



Characters as Social Beings: Social Performance in the French and Czechoslovak New Waves

Examination number: 824826
Anna Ema Antoinette Koch, Christ Church
Submitted for the Degree of DPhil at the University of Oxford
Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages
Trinity 2017

For my parents, Saskia Fokkema and Paul Koch.

In memory of my grandfather, Jan Fokkema (1933 – 2016),
and of one of my heroes, Miloš Forman (1932 – 2018).

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Short Abstract

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This thesis investigates the aesthetic presence of social performance in six French and Czechoslovak New Wave films of the 1960s. The New Wave was particularly interested in portraying everyday life, and my film corpus focuses specifically on the representation of the characters' social lives. In addition, the films share the commonality of being made with an aesthetic of authenticity inspired more or less by the 1960s observational documentary genre of *cinéma vérité*. While fictional, the films function to some extent like historical artifacts that share the ambition of achieving an accurate representation of contemporary life.

In the film corpus, ordinary social situations occupy a more prominent place on screen than usual, and instigate a social kind of engagement with the films. Where narrative context conventionally provides the framework for a character's actions, in these unconventional films, it is the characters' social environments that more precisely contextualize their way of being. The aim of the thesis is to engage with these social contexts to understand the characters' social behaviours, and to examine how the '*vérité* aesthetic' evokes a social kind of reading of the films.

To this end, I develop in the first chapter a Goffmanian approach to the films, inspired by sociologist Erving Goffman's writings on social reality as a performative realm. I use his notions of social performance, social framework, and social perception to engage with each film through what I call a 'social gaze' that inspects the social dynamics of the characters' behaviours. Over the course of three case study chapters, I apply this approach to the films to unearth and discuss their social range of meaning.

This thesis thus aims to contribute both to film historical scholarship on the 1960s European New Wave, and to a study of the aestheticization of social reality in film in general.

Long Abstract

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This thesis presents an investigation into the aesthetic presence of social performance in six French and Czechoslovak New Wave films of the 1960s. The New Wave was particularly interested in portraying everyday life, and the French and Czechoslovak films studied in this thesis share the commonality of focusing specifically on observing and depicting the characters' everyday social lives: strolling down the Parisian sidewalks, absorbing orders from employers, bantering with friends, avoiding arguments with parents, flirting at a socialist twist party, or having philosophical debates over a drink. Social interactions and situations occupy a prominent place that surpasses their usual, conventional exposure in film. The films' common lack of conventional narrative structure elevates social events and people's behaviours in them to the main story, and instigates an engagement with them that is socially minded.

Early in my research, I realized that the object of my study – New Wave filmic aestheticizations of social behaviour – frequently overlapped with another trait that also unified the French and the Czechoslovak films from this era that I was drawn to studying for shared attentiveness to sociality. Indeed, many of them were made with an aesthetic of authenticity. This aesthetic was often the result of a mixture of methods stemming from fictional and observational documentary filmmaking, notably, *cinéma vérité*, a genre that emerged alongside the New Wave and was most prominent in France, and that was itself predicated on the observation of ordinary people going through everyday life. Based on this overlap, I decided to focus my study on New Wave films that depicted everydayness, and that had been made, to some degree, with an aesthetic either derived directly from, or loosely

inspired by *cinéma vérité*. This kind of aesthetic of authenticity has often, for lack of better terms, been described as constituting a *cinéma vérité* feel, style, or effect. To concentrate the thesis, I limited my film corpus to the French as well as the Czechoslovak New Wave movements because of their prominence in European art cinema, and to demonstrate that *cinéma vérité* impacted non-French fictional cinema very quickly after it emerged. Thus, the six films I chose to focus on are *Adieu Philippine* (1962) by Jacques Rozier, *Masculin Féminin* (1966) by Jean-Luc Godard, *Černý Petr* (1963) by Miloš Forman, *Intimní Osvětlení* (1965) by Ivan Passer, and both *La Collectionneuse* (1967) and *Ma nuit chez Maud* (1969) by Éric Rohmer, the choice of which I will clarify in more detail momentarily.

In the first instance, my thesis is a contribution to scholarship on the French and Czechoslovak New Waves. The fact that New Wave filmmakers in general sought to break from convention to offer novel and, in their eyes, more authentic and truthful perspectives on the appearance of real everyday life has been well noted by New Wave scholarship. While the French New Wave rebelled against a traditional kind of filmmaking that they felt was out of touch with reality, the Czechoslovak New Wave rebelled against the politically imposed doctrine of socialist realism, which they deemed disingenuous and false. The film corpus's treatment of everyday life is not just historical or ethical. It is also aesthetic, and there has been very little research on the filmic representations of social reality as an aesthetic entity. Therefore, my thesis is also a contribution towards film aesthetics scholarship in general.

Secondly, the genre of *cinéma vérité* has been the object of detailed historical and technical study in documentary scholarship. *Cinéma vérité*, which emerged in parallel with the New Wave in the 1960s, had not just been influenced by the New Wave to also focus on depicting everyday life, but had influenced New Wave cinema in return as a suitably naturalistic means to do so. In a 1969 *Cahiers du cinéma* two-parter article, Jean-Louis Comolli observed that there had been a tendency of relatively experimental, fictional,

international, and modern New Wave cinema to borrow from the genre of observational documentary. While this fact has been noted, the historical aesthetic phenomenon is under-researched. No scholarship has been devoted to a more detailed study of this phenomenon and of the series of films that were part of it. In focusing exclusively on some of the fictional films that were more or less inspired by *cinéma vérité*, and in attempting to clarify the crux of that inspiration, my thesis is one of the first pieces of scholarly work to address this historical aesthetic phenomenon.

Ultimately, my thesis proposes to examine the questions that are raised at the intersection of these relatively neglected aspects of both New Wave cinema and film aesthetics of social reality. Thus, on the one hand, it carries out historical scholarship in terms of considering the concept of *cinéma vérité*'s cross-pollination into a pocket of New Wave films as a small but nonetheless meaningful extension of the New Wave story, a story that encompasses more than one national cinema and that is worthy of investigation. And on the other hand, the project is also a theoretical one, as I specifically seek to develop an approach towards understanding these films' aestheticizations of everyday sociality.

To develop this approach, I allowed myself to be informed by the way some of the films first struck me upon my initial familiarization with them. Firstly, the performances in these films had made a particular impression on me. Rather than looking like film acting, they distinctly resembled the way people behave in real life when they socialize with each other. Secondly, I noticed that my appreciation of the films' quality of authenticity was directly linked to the degree to which the actors' performances were seemingly delivered according to the pressures of their surroundings, rather than one director's wishes. Indeed, I observed that the films appeared more authentic to me if the characters were portrayed as socializing in a recognizable way. In all the films, I became aware of a familiar kind of organizing force over

the characters' ways of moving and speaking, which was similar to, but nevertheless distinct from directorial *mise en scène*.

These initial observations led me to thinking about the aesthetic influence of social reality on these films. To gain a better understanding of social reality as a potentially dramatic entity, I turned to the writings of Canadian-American sociologist Erving Goffman, starting with *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). Goffman conceives of social reality as a theatrical space, and of social behaviour as a performative act. He offers the concept of the 'social framework', a construct that organizes and stages the way our daily social interactions unfold. Social performers, like you and I, are able to read social frameworks to know what kind of social behaviours are appropriate in them and expected of us, and, in combination with our personal intentions, we perform our social roles accordingly. Thus, social frameworks have an inherently directorial influence over us.

While Goffman provided me with the tools to think of sociality in a theatrical way, I sought to find film scholarship that incorporated a Goffmanian understanding of social theatricality in a filmic context. I turned to Adrian Martin (2014), who proposes the concept of 'social *mise en scène*'. He uses this partly filmic term to denote the directorial force with which the staged nature of social experiences imprints on a film's *mise en scène*. Martin argues that some films, notably those of naturalistic aesthetics, have a particular relationship to social *mise en scène*, whereby they are more prone to expose the 'material form of the workings' of the theatrical nature of social life. What we see in such films is not just the director's *mise en scène* of neutral matter, as if started from a blank canvas, but rather, his exposure and manipulation of raw material that is already staged in a social way.

Martin's concept of social *mise en scène*, via Goffman's concept of the social framework, provided me with the conceptual matter and language to discuss the way in which the films in my corpus represent social situations. However, I believed that the achievement of

the films I was dealing with lay especially with the authenticity of their representation of social performance: the act of socially behaving in these social situations. Indeed, I believed that the unconventionality of these films was unique for making visible real social dynamics and the social performances that arise in them. I therefore decided to hone in on the performative dimension of social theatricality. To do so, I turned to an aspect of Goffman's model of social reality that Martin had not treated: the notion of social perception.

According to Goffman, it is fairly manageable for most people to read social environments in such a way that they can interpret social performances and social frameworks to basically understand 'what is going on'. As Goffmanian social beings, we tend to be able to gain information from our social surroundings quickly and automatically, albeit to different degrees of accuracy. When we turn our Goffmanian attention to filmic social reality, I call this perceptive skill the 'social gaze'. To develop my approach towards understanding these films' aestheticizations of everyday sociality, I incorporated the 'social gaze' by using it as an interpretative tool to identify moments in the films where social reality was convincingly brought to life. 1960s New Wave cinema specifically played with an aesthetic of authenticity to capture the transforming landscape of social life, and therefore, I believe that an important contribution of a Goffmanian approach to film is its ability to facilitate a more tangible engagement with these films' otherwise elusive quality of authenticity.

In the case studies, I employ the Goffmanian approach to individual films. I use it to unearth the social range of meaning embedded in and revealed by the films' different aestheticizations of social situations. While each of the films is made with a different *cinéma vérité*-inspired methodology, *cinéma vérité*'s manner of merging with fiction is neither clear nor consistent, sometimes not even to the filmmakers themselves. For the sake of terminological simplicity, I refer to the result of this shared but varying inspiration from *cinéma vérité* as the 'vérité aesthetic'. Not solely defined by methodology, the *vérité* aesthetic

also importantly encompasses the ambition of *cinéma vérité* to better capture the aesthetic essence of everyday life.

