for ten years." Both Cocteau and *Orphée* survived this initial reaction; the former retaining his place as a major figure in the world of art and literature; the latter taking its place in the ranks of world film classics.

ORPHEE orchestrates that which Cocteau says, "I had only clumsily played with one finger." It is necessary to define the work, which isn't the poetic detective movie that they wanted, but the irruption of a detective mystery within poetry; that is, within myth, treated with the realism of Greek tragedy.

CLAUDE MICHEL CLUNY

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C63qi

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THE PAGNOL TRILOGY

MARIUS (1931)

Director: Alexander Korda
Screenplay: Marcel Pagnol
Photography: Ted Pahle
Music: Francis Grammon

FANNY (1932)

Marc Allégret
Marcel Pagnol
Nicholas Torporkoff
Vincent Scotto

CESAR (1936)

Marcel Pagnol
Marcel Pagnol
L. Willer
Vincent Scotto

Cast (for all): Pierre Fresnay, Raimu, Orane DeMazis, Charpin, Robert Vattier,
Alida Rouffe, E. Delmont, Milly Mathis, Paul Dulac, Mihalesco

Marcel Pagnol, according to Georges Sadoul, considered the cinema "le théâtre en conserve." Although each of the films in the Marius-Fanny-César trilogy is based on a Pagnol play, they clearly represent more than mere film versions of theatrical works. Pagnol was as much at home in the cinema as he was in his numerous other roles as playwright, novelist, and theater director. Film captured better than all his other media that authentic spirit of Provence that is uniquely Pagnol's.

Pagnol spent his youth in a village near Marseilles, where his father was a schoolteacher. Among his family and neighbors Pagnol lived the life that he would later depict in his films. As Pierre DOMEYNE writes, Pagnol's art explores and illustrates "the universe of his childhood, a universe already formed by the oral tradition, the folklore of Provence, a mythical world which the cinema rendered even more mythical. The Pagnol universe is a certain morality lived by mythical characters, rooted in the reality of the Provençal setting, and transmitted by the Word." Although Pagnol only directed the last film of this trilogy, they all bear the unmistakable mark of his "univers Provençal." It is Pagnol above all who is responsible for the creative drive and artistic continuity of the trilogy.

When MARIUS was made in 1931, Pagnol was already establishing himself as a playwright and novelist in Paris. Although he wanted to direct the film himself, Pagnol's French and American producers insisted on a "known quantity" for director, and chose Alexander Korda. Pagnol wrote the script and dialogue and assembled the cast from those actors whom he had trained to star in the original stage version of Fanny. All went on to greater successes in the cinema, in particular Raimu who appears in many of Pagnol's later films, and Fresnay who plays the aristocrat-officer de Boldieu in Renoir's GRAND ILLUSION (1937). Because of the huge international success of MARIUS, the producers were anxious to follow it up, so that when Alexander Korda was not available to direct FANNY, the task was given to Marc Allégret. Thanks to Pagnol's use of the same cast and his personal creative influence, there is no great stylistic difference between MARIUS and FANNY. Although Pagnol had completed the screenplay for CESAR by 1933, he refused to release the film rights unless he was allowed to direct it. The backers held out nearly four years, during which Pagnol directed a half dozen films on his own and collaborated on several more. By 1936 Pagnol was an accomplished filmmaker, as CESAR bears witness.

The story of Pagnol's trilogy is a simple one. A Marseilles teenager, Marius, abandons his pregnant fiancée, Fanny, for the life of a sailor, only to be reunited with her many years later through the help of his father, César. The story has been retold many times since, for example in the Broadway show Fanny the the subsequent Hollywood movie version. But only Pagnol's work has been able to depict faithfully those unique qualities which are Provence.

"I'm an internationalist, but I believe in the necessity of a national cinema: one must show what one knows well....It is for these reasons that I consider Marcel Pagnol the greatest cinematographic author of today....Isn't it wonderful that the great popular masses can today appreciate a work like CESAR which previously only the clientele of a Parisian theater was able to know."