As a means to more precisely analyze the way the films' *vérité* aesthetics draw a social gaze in each case study, I refer to Rudolf Arnheim's two orders of authenticity, the 'documentary' and the 'aesthetic'. I also employ a terminology introduced by Étienne Souriau to discuss filmable reality. Souriau distinguishes between the 'afilmic', that which exists in real life regardless of whether the camera is there to film it, and the 'profilmic', that which is deliberately put in front of the camera with the intention of being filmed. I use these terms to help me isolate and understand the films' particular pursuits of authenticity in their aestheticizations of social reality. Through the case studies, the thesis will serve as a contribution to film scholarship on the six individual films. But through the diversity brought by each of the films, the Goffmanian approach also demonstrates an appreciation of representations of social performativity that is applicable to cinema in general.

The first chapter of the thesis, the theory chapter, will lay down the foundational basis. In the first half of the chapter, I address the film corpus's shared properties, introduce the concept of social *mise en scène*, and discuss Erving Goffman's writings on social reality to develop a Goffmanian approach towards appreciating the films' representations of social performance. In the chapter's second half, I discuss the aesthetic of authenticity of the films, introduce the genre of *cinéma vérité*, briefly analyze the first *cinéma vérité* film, *Chronique d'un été* (1961), in order to see how the genre typically aestheticizes sociality, and discuss the significance of *cinéma vérité* methods and styles to the New Wave. Finally, I finish the chapter by briefly explaining the workings of the case studies in the thesis.

The six case studies are organized into three chapters and paired up according to their language and to the specific facets of everyday life that they are primarily concerned with portraying. Thus, the second chapter initiates my application of the Goffmanian approach on

two French New Wave films concerned with portraying youth. First, I chose *Adieu Philippine* (released in 1962, but made in 1960) by Jacques Rozier. While it was made just before *cinéma vérité* was officially born, Rozier is drawn to the cinematography of observational documentary for the purpose of capturing something genuine about the youth, achieving, perhaps, the strongest naturalistic aesthetic in the corpus. Secondly, I study Jean-Luc Godard's *Masculin Féminin* (1966). Godard advertised the film as the sequel to *Chronique d'un été*, and also promises to capture the youth in a revelatory way, but offers something much less straightforward that challenges the Goffmanian approach.

In the third chapter, I focus on two Czechoslovak New Wave films made under the socialist regime and its system of censorship. I chose Miloš Forman's *Černý Petr* (1963) and his best friend Ivan Passer's *Intimní Osvětlení* (1965), for their similarities – Forman and Passer worked along the same filmmaking 'manifesto' of authenticity – as well as their differences. Both films treat the question of experiencing a split sociality due to insidious oppression with quite different *vérité* aesthetics. This chapter progresses the thesis from examining a film that is more methodologically inspired by *cinéma vérité*, to examining a film that is inspired by it in more conceptual terms.

The fourth and final chapter continues this exploration of the conceptual side of the *vérité* aesthetic with two films by Éric Rohmer. *La Collectionneuse* (1967) and *Ma nuit chez Maud* (1969) are both late French New Wave films with protagonists from middle class backgrounds. Their sociality is represented as being of a slightly more crafted and strategic kind. To examine these films' representations of this type of sociality I draw from Pierre Bourdieu's writings on social status in his study of the French middle class of the 1960s in *La Distinction* (1979), and formulate a Goffmanian-Bourdieuian approach. *La Collectionneuse* flirts openly with *cinéma vérité*, whereas *Ma nuit chez Maud* is the least 'vérité' film of the corpus. I nonetheless chose to include the latter because Rohmer's interest in portraying

sociality authentically is well established, and because I was interested in engaging with his granular ability to authentically capture the art of everyday conversation.

I concluded that the Goffmanian approach unearths a social range of meaning in the film corpus that is both universal and specific to a historical context. Depending on the constitution of the films' *vérité* aesthetics, social reality is aestheticized either as a harmonious or as an incongruous space, in which social performance serves to signal an individual's relationship to this reality. Ultimately, I find that what is colloquially described as a *cinéma vérité* feel, style, or effect, is predicated, firstly, on its potential to evoke a social gaze on the essence of everydayness, and, secondly, on its methodological adherence to the principles of the genre of *cinéma vérité*. I propose that a counter-cultural intent to challenge misrepresentations and lack of truthfulness in film often served as impetus for a *cinéma vérité*-inspired pursuit of authenticity in representing social life, and that it might therefore be fruitful to take a Goffmanian approach to other counter-cultural film movements that strive for authenticity in order to unearth their social range of meaning with greater precision.

Acknowledgements

Many people have helped and supported me in big and small ways over the course of the past few years to make this project possible.

Firstly, I want to thank my supervisor, Dr. Reidar Due, for having faith in this project and for seeing it through with me so dedicatedly. Thank you for your patience, guidance, and wisdom. I am greatly indebted to my college adviser, Prof. Jennifer Yee, for her kindness and her generosity, as well as that of her family. Thank you very much for your invaluable council and support. Thank you, Prof. Roger Scruton, for your friendship and for the memorable seminars and conversations you hosted – they were a highlight of my postgraduate experience. I thank Prof. Nikolaj Lübecker and Prof. Stephen Mulhall for reading early drafts of chapters and providing invaluable feedback for my Transfer and Confirmation milestones. I'm very grateful to Katarina Koch, Veronika Pehe, and Natasha Naayem for taking the time to read and comment on drafts. I thank Dr. James Naughton, the former head of the Czech language department at Oxford, who welcomed me with DVDs and literature when I first told him about my project, and who sadly passed away in 2014.

I owe my gratitude to the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds for a bursary in my second year. I thank the Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages, its graduate administration office, the Taylor Institution Library staff, and especially Helen Scott, the guardian of the film studies collection, for being consistently friendly and helpful in facilitating my research. My thanks also go to Christ Church, to the Graduate Common Room, and especially to Melanie Radburn and Jackie Webber. I thank the Czech national film archive, the Barrandov film archive, the Cinémathèque Française, and the Fiedler Memorial Fund for letting me browse and learn.

I also thank my peers, my friends, Brad Sr. and Mary, my family, my grandmother Joukje, my siblings Sam and Katarina (rocks in my life), and my dear parents Saskia and Paul, for the patience, confidence, support, and financial backing without which this pursuit would not have been possible. Finally, thank you, Brad, for always joining me in the front row.

Introduction

In this thesis, I examine the aesthetic presence of social performance in six fictional feature films from the 1960s French and Czechoslovak New Wave film movements, that were made with an aesthetic of authenticity inspired more or less by the genre of *cinéma vérité*.

Colloquially, this is the kind of film that one might hear practitioners and viewers describe as having a *cinéma vérité* feel, style, or effect, and as having ‘not much happening’ in them. Due to their unconventional narrative structures, the characters too occupy an unconventional place. The films capture characters of more or less specific social groups going about their ordinary everyday lives, having seemingly banal interactions with each other. But rather than that these interactions hover in the background of the films, they are foregrounded and form the bulk of the films. In many ways, the inherent ups and downs of the characters’ daily social existences, as mediated by their social interactivity, seem to *be* the story, and catch the viewer’s eye for the authentic ways in which they are represented. The concurrence in several New Wave films of the prominence of everydayness, of the effect of authenticity, and of the unconventional function of the characters and their performances, raises many interesting interpretative questions that have not yet been the subject of a close scholarly examination. I intend to address these questions with this thesis.

As I was thinking of the specific quality of these films that originally caught my attention, I realized that the question of filmmaking methodology, although not the most stable trait of the films as a corpus, was an important one to clarify, precisely because *cinéma vérité* has often, both in scholarship and in filmmaking practice, come to mean things that are not originally part of its credo. The film corpus of this thesis consists of films that were either made with techniques derived from *cinéma vérité* or that have been described as looking like

they were made with *cinéma vérité* techniques. For example, while Éric Rohmer described his film, *La Collectionneuse* (1967), as comprising ‘true *cinéma vérité*’, this is technically inaccurate, since, as we shall see in more detail in the first and fourth chapters, the film directly contradicted the *cinéma vérité modus operandi* by being entirely scripted.¹ What the films have in common, then, is that they dance around the concept of *cinéma vérité*, each with an ambiguous but notable relation to the genre.

This poses an interesting interpretative problem. How can we discuss films that impress the viewer as feeling like *cinéma vérité*, even if the films described this way were not necessarily made with methods technically derived from *cinéma vérité*? What could this aesthetic impression actually denote, and could it be related to *cinéma vérité*’s claim as a genre to pursue authenticity in depicting everyday sociality in particular?

The act of socializing, or what I will refer to as sociality, became the crux of my research. The more I studied the film corpus’s representations of the characters’ social interactions, the more it struck me that their performances reminded me more of the way we, and the people we interact with in real life, tend to perform, than of the way film actors usually perform. Indeed, I found that the characters had an overwhelming sense of themselves as social beings. Even if their interactions are narratively and dramatically decontextualized, there is still a sense of something being at stake. In contrast to characters with narrative functions in conventional narrative films, the characters of these films brought with them a sense of the recognizable real world, of being part of social reality around them, and this was a palpable quality that each film, although made differently, emitted. While the naturalistic performative quality of certain New Wave films has been noted and appreciated in film scholarship, it has not yet been the main subject of a detailed theoretical study.

¹ Accredited to Rohmer, 1977, by Jacob Leigh, *The cinema of Éric Rohmer: Irony, Imagination, and the Social World* (New York; London: Continuum, 2012), p. 23.

Indeed, the French *nouvelle vague* and the Czechoslovak *nová vlna*, over the past three or four decades, have been the subject of thorough, comprehensive, often but not only Anglophone scholarship that focused mainly on their historical, philosophical, and narrative significance. There are many excellent works on the cinematic New Waves, and on national or regional cinemas that include discussions of New Wave movements, that I have used and referred to, such as by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, Michel Marie, Richard Neupert, Geneviève Sellier, James Monaco, Peter Hames, Jonathan L. Owen, Peter Graham, Ginette Vincendeau, Jean Douchet, Mark Betz, Alice Lovejoy, Dina Iordanova, Susan Hayward, Antonín and Mira Liehm, and Ewa Mazierska. These works study and celebrate the films I choose to look at in this thesis, but mainly note the aesthetic of authenticity of the performances in budgetary, methodological, and political terms. Other diverse works treating the concept of everydayness, such as by Antoine de Baecque, Kristin Ross, and Michael Sheringham, have addressed representations of the social life of specific social groups in the New Wave, but in terms of their more implicit political and socio-economic significance, predominantly rooting their discussions into the academic field of cultural studies.

Furthermore, *cinéma vérité*, the predominantly French observational documentary genre to also emerge in the 1960s, based on the principles of a renunciation of directorial control and an invitation of the unplanned, has also been the subject of historical and technical scholarship. It has been studied either exclusively, along with direct cinema, a similar observational documentary genre to *cinéma vérité*, by Séverine Graff, Stephen Mamber, and P.J. O'Connell, or as part of larger works on documentary filmmaking such as by Bill Nichols, John Corner, and Brian Winston. But these works limit their focus on the documentary dimension of the genre, and do not address its influence on New Wave filmmaking. During the 1960s and 1970s, in response to the release of a notable amount of fiction films that had experimented with *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema, French critics George Sadoul and Jean-

Louis Comolli directly addressed this amalgam, with Comolli even describing the popularity of observational documentary to fictional filmmakers as another ‘certain tendency’ of modern cinema.² Their works were limited to formulating their findings in short articles, which only gave them time to briefly ponder the resulting aesthetics in singular films.

Recently, some particular works have discussed the juxtaposition of some of these questions. In his 2010 analysis of Jacques Rozier’s *Adieu Philippine* (1962), Gilles Mouellic alludes to the 1960s creative climate in which New Wave filmmakers, novel filming equipment, television, and *cinéma vérité* techniques are part of the same melting pot. Further, in an excellent 2012 contribution to Éric Rohmer studies, Jacob Leigh notes Rohmer’s particular interest in capturing social life with sincerity, and focuses on the tangibility of his characters’ social worlds. Both have served as springboards for my own research on the particular qualities that I believe are shared by the films of the corpus: an inspiration from *cinéma vérité* channelled into sincere representations of social life.

While my thesis builds on many of the sources just referred to, especially for historical, technical, and cultural contextualization, as well as, in the case studies, for observations they have made on the same individual films that I study, it distinguishes itself by tackling the questions that appear at the intersection of these historical, methodological, and social accounts of the films’ achievements. I place my study of the way in which these films reflect social performance both in a historical and a theoretical context. Historically, my thesis considers the phenomenon of the aesthetic and conceptual influence of *cinéma vérité* on New Wave film as rooted in the desire to capture sociality authentically. Theoretically, my thesis tries to develop and apply an approach that would help in understanding the representation of sociality not as a historical or ethical problem, as it has predominantly been discussed, but as an aesthetic problem, on which there has been very little writing.

2 Jean-Louis Comolli, ‘Le Détour par le Direct (1)’, *Cahiers du Cinéma*, February 1969, no. 209, pp. 48-53. Unless specified otherwise, translations both from French and from Czech to English are mine.

Historically, the films I will analyze in this thesis form a discrete branch of the 1960s New Wave because of their varying but comparable receptions of the genre of *cinéma vérité*. I restrict my corpus to films from the French and the Czechoslovak New Wave film movements for their prominence in 1960s European art cinema. The broad interpretation of the French New Wave, from 1959-1968, overlapped with the Czechoslovak New Wave, 1963-1968, which allowed for there to be a mutual awareness amongst their filmmakers, and an exchange of influences. In a 1966 interview, during a publicity tour in Paris for Miloš Forman's film *Černý Petr* (*Black Peter*) (1963), Forman would list François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and the '*manières de films documentaires*' of the Italian neorealists by whom they were all influenced, as sources of inspiration.³ Around the same time, Godard would name the '*jeune école tchèque*' as his creative 'big siblings' in publicity documents outlining the making of *Masculin Féminin* (1966), in which he also described the film as a sequel to the first *cinéma vérité* film.⁴ Because the fruits of their different inspirations from the genre differ significantly, I synoptically refer to the film corpus as having a '*vérité* aesthetic'.

The first two French New Wave films to be examined have a more or less direct relationship to the methods of observational documentary and improvisation: *Adieu Philippine* (1962) by Jacques Rozier and *Masculin Féminin* (1966) by Jean-Luc Godard. This trend is continued by the first Czechoslovak New Wave film to be examined, *Černý Petr* (*Black Peter*) (1963) by Miloš Forman, although his work is more satirical and therefore undergoes a slightly less direct stylization. However, the second Czechoslovak New Wave film, *Intimní Osvětlení* (*Intimate Lighting*) (1965) by Ivan Passer, has a *vérité* aesthetic that distantiates itself from observational cinematography and improvisation, while still capturing an essence of everyday sociality. This variable is continued in the final two, late French New Wave films, *La Collectionneuse* (1967) and *Ma nuit chez Maud* (1969), both from Éric

3 Henry Chapier, 'Interview with Miloš Forman', Paris, 23 April 1966; online video recording, Ina, <<http://www.ina.fr/video/I00017670>> [accessed 20 February 2014]

4 'Dossier Presse ITV', provided by Argos Films [accessed May 2016].

Rohmer's *Contes moraux* (Moral Tales) series, which make the dynamics of the characters' social worlds acutely tangible in a more conceptual than methodological *vérité* sense.

Many French and Czechoslovak New Wave filmmakers built momentum on their promise for more cinematic authenticity and truthfulness, and with the films examined in this thesis, authenticity and truthfulness were sought specifically for the realm of how people normally behaved in ordinary social situations. Indeed, the *vérité* aesthetic of this branch of the New Wave represents a choice made by these filmmakers aimed at achieving a degree of accuracy in their representation of the elusive and intangible matter that is our shared and yet differently experienced social reality.

With the aim of understanding and appreciating the representation of social reality as an aesthetic problem in these films, and of engaging with the effect of authenticity achieved in them, I develop, in this thesis, my theory of the Goffmanian approach. This approach is based on Canadian-American sociologist Erving Goffman's 1950s writings on social reality. Goffman proposed that social reality is an inherently theatrical place. He describes social behaviour as a performative act that is partially self-staged and that takes its theatrical cues from various elements that constitute the context, or, the 'social framework' of any interaction. These elements include the occasion, the location, other people's behaviours, the props they use, and so on, which indicate to an interlocutor the interaction's perimeters, purpose, and appropriate tone.

Goffman's work has been sporadically used in film scholarship, especially in the fields of film acting (James Naremore) and of documentary and reality TV performativity (Elizabeth Marquis, Annette Hill, Misha Kavka), where his writings contribute to technical discussions about the role of 'the self' in certain media in which the line between the actor and the character or the on-screen persona is blurred. Goffman has also been used in several distinct

interpretative film analyses, such as by Deborah Thomas, with a focus, especially, on the visibility of social frameworks or, as the case may be, on ‘frame-breaking’.⁵

More recently, Goffman’s notion of the social framework has been used theoretically by Adrian Martin, in his book *Mise en scène and Film Style* (2014), in which he proposes the filmic concept of social *mise en scène*. This concept has its roots in semiological and classical film theory and criticism from the 1950s to the present, via Étienne Souriau, Umberto Eco, Serge Daney, and François Albera, including the sociological work of Goffman. The notion of social *mise en scène*, which I will elaborate on in the theory chapter and refer to in the case studies, conceptualizes a scene’s dramatic stakes in social rather than narrative terms, based on a Goffmanian, theatrical understanding of social reality.

My Goffmanian approach incorporates an attentiveness to the social frameworks and to social *mise en scène* in order to identify, name, and understand various social dynamics happening in conjunction with the narrative of the films. What I realized, however, is that this attentiveness starts with the authentic quality of the way the characters behave, or, as Goffman calls it, socially perform. Indeed, I noticed that my appreciation for the film corpus was partly due to the fact that the performances lent themselves to a Goffmanian kind of interpretation.

To articulate this aspect with more clarity, I drew from Goffman’s notion of social perception, one that previous applications of Goffman in film scholarship have not focused on – the notion that people generally are socially literate and well equipped to read social performances and to understand ‘what is going on’. I applied this notion as a film interpretation tool, which I called the ‘social gaze’. The term ‘social gaze’ is used here to summarize what we viewers, as Goffmanian social beings, see when we observe cinematic sociality that is intuitively familiar due to the authenticity with which it is represented. I invest the term less with spectatorial significance, as it is not designed to describe how viewers are

5 Deborah Thomas, “Knowing one’s place’: frame-breaking, embarrassment and irony in *La Cérémonie* (Claude Chabrol, 1995)”, in *Style and Meaning: Studies in the Detailed Analysis of Film*, ed. by John Gibbs and Douglas Pye (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 167-78.

impacted by the film. Rather, I use it to describe a vehicle for a Goffmanian approach to film, through which we can become attuned to the social range of meaning that can be found in films that strive for a certain degree of authenticity in representing characters as social beings. Indeed, my Goffmanian engagement with, and analysis of the authenticity in these films also serves to hone in on what is at stake for the characters in crucial moments of interaction that are narratively or dramatically decontextualized.