Jean Renoir

PANIQUE (1946)

Director:	Julien Duvivier	Music:	Jean Wiener
Screenplay:	Charles Spaak Julien Duvivier (based on Georges Simenon's Les Fiançailles de M. Hire)	Décors:	Pimenof
Photography:	Nicholas Hayer André Germain Paul Souvestre	Editing:	Marthe Ponein
Sound:	de Bretagne	Cast:	Viviane Romance Michel Simon Paul Bernard Marc Dalban Emile Drain Guy Favrières Charles Dorat

Julien Duvivier was one of France's most prolific directors and an expert at cinematic adaptation. Following a career as stage actor and director, Duvivier began making films in 1919. The early influence of the theater had a considerable effect on his choice of subject matter for his films. He often adapted dramatic and literary works for the screen, including those of Henry Bordeaux, Emile Zola and Jules Renard (*Poil de Carotte*, 1932). By his death in 1967 Duvivier had completed over a hundred feature films, in Great Britain, Germany and the United States, as well as France. Abroad he was considered the equal of Renoir, Clair, Feyder or Carné.

In 1946, Duvivier returned from a 5 - year period, working in the United States, during which he completed four major films. As Patrick Brion writes, "For his return to France, Duvivier needed to burst on the scene with a powerful subject - this was Panique, based on Simenon's Les Fiançailles de M. Hire." This was the first time Duvivier had attempted an adaptation of Simenon roman policier. In 1932, the same year he completed Poil de Carotte, Duvivier directed a screen adaptation of Simenon's La Tête d'un Homme. At this point he was just beginning to establish himself as a major director. In 1946 however, his three masterpieces were already behind him (La Bandera, 1935; La Belle Equipe, 1936; Pépé - le - Moko, 1937) as well as his successful experiences in the United States.

Panique reflects all of the qualities that a mature film maker can bring to a suspense story, the precision of direction, an intuitive sense for atmosphere and timing. The setting is the slums of Paris in the aftermath of World War II. The plot involves two lovers who frame a stranger in a Paris murder case. To the basic framework of a murder mystery, Duvivier adds a sociological dimension, exploring the mob-psychology of working class Parisians faced with a murderer in their midst.

"Panique is the negative of Le Jour se Leve (Marcel Carné, 1939), in which the group of friends and neighbors strive to save Jean Gabin." -- Julien Duvivier

Director:	Jean Renoir	Music:	Joseph Kosma
Screenplay:	Jean Renoir (from the short story of Guy de Maupassant)	Editor:	Marguerite Renoir Marinette Cadiz
Photography:	Claude Renoir Jean Bourgoin	Assistants:	Jacques Becker Henri Cartier-Bresson Luchino Visconti
Sound:	Jo de Bretagne		Yves Allégret

Cast: Sylvia Bataille, Georges Darnoux, Jane Marken, Gabriello, Paul Temps, Jacques Brunius, Marguerite Renoir, Jean Renoir.

This short film, based on a story by Guy de Maupassant, was originally intended to be completed as a feature film. Due to financial problems Renoir was unable to complete it as such, and instead edited the finished material into this work which is pictorially one of his most beautiful films. The costumes and sets, the cinematography, the attitudes and positions of the actors all appear to give homage to the director's famous father, the Impressionist painter August Renoir.

"This lyric tragedy rates with Renoir's greatest. Visually, it recaptures the impressionist period; in tone, it accomplishes a transformation from light nostalgic comedy to despair. In the late 1800's a merchant (Gabriello) takes his family for an outing on the banks of the Marne; there his wife (Jeanne Marken) and his daughter (Sylvia Bataille) are seduced--the one delightedly, the other tremblingly, like a captured bird."

Pauline Kael

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Call Number: 791.430.944

LA PASSION DE JEANNE D'ARC (1928)

Director:	Carl Théodore Dreyer	Cast:	Marie Falconetti
Screenplay:	Joseph Delteil		André Berley
	Carl Théodore Dreyer		Eugène Sylvain
Photography:	Rudolf Maté		Maurice Schutz
Décors:	Herman Warm		Antonin Artaud
	Jean Hugo		Michel Simon
Costumes:	Valentine Hugo		Jean d'Yd

La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc was the first French film directed by Denmark's most renowned film maker, Carl Dreyer. This film made Dreyer's reputation and soon became a major classic, finding its way to most lists of all-time great films. The case has often been compared to that of Eisenstein with his Battleship Potemkin, in that both of these films gave to their respective creators "the artistic conscience of a great director" (Jean Semolué).

When Dreyer arrived on Paris in 1927 he was planning to make a sound film of Joan of Arc, but unfortunately none of the French studios were capable of doing so at that time. Dreyer did not alter his artistic concept, however, but instead relied considerably on sub-titles. He used as the basis of his film the actual minutes of Joan's trial, and much of the dialogue is taken directly from them. The film is essentially divided into three parts, each distinguished both by its content and cinematic technique: the first concerns the setting up of a tribunal, with a steady, moving camera presenting the judges and describing the interior of the hall; the second consists of the trial itself, the sentencing to death, and the preparation for execution, all of which is presented largely with close-ups, the camera's movements rendered nearly imperceptible through precise editing; the third treats the march to Joan's execution at the stake, and is filmed, according to Georges Sadoul, with "ample and audacious" camera movements, especially the scene depicting the exit from the prison.

Dreyer's technical mastery is matched by his actor's and actresses' performances. Marie Falconetti, in particular, on her first screen role, presented such a moving and convincing portrayal of Joan of Arc that, in the words of Valentine Hugo, the actors "Continued to embody their roles unconsciously after the takes." Falconetti had all of her hair shorn for the role, but on the director's request, neither she nor the other actor's wore make-up. The film's success depends heavily on the combined talents of director and actors, and an overwhelming success is indeed achieved.

In addition to the purely artistic merits of La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc, there is a certain philosophical message conveyed through the trial of Joan of Arc. The symbolic representation of the judges' mean hypocrisy is as timeless as injustice itself. It is no wonder then that the film was never allowed to be shown in Nazi-occupied countries during the early forties. Now this moving and realistic portrayal of Joan of Arc is considered one of the masterpieces of world cinema.

"Potemkin imitated a documentary and it moved us. Jeanne d'Arc imitates a document of an epoch when cinema did not even exist."

--Jean Cocteau

POIL DE CAROTTE (Carrot Top) 1932

Director:	Julien Duvivier	Montage:	Marthe Pontin
Scénario:	Julien Duvivier (after the play of Jules Renard)	Décors:	Aguettard Carré
Photography:	Thirard Moriot	Cast:	Harry Baur Catherine Fonteney Robert Lynen Louis Gauthier Simone Aubry Colette Ségat Maxime Fromiot
Sound:	Lucy Sarrazin Roger Handjian		

Julien Duvivier is a too often neglected figure in the history of French cinema. Duvivier is certainly the most prolific of French directors, having produced about a hundred films in the period from 1919 until his death in 1967. He was an expert at cinematographic adaptation; some of his earliest silent films were based on the works of such authors as Henry Bordeaux and Emile Zola. In fact, he first adapted Jules Renard's play Poil de Carotte as a silent film in 1925. Seven years later he remade Poil de Carotte as his fourth sound film.

Most critics agree that Duvivier only truly came into his own as a maker of sound films. His first, David Golder, starred Harry Baur, an actor whom Duvivier featured in many of his films made during this period, including Poil de Carotte and La Tête d'un homme, based on a Simenon mystery. A few years later Jean Gabin was to replace Baur as Duvivier's principal actor when he played the lead in Pépé le Moko (1937). This film brought Duvivier international acclaim, and in the words of Georges Sadoul, "he was considered abroad as the equal of Renoir, Clair, Feyder, or Carné." Duvivier thus attracted the attention of foreign producers and subsequently began directing films in the U.S., Great Britain, and Germany.

Poil de Carotte is the story of François, a 12-year-old boy whose red hair has given him the nickname of the film's title, and whose angry mother and inattentive father have made his life miserable. He is constantly having to bear the brunt of his mother's hostility and bitterness, while his father simply ignores the situation by isolating himself entirely and never speaking a word to his wife. The conflict is resolved only after taking its most dramatic turn--François's decision to commit suicide. Duvivier handles it all with a keen sense of atmosphere and an exacting control of his actors, the marks of a true master of poetic realism.

" Duvivier's great films are at the same time the great films of the history of French cinema. They have at once the carnal beauty and power of the masterpieces of Renoir, the lyricism of those of Carné, the perfection of those of Becker. To these qualities, Duvivier added a realism sometimes terrifying, a pitiless vision of beings and of things...."