The structure of the thesis will take the following form. Chapter one will develop and articulate the Goffmanian approach and address how the *vérité* aesthetics of a branch of 1960s New Wave cinema, exemplified in the corpus by French and Czechoslovak films, lend themselves to this kind of socially-focused approach. The chapter will include a brief analysis of the first *cinéma vérité* film, *Chronique d'un été* (1961) by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin, to demonstrate how the core principles of *cinéma vérité* apply themselves to representing the performed dimension of social reality.

The following three chapters will house six case studies, paired up according to language and theme. Chapter two will initiate my application of the Goffmanian approach on the representation of the social performance of youth in *Adieu Philippine* (1962) by Jacques Rozier and *Masculin Féminin* (1966) by Jean-Luc Godard. This chapter will start with a brief discussion of the cultural and sociological place of youth in French society before considering the filmic representations of their sociality.

Chapter three will venture into more political territory by considering the pressure of conformism on social performance in two films from the early-to-mid Czechoslovak New Wave, *Černý Petr* (1963) by Miloš Forman and *Intimní Osvětlení* (1965) by Ivan Passer. It will begin with a brief history of the Czechoslovak New Wave to situate Forman and Passer's *vérité* aesthetics, and continue on to analyze representations of social performance by characters who experience a split kind of sociality.

The fourth and final chapter will be devoted to the analysis of ‘sophisticated’ social performance in Éric Rohmer’s *La Collectionneuse* (1967) and *Ma nuit chez Maud* (1969). Here, the beginning of the chapter will include a brief discussion of Pierre Bourdieu’s conception of taste in relation to the expression and performance of social status from his seminal work, *La Distinction* (1979). I will use Bourdieu to adapt a Goffmanian-Bourdiesian approach towards understanding the competitive impetus for the social performances of Rohmer’s middle class characters and their *savoir-vivre* sensibilities.

Finally, the conclusion will summarize the findings of the case studies, and move on to propose areas of future research into the application and development of a Goffmanian approach to cinematic representations of sociality, and into a more widespread examination of the lineage of the *vérité* aesthetic.

1

A Goffmanian Approach to Representations of Social Performance

All the world's a stage | And all the men and women merely players.

- Jaques to Duke Senior, Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, II.7.139-40.⁶

I didn't care in my first films about the story and plot, structures, storytelling. I was just fascinated to bring and see real people on the screen, real faces, real normal human behaviour on the screen, that was enough for me to just salivate.

- Miloš Forman.⁷

1.1. Introduction

In 1960, Siegfried Kracauer posited in his *Theory of Film* that film had an inherent affinity for the 'fortuitous', and notably for observing the 'masses' in the 'street':

...a term designed to cover not only the street, particularly the city street, in the literal sense, but also its various extensions, such as railway stations, dance and assembly halls, bars, hotel lobbies, airports.⁸

Later on he describes the 'street' as 'the scene of life'.⁹ Kracauer goes further to say he believes film 'came into being' for filming 'moving crowds' in the streets, as it is, for him, the

6 William Shakespeare, *As You Like it*, ed. by Cynthia Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), II.7.139-40.

7 Pawel Pawlikowski, 'The Kids from FAMU', *Tales from Czechoslovakia*, BBC2, 2 June 1990, online video recording, YouTube, 21 July 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fbank_byZr0> [accessed 15 November 2015].

8 Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 62.

9 Kracauer, p. 72.

only medium ‘equal to the task of capturing them in motion’.¹⁰ The six films examined in this thesis exemplify this filmic affinity for physical movement on the streets, or, the ‘scene of life’. They do so in an expansive way, examining not just the ‘crowds’ moving *en masse*, nor just the street, but taking their observations and depictions of these entities further in various ways.

Firstly, while each of the films is set for more or less significant portions on the streets and sidewalks and captures their inherent hustle and bustle, the films branch out from this fundamental filmic staple. They take place in the bars, dance halls, concert venues, cafés, schools, and leisurely waterfronts of large cities, such as Paris, Prague, and Clermont-Ferrand, of medium-sized towns, such as Kolín and St. Tropez, and of smaller villages, hamlets, and sites in the middle of nowhere too. As a result, the ‘crowds’ are shown not just strolling but also in their diverse activity: grocery shopping, having family lunches, seducing good looking strangers, mingling at parties, and so on. And when they go home, the films follow them into their houses, flats, countryside residences, mansions, and chalets, which become the setting for a depiction of the private branch of the ‘scene of life’ as well.

The films’ characters are ordinary, non-heroic people who represent the everyperson going about everyday life. As they move from public to private settings, the films reveal the relationship between these settings to be conflictual and compatible at the same time. The characters become the physical vessels for that relationship by navigating the different actions required of them by the public and private spheres of their daily lives. At home, they interact and relate to their family and friends, and the films show the ordinary drama this entails. Then, in the public sphere, the films show characters at work, interacting with colleagues, business owners, acquaintances, and strangers. In these diverse moments of ordinary interactivity, the films reveal the subtle and delicate qualities of the characters as individual

¹⁰ Kracauer, pp. 50-1.

social beings playing different but similar versions of themselves depending on the setting. The scene of life is thus shown in its diverse but familiar make-up.

Specifically, this thesis is interested in these films' close investigations of their characters' social lives – that part of human life that is concerned with socializing with others. Sociality, or the act of socializing, impresses itself on these films' modes of storytelling in vaguely but palpably recognizable ways. This theory chapter serves to elaborate, in a first instance, on these familiar processes of sociality and interactivity that the film corpus emphasizes. To develop a theoretical frame for the study of sociality in these films, I will draw from sociologist Erving Goffman's seminal writings on the theatricality of everyday social behaviour. Goffman posited that the act of social behaviour is performative, and that people's interactions and face-to-face communications continuously and simultaneously invoke the performance of various social roles as well as the interpretation of our interlocutors' reciprocated social performances. Goffman also posited that people possess a kind of social literacy that allows them to easily read what is going on in a social situation, a perceptive skill that I call a 'social gaze' and use as an interpretative tool. Goffman's writings provide both a model of social reality as well as a vocabulary to approach an understanding of the intricacies of the social performativity found in these films.

In a second instance, the theory chapter will take a closer look at the films' similar aesthetics. The films do not focus on a social paradigm in order to dramatize and denounce ethical societal problems or social injustice, as is for example a more predominant concern of other film movements, such as Italian neorealism. Nor is this social focus conveyed by a beat-by-beat unfolding of an intimate dramatic conflict, as in some more conventionally narrative cinema and theatre that centre on the psychological complications inherent to society's influence on human relationships. Rather, thanks to the unconventional and naturalistic

aesthetics shared by the films, they focus on the tone, texture, and fabric of the characters' daily social lives.

Indeed, the affinity of these films for the 'fortuitous' is characterized secondly by their tendency for naturalism: they possess an important reverence for what people socially performing on the 'scene of life' actually, accurately, and truly look and sound like, as expressed by Miloš Forman in the epigraph. The core of the films' naturalistic aesthetics is the result of a combination of technique and mood. Indeed, the six films I will examine are instances of a discrete branch of 1960s New Wave cinema (in our case, French and Czechoslovak) that share the property of having blended in different ways with the observational documentary genre of *cinéma vérité*, which emerged around the same time (in 1961) and became fashionable amongst New Wave filmmakers.

Cinéma vérité had the sociological ambition of capturing the elusive entity of 'everydayness', an increasingly popular concept for discussing the transformative 1960s that preoccupied scholars and artists alike. The genre proffered a kind of worship of letting what occurred in front of the camera unfold of its own accord, manipulating or transforming it as little as possible, whilst making allowances for the director's interactive participation in it. This attitude also applied to the act of capturing the way people actually move and speak, conceiving of it as a performance that looks and feels distinct from a conventional actor's performance, because instead of being predetermined or designed, it is closer to the way people perform themselves in everyday life.

The films in the corpus were inspired varyingly by the genre of *cinéma vérité*'s credo or by its methodology, resulting in what I call a more general 'vérité aesthetic' that departs from the genre in crucial ways, but that in turn brings to light those qualities that earned it its following. Indeed, one of the unifying properties of the films' varying *vérité* aesthetics is that they share a passion, stemming from different circumstances and production histories, for

showing common people behaving ‘normally’ in ways that represent their social experiences with a certain kind of authenticity that is rooted in how social reality actually functions, and that thus lends the films to a Goffmanian kind of appreciation. The second section of this theory chapter will therefore be devoted to examining in greater detail the concept of authenticity, and the influence of *cinéma vérité* on the New Wave. In a third and final section, I will briefly introduce the workings of the case studies.

The rest of the thesis will be dedicated to applying the Goffmanian approach to the study of representations of social performance in three case study chapters. The larger question that guides the case studies is how to understand and appreciate the film’s social reality and the characters’ social performances with the help of Goffmanian terms. The Goffmanian approach will engage with specific moments of character interaction that offer particularly authentic representations of social experience, and thus tap into the contemporary forms of sociality made visible by the films.

It is the purpose, then, of this theoretical chapter to introduce the foundational concepts that will be used to think and write about social performance as an aesthetic presence in this niche film corpus, so as to appreciate the films’ achievement in capturing something unique and interesting about characters as social beings.

1.2. Social *Mise en Scène*

Characters in Unconventional Narrative Structures – *Konkurs* (1963) by Miloš Forman

The film corpus and its characters have a few cinematic particularities that are key to their original manner of depicting sociality. They differ from the classical norm not just because the characters are largely non-heroic and plucked from the Kracauerian street, so to speak, but also because of how they function in relation to unconventional narrative structures. To open a discussion of this, I will consider the following example of an early Czechoslovak New Wave film for the unconventionality of its narrative structure and characters.

In 1963, under the Czechoslovak socialist regime, Miloš Forman, whose subsequent work will be examined in chapter three, made a medium-length 16 mm film called *Konkurs* (*Audition*). The film was pitched as a documentary-like amateur home-movie about Forman's friends, Jiří Suchý and Jiří Šlitr, and the Semafor Theatre that they had founded – a 'pop-music cabaret that was just becoming the hottest thing in Prague'.¹¹ In one sense, the film is a historical document of 1960s Czechoslovak cultural life, of the Semafor theatre and its stars, and of the wider growing Western rock 'n roll and twist music scenes in Prague at the time.

The narrative of the film focuses on an audition call for a new female singer to join the Semafor troupe – a call that Forman, together with Suchý and Šlitr, orchestrated especially for the film. Anxious young female candidates who genuinely responded to the call, unaware of the film project behind it, wait in line to perform in front of a jury made up of their idols. The overcrowded entrance and waiting room signal not just the popularity of the Semafor Theatre, but also the intense desire of these young girls to do something great with their lives and to

¹¹ Miloš Forman and Jan Novák, *Turnaround* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994), p. 134.

put on display their individuality in a socialist society that prioritized collectivity and conformism.

The bulk of the film and its most evocative moments consist of the audition performances captured with an observational camera. In fact, Forman was ahead of his time in realizing the potential of filming an actual audition process, one that reality TV talent shows such as *The X Factor*, *The Voice*, *Idols*, and such, derive enormous entertainment value from today. Complementing the auditions, the film also features other real live music events, such as rehearsals, and professional and amateur shows.

Although music can virtually be heard non-stop both in the foreground and in the background, it is not necessarily the film's main focus. Rather, while people are auditioning or making music, the observing camera is often aimed at the surrounding social ambiance of these events: the banter, the socializing, the jitters, the build-up, the climax, and the aftermath. Forman was interested in offering a glimpse into the social world of Semafor's corridors and wings. The film showcases how people behave in different social roles: Semafor troupe-members, contestants, performers, musical partners, audience pleasers, and judges. Filming this with a non-controlling, observational, *cinéma vérité* approach, Forman literally goes behind the scenes to show how the people involved with this world carry themselves in these extraordinary circumstances.

Paradoxically, one of the tools Forman uses to flesh out his focus on this genuine social experience, is to weave into this real setting two fictional characters – Věra and Marketka – for whom he and his collaborator and friend, Ivan Passer, whose work will also be examined in chapter three, wrote minimal storylines. The film is not a pure documentary. Since the film's core concept was predicated on the fact that the candidates showed up spontaneously, showing what these girls' lives are like not just during, but also before and after the auditions, required Forman to invent them.

Before the auditions, Marketka is shown having a hard time at work as a podiatrist, whereas Věra is shown struggling with her amateur twist band leader's instructions during rehearsal. But rather than that the girls become leading characters, or even the most memorable candidates, they fit into the audition like chameleons. Both actresses were also singers, but unlike the genuine candidates, whose fates are unknown until they perform, Forman scripts Věra and Marketka's audition outcomes. When Věra is called inside, she becomes too shy to perform, panics, and leaves the room. Marketka does complete her audition, but, unsatisfied when the jury tells her that they 'will be in touch', she insists on finding out on the spot whether she 'did it', and receives a negative response (Figure 1.1). Upon losing out, both Marketka and Věra can be seen returning to their normal lives, Marketka getting in trouble with her boss at the podiatry for lying to get time off to do the audition, and Věra lying to her band about why she is late. The storylines allowed the film to cross over from the outside world into the audition world and back to the outside world, putting the audition into a larger context.



Fig 1.1: Marketka, about to be rejected, with the audition microphones visible behind her

While the characters serve as vehicles through the wider world surrounding the audition, they do not function like heroines in conventional narrative terms. The film's plot is not married to their fates. Overall, it is not even meant to be blatantly clear that they were

planted there. Both characters were based on the actresses' real lives, and therefore Věra and Marketka's function as characters can better be understood as representing two possible individual timelines and backstories that illustrate in more detail what the personal ordinary lives of some of these audition candidates might, for example, look like.

While *Konkurs* is perhaps an extreme example because it is predominantly a documentary that incorporated fictional elements, whereas the film corpus consists of fictions that incorporate more or less *cinéma vérité* elements, the manner in which they are narratively unconventional is similar. To put this into context, let us delve briefly into a description of the properties and criteria of conventional narrative film, to then consider how these films fall outside of conventional narrative cinema and the genre-system, and the impact that this has on how social performance comes across.

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson define narrative as 'a chain of events in cause-effect relationship occurring in time and space'.¹² What one would call 'narrative film' does not present a 'random string of events' which the viewer has 'trouble grasping' and of which the viewer is 'unable to determine the causal or temporal relations among the events'.¹³

Rather, conventional narratives rely on events to be interconnected by 'lines of organized action' that are put in order by 'broad causal forces' that give it 'formal structure'.¹⁴

Conventional characters play 'roles within the film's formal system' by being 'agents of cause and effect' that 'trigger and react to events' which the spectator 'actively seeks to connect' by means of 'causal motivation' in order to 'make sense of narrative'.¹⁵ In short, characters help to make the narrative understandable to a viewer by embodying human causes – 'motivations' – for the events to happen, and by creating the sense that this impetus moves the story along.

12 David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *Film Art: An Introduction*, 10th edn (New York : McGraw-Hill, 2012), p. 69.

13 Bordwell and Thompson, p. 69.

14 Bordwell and Thompson, p. 70.

15 Bordwell and Thompson, pp. 70-2.

To do so, characters are given ‘traits’: ‘attitudes, skills, preferences, psychological drives, details of dress and appearance, and any other specific quality the film creates for a character’.¹⁶ The genre-system helps to decide which traits it is useful for characters of specific narratives to have. As an example, Bordwell and Thompson quote the case of the heroine, Jill, of Alfred Hitchcock’s thriller *The Man who Knew Too Much* (1934). Jill is a very good shot with a rifle, a trait that is made known in the exposition of the film.¹⁷ At the end of the film, when a shooter hired by the police to shoot Jill’s daughter’s kidnapper does not take the shot for fear of missing, Jill decides to grab his rifle and successfully shoots the kidnapper herself. This rifle skill ‘is not a natural part of a person named Jill’, say Bordwell and Thompson; ‘it is a trait that helps make up a character named Jill, and it serves a particular narrative function’.¹⁸ Indeed, it offers a clutch resolution to a suspenseful narrative arc that is typical of the thriller genre. All along, only a mother was able to save her daughter, and the fact that this trait emerges both at the start and at the end of the film creates a neat pattern.

Jill’s case clearly contrasts with that of Věra and Marketka in *Konkurs*. Their traits, few of which are purposefully exposed at the start, do not have the function of solving a narrative puzzle later on. Not only is there no puzzle to be solved, but their traits remain too opaque to effect causality. They are fictional characters whose motivations are not forced to have a purpose, but are rather left to be as they are. Forman depends on their ability to fit into the group of genuine candidates to access the social environment of the audition process, which it is the film’s titular goal to capture. The film focuses on the tone and texture of the social world of the audition process, and Věra and Marketka appear as mere avatars to that experience, rather than that they have an explicit role within the film’s plot. The films examined in this thesis more or less share this unconventional relationship between character and narrative.

¹⁶ Bordwell and Thompson, p. 72.

¹⁷ Bordwell and Thompson, p. 80.

¹⁸ Bordwell and Thompson, p. 72.

The unconventional nature of the film corpus can be ascribed to the niche its films occupy. The films examined here do not adhere to any singular set of generic motivations, codes, and conventions. In fact, most of the films examined here have been scripted in unusual ways. They function independently of the genre-system, and within the realm of European art cinema which blurs the lines of genre and experiments with non-narrativity. Specifically, they have more or less experimentally cross-pollinated with the observational documentary genre of *cinéma vérité*, predicated on the notion of saying less and of letting the action speak for itself.

As a result, rather than consisting of a tightly organized order of events, the narratives in these films are more vague, often presenting a combination of moments, anecdotes, or vignettes that do not form one story, but that interweave in a polyphonic way, reflective of the way life itself may not fit into one story either. These broad strokes paint a general picture even though the information they present may not be narratively relevant to any other part of the film. This is the case very pointedly, for example, in Jean-Luc Godard's *Masculin Féminin* (1966), examined in chapter two. Godard structured the film into fifteen numbered segments that he calls '*faits précis*' that are demarcated by intertitles, and that do not have obvious causal links between them.

At the extreme, then, with the absence of the guidance of a narrative structure, these films try to put the viewer in a position where 'you have to make up your own mind about what's going on. You are not being spoon-fed or told what to think about this or that.'¹⁹ Unsurprisingly, the films to be examined in this thesis have each been described by critics, in different words, as films in which nothing much clearly happens. This thesis is dedicated to tuning into what *does* happen, even if that is not very much, and to offer, in the case studies, better ways of discussing it.

19 American *cinéma vérité* film director Frederick Wiseman quoted by Brian Winston in *Claiming the Real: The Griersonian Documentary and its Legitimations* (London: British Film Institute, 1995), p. 151.

What *does* happen, happens in a certain kind of framework. While conventional narrative may not structure the performances, it is not that these films show characters to be completely devoid of context for their actions. On the contrary, because of the way the films focus on specific interactions and social situations of ordinary daily life, these are the predominant contexts for the characters' performances. Specifically, the majority of the performances in the films examined in this thesis seem to consist of behavioural responses to various social situations and interactions that emanate from their direct social environments.

For instance, in one of the segments of *Masculin Féminin*, we see protagonist Paul sitting with his buddy Robert in a laundromat, looking at a girl who walks in, joking about what kind of 'brassiere' she is wearing. The conversation does not reveal information that is causally motivated by the narrative or that helps to set up future actions. Rather, the film lingers on the level of showing *how* the social situation is carried out. The girl is not seen again and brassieres do not occupy a consequential place in the story. It is less useful and less interesting to seek to understand the performances as containing signs that clarify the plot than to appreciate them as carrying out functions within the social interaction, and thus, to consider the boys as social beings, bonding, presumably, over their shared way of talking about girls.