Patrick Brion

LES PORTES DE LA NUIT (Gates of the Night) 1946

Director: Marcel Carné
Producer: Pathé-Cinéma
Screenplay: Jacques Prévert, Marcel Carné
(from Prévert's ballet, Le Rendez-vous)

Photography: Philippe Agostini
Editor: Jean Jeyte
Music: Joseph Kosma
Design: Alexandre Trauner

Cast: Yves Montand, Nathalie Nattier, Serge Reggiani, Jean Vilar, Sylvia Bataille

The end of World War II had several effects on the career of Marcel Carné. His first post-war film, Les Portes de la Nuit, evidences many of these. Only now could Carné publically give credit to some of the talented individuals who had worked with him "incognito" during the occupation years, for fear of Nazi imprisonment. Among these were set designer Alexandre Trauner and composer Joseph Kosma, both of whom had worked with Carné since the beginning of his career as a feature-film-maker (1936-37). Now, in 1946, both were again free to participate in Carné's latest project. Another understandable effect of the war and occupation was a continuation in France of strong anti-German sentiment. For Carné, one result was the rejection by his producers of Marlene Dietrich for the leading female role, and the consequent reluctance of Jean Gabin, who had contracted for the male lead, to play opposite anyone else. At the insistent urging of Edith Piaf, Carné finally accepted Yves Montand for the male role, and Nathalie Nattier for the female.

Les Portes de la Nuit marks the end of Marcel Carné's ten-year collaboration with Jacques Prévert as scénarist. The film is based on Prévert's ballet, Le Rendez-vous, which Carné had first seen in the company of Gabin, Dietrich, and Prévert, and to whom he immediately proposed the idea for a film. Although the project was not executed as Carné had originally hoped, the reasons for the film's lack of commercial and critical success are much less subtle. The film depicts a bleak post-war world of black marketeers, Fascist collaborators, and former Resistance fighters, without hiding anything behind the kind of allegories that allowed for the acceptance and success of the two Carné-Prévert war-time masterpieces, Les Visiteurs du Soir (1942) and Les Enfants du Paradis (1945). Only now, with a more detached view of the immediate post-war period, can the film be judged on its true merits. And only now are critics beginning to appreciate Les Portes de la Nuit, which in the words of François Truffaut, "n'était pas un si mauvais film après tout."

"While its bleak outlook did not please French audiences in 1946, Les Portes de la Nuit can be appreciated today as one of Carné's finest works, with memorable sequences worthy of the most selective of anthologies: the scenes at the reconstructed Barbès-Rochechouart métro station; Montand's and Nattier's waltzing among the warehouse rubble to composer Joseph Kosma's "Autumn Leaves" (the renowned song which this film introduced); and Serge Reggiani's dramatic suicide."

--EDWARD BARON TURK

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Call Number: 791.430944

LA REGLE DU JEU (Rules of the Game) 1939

Director:	Jean Renoir	Music:	arranged by R. Desormieres, Joseph Kosma
Screenplay:	Jean Renoir	Décors:	Eugène Lourié and Max Douy
Dialogues:	Jean Renoir and Carl Koch	Director of Production:	Claude Renoir
Photography:	Jean Bachelet and J.P. Alphen	Assistants:	A. Zwobada and H. Cartier-Bresson
Editing:	Marguerite Renoir		

CAST: Marcel Dalio, Nora Grégor, Roland Toutain, Jean Renoir, Mila Parely,
Paulette Dubost, Gaston Modot, Julien Carette, Odette Talazac

The mention of Jean Renoir is an inescapable part of any discussion of "film classics." His films have undoubtedly had a major effect on the course of world cinema, particularly his three most frequently cited masterpieces, LA GRANDE ILLUSION (1937), LA BETE HUMAINE (1938), and LA REGLE DU JEU. All have aspects in common with one another and with the oeuvre of Renoir in general. Only one, LA REGLE DU JEU, incorporates all of those aspects in such a way as to become the most representative Renoir film, the film which one critic succinctly describes as "tout Renoir."

As is often the case with works later considered masterpieces, LA REGLE DU JEU was received by the Parisian filmgoers of 1939 with displeasure, if not outright hostility. The film was termed "demoralizing" and Renoir's efforts to ameliorate the situation by editing out nearly a half hour proved unsuccessful. (The film was not reedited into an approximation of the original until 1965.) He decided that if he were to continue at all in cinema, he would have to leave France, and chose to come to America. Renoir attributes the film's failure to his own sincerity. In his words, "During the filming, I was torn between my desire to make a comedy and that of telling a tragic story. The result of my doubts was the film such as it is." Essentially Renoir left it up to his actors to decide how best to interpret their roles. This had often been his method, most notably in BOUDU SAUVE DES EAUX (1932) when he encouraged Michel Simon to determine the character of the film's hero. Although film critic Georges Sadoul praises Renoir's initiative in BOUDU, he criticizes the same reliance on actors' intuition in LA REGLE DU JEU. The resulting ambiguity and occasional dissonance, which for many is the most fascinating aspect of the film, for Sadoul only "provoked sneers and not emotion." This dichotomy of tragedy and comedy is actually as important as a technique in the film as the dichotomy of class is for the plot. The thematic element most evident throughout Renoir's films is just this consciousness of class differences and their effect on society. On the eve of World War II, the apocalyptic picture that Renoir painted of this class conflict was truly prophetic.

Renoir brings his social analyses to the screen, not only through the plot itself, but through cinematic technique and a certain symbolism as well. He sets up a series of parallels very early on which determine the outcome of the story. The most striking is the hunt scene which foreshadows the accidental murder of Jurieu. The love intrigues among the servants are reflected in those of their aristocratic masters, while the narrative unfolds through a non-linear technique which was quite innovative. The photography evidences Renoir's concern with the concept of groups. The characters interact within their given milieu. There are few close-ups. In its plot LA REGLE DU JEU is a relatively straightforward social satire, the story of a man who refuses to play by the rules, and suffers the consequences. The apparent simplicity of plot belies both the complexity of Renoir's artistic intention and his technical achievement. These are the qualities which contribute to all of Renoir's masterpieces, but find their fullest expression in LA REGLE DU JEU.

...Realism and fantasy, humor and drama, this novelty of technique, this subtlety of form, supporting the originality of the theme... LA REGLE DU JEU was of course ahead of its time...Modern film owes to it perhaps the most essential of its discoveries.

PIERRE LEPROHON

SOUS LES TOITS DE PARIS (Under the Roofs of Paris) 1930

Director	René Clair	Cast	Albert Préjean Pola Illery Edmond Gréville Gaston Modot
Producer	Films Sonores Tobis		
Screenplay	René Clair	Music	Raoul Moretti R. Nazelles Armand Bernard
Photography	Georges Périnal Georges Taulot		
Editor	René Le Henaff	Assistant	Marcel Carné

In 1930, Marcel Carné was invited by René Clair to work as assistant on Clair's first sound film, Sous les Toits de Paris. Clair had seen the young Carné's first film, Nogent, Eldorado du Dimanche (see program Feb. 16-18) and was favorably impressed. In addition, Carné, while serving as a film critic, had praised the works of Clair, and the director no doubt took this into consideration in hiring Carné.

In light of Carné's later work, his collaboration with René Clair, on this film in particular, seems malapropos. Carné, whose greatest successes owe much to the scenarios and dialogues of Jacques Prévert, found himself working on a film which was a deliberate satire of sound film, with dialogue playing an insignificant rôle and often serving as the object of Clair's "plaisanteries" (as when a door is closed on one of the protagonists, interrupting him in mid-sentence). Nevertheless, Carné could not help but learn from Clair. Despite the director's disapproval of dialogue, he evidences a clear understanding of the uses of music for moods, contrasts, and montages, and in this respect reveals the influence of early Soviet cinematographers, Eisenstein and Pudovkin.

A simple plot, a love triangle involving a Parisian street singer, his best friend, and a pretty Rumanian woman serves as the basis for Clair's bold experiments. His technique of counterpointing sound and image, in particular, give this film a key importance in the history of cinema.

"It portrayed the lives of ordinary Parisians at a time most internationally successful films dealt with life among the upper classes...the furnished rooms, the children playing, the crotchety concierges, the window boxes...the street singers with their accordions in every square...a film at once cinema and French, combining technical virtuosity with true national character..."

--GEORGES SADOUL

"In saving--with Sous les Toits de Paris--the honor of the French cinema /Clair/ has the right to be held...among those who showed the path it was necessary to follow."

--JEAN MITRY

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