Just like Paul and Robert, the characters of the film corpus seem to exist in the films in a way that is determined by their direct social environments on a micro-level, rather than by the film narrative on a macro-level. Their performances and reasons for actions are represented as being highly sensitive to rules of sociality. In his seminal work on film acting, James Naremore acknowledges the distinction between the 'theatrical' sense of performativity, or, conventional acting, to which he devotes his work, and the 'aleatory' sense of performativity – the broader kind of performativity which applies to a category of

performers that includes people who are ‘caught unawares by the camera’.²⁰ What concerns us in this thesis is what makes the concept of performativity ‘a much broader category than acting’ because, as Naremore says, ‘we are all performers’.²¹ I will argue that social interactions and situations come to give the actors’ aleatory performances the frameworks and contexts that make sense of them in a way that their narrative structures do not. This calls for a close investigation of these social contexts’ capacity to exert theatrical influence on performance.

On the Social Stage

The way characters appear in these films is deeply connected to their direct social environments. One way to grasp the kind of directorial control that social environments, situations, and interactions can exert over characters, is through a conception of what Adrian Martin and others have referred to as ‘social *mise en scène*’:

It starts, rather, from the simple but powerful idea that cinema works with a particular type of loose but definite material: the codes and rules of sociality. Cinema, in dealing (in at least in some of its major forms) with bodies and environments as its primary material, takes into itself the facts long recognized by sociologists of every stripe: that the social world itself is already relatively strictly organized, codified, subject to a multitude of rule-sets that govern (or at least regulate) behaviour, posture, gesture, level of emotion (contained or released), where and how one will sit, stand, walk, run, be active or passive, hushed or loud... Therefore, the expressivity of many films comes not just ‘from the heart’ of inspired auteurs, not only from the classically literary or philosophical themes they assemble and explore, not even solely from their arabesques of cinematic style – but, rather, from the capture, investigation and contestation of a social *mise en scène*.²²

20 James Naremore, *Acting in the Cinema* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 14-21.

21 James Naremore, *Invention Without a Future: Essays on Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), p. 49.

22 Adrian Martin, *Mise en scène and Film Style* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 131.

Martin builds the concept of social *mise en scène* on the idea that the reality filmed by cameras does not just consist of raw, malleable material, but that it is already inherently organized in a theatrical way.²³ Rooting the idea of pre-organized reality in wider film scholarship, Martin quotes Umberto Eco, who posited that the ‘universe of action transcribed by cinema *already exist[s] as a universe of signs*’ that adheres to the rules of ‘culture, convention, system, code, and therefore, by extension, ideology’.²⁴ Eco also wrote that ‘le film [...] nous appartient [...] comme un langage qui parle un autre langage préexistant, tous deux en interaction avec leurs systèmes de conventions.’²⁵

Martin also refers to Serge Daney who describes the world as a ‘coded reality’ that is inherently organized in cinematic ways. Daney argues that society ‘*fait son “cinéma”*’ and that films capture the world that is subject to ‘*pre-mise en scène sociale*’.²⁶ Furthermore, in his critique of a direct cinema film, Daney argues that naturalistic film is especially prone to faithfully represent the staged nature of social reality: ‘Le naturalisme est une technique qui reconduit quelque chose qui lui pré-existe: la société en tant qu'elle est déjà une mise en scène.’²⁷ This harkens back to the affinity Kracauer proposes film to have with ‘fortuitousness’, if ‘fortuitousness’ were better understood as capturing by chance a glimpse of the real social world in which the inherently staged nature of that glimpsed social world confirmed the film’s faithfulness to reality, or in other words, its authenticity.

As all kinds of cinema demonstrate, the staged nature of social reality can be conveyed or alluded to in ways that are not authentic. In conventional narrative cinema, social situations and interactions often serve as platforms to tropes. Mainstream and classical romantic

23 Martin presents the literature review of the concept of social *mise en scène* in chapter seven, ‘A Detour via Reality: Social Mise en scène’, pp. 127-54.

24 Martin, p. 132; Umberto Eco, ‘Articulations of the Cinematic Code’, in *Movies and Methods: Volume 1*, ed. by Bill Nichols (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1976), pp. 590-607 (pp. 599-600). Italics in the original.

25 Martin, p. 133; Umberto Eco, ‘Sémiologies des Messages Visuels’, *Communications*, 1970, no.15, pp. 11-51 (p. 44).

26 Serge Daney, ‘La remise en scène’, in *La Rampe: cahier critique 1970-1982* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma – Gallimard, 1996; first publ. in *Cahiers du Cinema*, July 1976, no. 268), pp. 62-73 (p. 70).

27 Daney, p. 70.

comedies, for example, will generally always have a ‘meet-cute’ scene that represents the first social interaction between two people that the film will then follow as they form a romantic relationship. Since the genre raises the viewer’s expectations that they will indeed get together, everything about their first encounter gains symbolic meaning, from the location of the meet-cute, to the clothing they wear, or to their personality quirks. While the two destined lovers will generally follow rules of social behaviour that are recognizable for the circumstances, such as trying to make a good impression on each other, their dialogue will be designed to ritualize the romanticization of this first encounter beyond an authentic representation of what first encounters might actually, socially look like. The social staging one would expect from this interaction in real life is overpowered by the more important organizing force of generic convention. Rather than representing the social environment authentically, elements of this environment are manipulated, stretched, and exaggerated for the comedic purpose that gives the genre its appeal.

Addressing the difference between authentic and inauthentic representations of social staging, Martin quotes François Albera, whose discussion of Eco and Daney leads him to consider social *mise en scène* more closely from a spectatorial perspective. He considers the capacity of the viewer, thanks to what he calls their ‘anthropologico-cultural’ knowledge and intelligence, to recognize when films ‘respect’ and ‘submit’ themselves to the pre-existing social *mise en scène* of reality, or when they ‘ignore’ it, and treat the raw material of the world as ‘malleable’, and thus fail to transmit ‘recognizable reality’.²⁸ In other words, if films show a world that does not appear to be socially pre-staged in ways that echo a real viewer’s experience of social life, they are considered to be less authentic. This ‘anthropologico-cultural’ knowledge does not have to be rooted in linguistic familiarity. Indeed, Anglo-American non-Czech speaking scholars have long appreciated the authenticity of the

28 François Albera, ‘Mise en scène et rituels sociaux’, in *La Mise en Scène*, ed. by Jacques Aumont (Bruxelles: De Boeck, 2000), pp. 219-232 (p. 229).

representation of Forman's Czech teenagers' social worlds without necessarily being able to fully understand the verbal components of their performances. Authenticity emerges as an effect of a film's depiction of socially staged reality as something that viewers are intuitively, if not specifically, familiar with.

The social context of a performance works thus, then, that the more the filmed social interaction between two characters unfolds according to social *mise en scène* to tell a micro-story of sociality, and the less integrated it is into plot, the more the moment will be authentic. Reversely, the more the filmed social interaction is integrated into the macro-narrative to serve causality and the more the inherent theatrical properties of the social environment of the character are ignored in favour of the plot, the less authentic the moment will be to a viewer.

How does performance fit into authentic depictions of social *mise en scène*? Can the performances lead a viewer to recognize the effect of authenticity of a film's representation of social reality? I will discuss these questions in the following subsection with the help of Goffman's writings on the social behaviour of everyday life.

Erving Goffman's Social Reality

I said earlier that the film corpus presents characters whose actions tend to be contextualized mainly by their immediate social environments. In order to consider how the influence of a social interaction on a character's performance is an intuitively recognizable phenomenon to viewers, it is useful to turn to the work of sociologist Erving Goffman. Specifically, I will look at his examination of the motivation and interpretation of ordinary social behaviour in everyday life, which lays out how people understand and interpret the interactions they are

involved in, and how they decide to behave in them and present themselves to the outside world.

Writing his first and seminal book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, in 1959, Goffman was borne of the same era as Kracauer, the New Wave, and the rise of *cinéma vérité* in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The zeitgeist of that time took an interest in the visible, representational, and performative dimensions of identity in a modern, changing, post-war society. Goffman carried out extensive observation of the social behaviour of regular people in their normal everyday lives, as well as in non-‘normal’ everyday life (as in *Asylums* (1961), for example). He articulated notions of behaviour, interactivity, context, social life, and institutions that are predicated on the idea that, in real life, everyone is an actor who performs their identity using the props that are provided by the different social settings and situations in which one finds oneself, for which there are often precedents that have helped establish some behavioural rules of thumb. His use of the vernacular of the theatre is peppered throughout his writings and emphasizes his understanding of social life through the metaphor of the stage.

People perform themselves for others on a daily basis, many times a day, as a means to facilitate day-to-day communications. Goffman’s use of the term ‘performance’ – which, in the interest of clarity in this thesis I call ‘social performance’ so as to conceptually differentiate with a film actor’s crafted, constructed ‘performance’ – is defined as the ‘activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants’, and is inherently grounded in an interactive motivation both to express and to persuade.²⁹ I will also use the term ‘social performativity’ to refer to the act of social performance. Performance implies audience, and Goffman posits that there is a motivation for anyone participating in social life to influence in a favourable way how people see and define them. This impacts a person’s standing and social quality of life: ‘regardless of the particular

²⁹ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1959, repr. in 1990), p. 26.

objective which the individual has in mind and of his motive for having this objective, it will be in his interests to control the conduct of others, especially their responsive treatment of him.³⁰ In the case of the films examined here, if the plot does not shed light on why the characters behave the way they do, the social impetus for behaviour helps by fulfilling the role of motivation.

Furthermore, refining and complicating the idea of motivation, social situations provide social agents with theatrical environments that indicate to them which ‘social role’ to play – a specific kind of performance which Goffman defines as the ‘enactments of rights and duties attached to a given status’.³¹ Thus, depending on the motivation and on the specifics of an interaction, people can slightly alter how they present themselves, and play different ‘roles’, or parts. The theatricalization of social behaviour rests on this notion that people do not have one ‘self’ to perform, but a variety of selves that they can switch between, merge, emphasize, or hide, depending on the circumstances. Indeed, as the film analyses will illustrate, social performance can be an interface for shades of sincerity, reflecting anything from authenticity of self to something not quite as true to self.

The motivation to socially perform also drives what Goffman calls ‘impression management’ which consists of social performative techniques that are primarily intended to avoid ‘performance disruptions’ like ‘unmeant gestures’, ‘inopportune intrusions’, ‘faux pas’, and ‘gaffes’.³² Such disruptions can cause ‘embarrassment’ or ‘dissonance’, or even, if done on purpose, ‘cause a scene’ that the other social participants were not expecting, and thus create a ‘new drama’ in which the participants’ social roles involve ‘sudden reshuffling and reappointing’ as they have to adapt to the new social situation, as if adapting to a new script.³³ Social situations put characters through micro-narrative journeys with anticipations, twists,

³⁰ Goffman, *Presentation*, p. 15.

³¹ Goffman, *Presentation*, p. 27.

³² Goffman, *Presentation*, pp. 204-5.

³³ Goffman, *Presentation*, pp. 204-5.

climaxes, and resolutions, all within one interaction that is dramatic in a social *mise en scène* sense.

The manner in which social environments inform participants of which social role to adopt is elaborated in Goffman's book *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (1974). Goffman characterizes social situations in terms of a contextualizing definition that is independent from the participants: 'those who are in the situation ordinarily do not *create* this definition, even though their society often can be said to do so; ordinarily, all they do is to assess correctly what the situation ought to be for them and then act accordingly.'³⁴ He assumes that when individuals are involved in a social situation, they ask themselves: 'what is it that's going on here?'³⁵ Although, as Goffman acknowledges, society can have an influence on determining the answer to that question, it differs based on the person asking. Either way, this answer is, in Goffman's terminology, always articulated in terms of the 'frame' of an experience (not to be confused with the film frame). The 'frame' or 'social framework' of a social experience, which he defines as 'the principles of organization which govern events – at least social ones – and our subjective involvement in them', is an important concept in Goffman's constellation of social reality.³⁶

Different social situations and interactions have different social frameworks that determine for participants what the implied 'rules' of conduct are, what the register or tone of the interaction is, and what other participants will roughly expect from the interaction. The actions that people undertake that help to give participants a hint about the social framework of their interaction are 'guided doings'.³⁷ Guided doings may sometimes be ritualized doings that are part of situations that happen quite frequently in daily life, and that have their set, formulaic ways of functioning, such as the 'interaction rituals' between waiters and

³⁴ Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986; first publ. New York: Harper and Row, 1974), pp. 1-2.

³⁵ Goffman, *Frame*, p. 8.

³⁶ Goffman, *Frame*, pp. 10-1.

³⁷ Goffman, *Frame*, p. 22.

customers, between teachers and students, or of spouses with each other.³⁸ The social framework that people ascribe to situations is ‘implied’ and ‘employed’ in their response.³⁹ Indeed, social performances mitigate and embody reactions to other people’s social performances, and so they become a tool of back-and-forth communication that combines the act of performing with the act of interpreting the performances of one’s interlocutors. As such, frames give a sense of containment and vacuum to social interactions as events, but they are also portals that signpost to others on the outside how they can get involved. As I will discuss in the next subsection, this combination between the ‘framed’ event and its ability to convey information to an interpreting observer, or viewer, particularly lends social interactions, in Goffman’s conception of them, to filmic representation.

In the films to be examined here, the characters can be seen dealing with normal everyday communication in public and private settings in ways that often reflect the characters’ motivations as socially rooted. They perform social roles aimed at managing the stakes of making the right impression, saving face, and of avoiding embarrassment. Goffman’s model for social reality provides us with a manner of thinking and talking about the social dynamics of the films’ specific moments of sociality, and about the dramatic stakes the characters’ social performances are trying to juggle, when plot does not primarily explain their behaviour on screen.

Recognizing Authenticity: a Social Gaze

I also said earlier that the more a filmed social interaction unfolds according to social *mise en scène* – some of the detailed mechanics of which I just addressed in Goffmanian terms – the

38 Erving Goffman, *Interaction ritual: essays on face-to-face behaviour* (London: Allen Lane the Penguin Press, 1972).

39 Goffman, *Frame*, p. 21.

more the moment will be recognizably authentic to a viewer. The property of authenticity particular to this film corpus will be explored in more depth in the next section, but it is useful here to discuss how a viewer's own Goffmanian experience of and perspective on social reality contributes towards their assessment of that property.

As mentioned before, Albera ascribed this power of recognition to the viewer's 'anthropologico-cultural' knowledge and intelligence, and I mentioned how this knowledge is partly intuitive rather than predicated fully on exact familiarity of language, for example.⁴⁰ Indeed, for theoretical purposes, and to avoid presuming too much, I will assume that there are elements of this recognition that are transcultural and that do not depend, although they can be aided by, knowledge of the cultural context. Goffman's conceptualization of social reality offers a means to delve into the dynamics of this intuitive recognition in a way that evokes the ontology of the medium of film.

Performance implies audience, and Goffman believes that people are generally well equipped to read a social situation: 'social life itself is often organized as something that individuals will be able to understand and deal with.'⁴¹ In other words, people are endowed with more or less accurate social literacy skills that inform their perspective on the social portion of their daily life. Illustrating the social literacy people have even when they are not participating in an interaction that they witness from afar, Goffman elaborates on the action of 'merely glancing' at a social situation. He says that 'bystanders who merely look are deeply involved, too', in estimating its social framework, before shifting their attention away again, thus demonstrating that 'glancing itself seems to be made possible by the quick confirmation that viewers can obtain'.⁴²

If just glancing allows someone to glean some aspect of the social framework of an interaction other people are having, without hearing what they are saying, based only on these

40 Albera, p. 229.

41 Goffman, *Frame*, p. 26.

42 Goffman, *Frame*, p. 38.

other people's social performances and guided doings, this demonstrates both the informative power of the non-verbal component of social situations, as well as the fact that participation is not necessary in order to make a rough assessment of an interaction's social framework. The act of looking at people's gestures and body language allows someone who is viewing an interaction without participating in it to make educated guesses about its social framework: what social roles the participants have given themselves, how they have interpreted the situation, and the rough direction the conversation seems to be taking. Goffman states, 'mere perceiving [...] is a much more active penetration of the world than at first might be thought'.⁴³ In real life, it gives an observer the power to decide whether to participate, and if so, how to perform, or whether to stay away from the situation. In film, however, merely perceiving a filmed social situation gives a viewer a different kind of access.

In fact, mere perceiving, or glancing, describes the very act of film viewing. By virtue of the ontology of cinema, social situations and interactions, just like anything on screen, are inaccessible to viewers in any other way besides the perceived way. In discussing the relationship with which viewers stand to film, Andrew Klevan says that the crucial characteristic of cinema is that what we see in film is 'screened reality' while simultaneously 'the screen screens the world from us'.⁴⁴ Quoting Stanley Cavell's *The World Viewed* (1979), he states that this makes the film world 'present to [us] while [we are] not present to it'.⁴⁵ This 'mechanically assured' separation embodies scepticism because it casts the world as 'but an image'.⁴⁶ Quoting Stephen Mulhall, Klevan emphasizes the quality of present absence in cinema: 'it makes present a no-longer existent world'.⁴⁷ But, while the filmed world is just an

⁴³ Goffman, *Frame*, p. 38.

⁴⁴ Andrew Klevan, *Disclosure of the Everyday: Undramatic Achievement in Narrative Film* (Trowbridge: Flicks Books, 2000), p. 18.

⁴⁵ Klevan, p. 18.

⁴⁶ Klevan, p. 18.

⁴⁷ Klevan, p. 18.

image, this image can still call on a viewer's Goffmanian social literacy, which consists in, as Goffman says, a 'more active penetration of the world than at first might be thought'.⁴⁸

The act of 'merely perceiving' filmed social *mises en scène* may indeed call on a viewer's social literacy. Figuring out 'what is going on' particularly lends itself to a Goffmanian kind of interpretative approach in the unusual and unconventional films examined in this thesis, which have liberated themselves from narrative in order to dwell in moments of ordinary life-living. This approach may be new for cinema, but it is highly familiar in everyday life. A viewer may glance at the characters and notice, not just from their dialogue but from their guided doings, that their performances are recognizably social and Goffmanian, and search for the social framework of the interaction and seek to grasp the social roles they have cast themselves in, to better understand the micro-story underlying this social *mise en scène*, and the stakes involved.

While the viewer is obviously absent from the filmed interaction, the viewer is also, by virtue of the camera's own non-participatory status, potentially given angles from which to observe the interaction that they would not have access to in real life. Indeed, films have the ability to present social interactions up-close, giving viewers details of the characters' facial expressions that they would normally not see, and making dialogue audible where they would normally have to read lips. Thus, viewers use their social literacy to interpret social situations both from the privileged position of inclusion offered by the film, and from an inconsequential and cloaked position outside of the diegesis.

Being an outsider on the inside is what James Naremore believes may be one of the reasons for which Hollywood movies are pleasurable to watch: they 'place [viewers] outside dramatic events [...] from which [they] can observe people lying, concealing emotions, or staging performances for one another', and thus allow the viewer to 'recognize and adapt to

⁴⁸ Goffman, *Frame*, p. 38.

the “acted” quality of everyday life’.⁴⁹ Speaking of the similar pleasure of watching *cinéma vérité*, William Rothman described it as ‘all but obsessed with the look of people being less than candid with themselves and each other while being unknowingly candid with the camera’.⁵⁰ John Corner goes so far as to compare this privileged perspective in *cinéma vérité* with ‘social voyeurism’, hinting at another famous form of voyeurism as analyzed by Laura Mulvey.⁵¹

Indeed, Mulvey linked the voyeuristic ontology of film (via its separation of the audience from the filmed subjects) to the dominance of a particular kind of spectatorial and characterological gaze – the male gaze.⁵² In loose inspiration and departure from this particular voyeuristic dynamic, what I call a ‘social gaze’ is one that is activated in viewers when they can align their Goffmanian, performative, interpretative social literacy with the social interactions and social performances on screen. While the social gaze can be voyeuristic, as Corner notes, it is, however, not involved in a dynamic of dominance, but engages, rather, in a dynamic of interpretation and perception. In short, this social kind of interpretation represents an ordinary way to appreciate films about the ordinary. Just as social *mise en scène* is best conducted by a certain, more naturalistic film aesthetics, this gaze too is evoked most directly by certain filmic circumstances.

While a Goffmanian kind of approach has been taken on several occasions by scholars to analyze films that did not have an aesthetic of authenticity, such as by Deborah Thomas with regards to Claude Chabrol’s *La Cérémonie* (1995), the extent of the Goffmanian influence on her investigation was limited to the discussion of social frameworks, which it is possible to abstractly locate in most films (as I did in the generic example of the romantic comedy meet-cute). The exercise of taking a Goffmanian social gaze on the films that form

49 Naremore, *Acting*, pp. 69-70; *Invention*, p. 49.

50 William Rothman, *The “I” of the Camera: Essays in Film Criticism, History, and Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 305.

51 John Corner, *The Art of Record: A critical introduction to Documentary* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 33.

52 Laura Mulvey, ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, *Screen*, 16 (Autumn 1975), no. 3, pp. 6-18.

my particular film corpus distinguishes itself from such precedents by focusing not just on social frameworks, but first and foremost on social performativity, as emphasized especially by films with an aesthetics of authenticity that is open to a broader, ‘aleatory’, or even unscripted kind of performativity, instead of the ‘theatrical’ performativity that is appropriate for conventional narrative film.

Therefore, positing our social literacy as involved in our interpretation of these films does not serve as a description of spectatorial perspective, but more as a manner of situating the films’ elusive effect of authentic performativity. Indeed, the potential for a social gaze to inform our interpretations of the films is connected to the recognizability of the social performances. When seeing these films, the viewer is not duped by their naturalism into believing what they see as true, but rather he or she accedes to the films’ insistence on truthfulness and conspicuous attempts to represent something authentic about how people behave. A viewer is able to recognize whether the representation of sociality rings true to social life based on whether the moment speaks to their Goffmanian social gaze. Perhaps it is the ‘quickness’ of the act of ‘merely glancing’ needed to interpret a filmic social interaction that effects the film’s authenticity – something that is therefore facilitated both by a film’s aesthetics and by the viewer’s intuitive Goffmanian literacy.⁵³ One of the functions the Goffmanian approach serves, then, is to engage with and the films’ pursued authenticity so as to make more tangible what is socially at stake in specific moments.

While some moments in the films studied here may call upon a viewer’s awareness and understanding of narrative and of genre over their social literacy, the social gaze is a tool that can provide insight into a range of filmic meaning that is specifically social and which has often been under-examined. Thus, it serves to shed light on the achievements of this particular branch of New Wave cinema that scholarship has not yet thoroughly explored. Having discussed the social groundings of these films from a *mise en scène*, a performative, and an

⁵³ Goffman, *Frame*, p. 38.

interpretative point of view, let us now consider the effect of authenticity more closely in the context of the *cinéma vérité*-inspired aesthetics that define this branch of New Wave films.

1.3. The *Vérité* Aesthetic

A Goffmanian approach offers a novel perspective for understanding the significance of certain New Wave films' authentic representations of contemporary social life, of which my film corpus comprises a selection. These films embody a particular kind of achievement that has been noted but that has not been extensively studied and written about. The six films studied here instinctively caught my social gaze, and with it, a sense of recognition and familiarity, whilst also igniting my curiosity for how the methodology used to make them could inform me about what my social gaze was gazing at.

This section examines authenticity both on a conceptual and an aesthetic level. It will involve a discussion of Rudolf Arnheim's treatment of cinematic authenticity, which I will apply to the genre of *cinéma vérité*, as it was absorbed by the New Wave. In the process of this discussion, I will introduce a set of aesthetic concepts and notions that describe the workings of the film corpus's *vérité* aesthetics and that I will use as instruments in the case studies.

The Authenticity Paradox: Rudolf Arnheim's Orders of Authenticity

Authenticity, as a quality attributed to art objects, is predicated on a relationship with an original source. For film, Kracauer described this original source as 'physical reality' and devised his 'theory of film' to address the different ways in which film, as a photographic medium, interacts with the physicality of reality by following, on the one hand, a 'realist

tendency’, and on the other, a ‘formative’ one.⁵⁴ This pair forms a dichotomy that exposes the inherent complication of authenticity, which I will elaborate on here.

Art objects are evaluated as authentic when they fulfil certain elusive criteria pertaining to how they represent something real. The difficulty lies in the fact that authenticity loses its essence every time it is subjected to a mediation into symbolic form. In his historical inventory of the paradoxes of authenticity, Wolfgang Funk points out that authenticity entails a ‘resistance to unambiguity’, grounded in the ‘impossibility’ of its ‘direct representation’.⁵⁵ And yet, there can be no access to authenticity in art without an aesthetic articulation: authenticity cannot be gleaned if it is not mediated.

But, as Funk says, mediation does not directly represent authenticity; authenticity appears through mediation as a ‘secondary phenomenon which no artist can depict directly and by itself’, thus pointing to the aesthetic paradox at hand.⁵⁶ On the one hand, authenticity is a quality we give to films without being able to tangibly point at it, like an effect of the film. But on the other hand, it is not just an unsubstantiated phenomenon: it qualifies a mediation of a real something. The artistic process can effect authenticity if it preserves the realness of this something in some way. So, if authenticity is to be found in films, it must be a property that is both the result of the circumstances of its mediation as well as of something that is grounded in the reality the film represents. Authenticity emerges both despite and because of the artistic process.

Arnheim picked up on the dichotomous ‘realist’ and ‘formative’ tendencies identified by Kracauer to examine them specifically in application to the relationship between authenticity and film’s photographic medium. According to Arnheim, the paradox of authenticity is accentuated in film because its mechanically obtained images ‘imitate nature

⁵⁴ Kracauer, pp. 33-5.

⁵⁵ Wolfgang Funk, *The Literature of Reconstruction: Authentic Fiction in the New Millennium* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), p. 16.

⁵⁶ Funk, p. 17.

[...] more clearly than the handmade images of artists ever could'.⁵⁷ Given film's indexical and iconic relations to reality, Arnheim identifies two 'orders of authenticity', in the tracks of Kracauer's 'realist' and 'formative' tendencies, in which film always partakes to achieve authenticity.

The first order of authenticity, which Arnheim also calls the 'documentary character' of the medium of film, is predicated on making a record of reality. Films are 'authentic to the extent that they do justice to the facts of reality'.⁵⁸ The second order of authenticity, or the 'aesthetic character' of film, is focused rather on the impression reality makes: films are 'authentic [...] by expressing the qualities of human experience by any means suitable to that purpose'.⁵⁹ While the first order helps the second order, paradoxically, Arnheim notes, the second hampers the first, as the aesthetic and 'formative' means used to convey a 'human experience' of reality authentically, sometimes require filmmakers to make decisions that manipulate and interfere with that reality. So, authenticity hangs from a seemingly contradictory combination of a pursuit of objectivity and subjectivity. This contradiction is embodied by an attempt to document reality exactly without intervening, while at the same time using representational devices to mould its likeness to how people experience it. Arnheim poetically sums up the simultaneity of both orders working towards authenticity together as the 'cooperation of nature and the human mind'.⁶⁰

The film corpus lends itself to an application of the theory of the two orders of authenticity. In the previous section, I addressed the way in which the human experience of reality is partly funnelled by our social lives: there is a particularly social experience of reality which engages our social performativity with our social gaze. The films in the corpus drew my attention precisely because of how they reminded me of this human social experience.

⁵⁷ Rudolf Arnheim, 'The Two Authenticities of the Photographic Media, *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 51(Fall 1993), no. 4, pp. 537-40 (p. 537).

⁵⁸ Arnheim, p. 537.

⁵⁹ Arnheim, p. 537.

⁶⁰ Arnheim, p. 539.

Interlocked with this second order of authenticity, there is also a version of the first order of authenticity partaken in by this film corpus that I have already alluded to. Indeed, while the ‘documentary character’ used by each film to effect authenticity differs, there is a point on which their representations share a commonality: in expressing their filmic affinity for the ‘fortuitous’ they are varyingly but comparably inspired by the observational documentary genre of *cinéma vérité*.

Cinéma vérité emerges as a genre that is able to satisfy some of the requirements for these films’ desired representations of social life. Indeed, *cinéma vérité* is the expressed inspiration of the majority of the films: *Konkurs* (1963), *Adieu Philippine* (1962), *Masculin Féminin* (1966), *Černý Petr* (1963), and *La Collectionneuse* (1967) were made with techniques that either pay lip service to or were inspired by *cinéma vérité*. The other two films in the corpus, *Intimní Osvětlení* (1965) and *Ma nuit chez Maud* (1969) were not made with *cinéma vérité* methods, and only occasionally follow its core tenets. Yet, they effect a reminiscent kind of authenticity in the context of this thesis, one that has sometimes led critics to describe them as having an elusive but palpable air of *cinéma vérité*, and to group them within larger aesthetic families of films that did explicitly borrow methods from *cinéma vérité*. Thus, either for technical reasons or in effect, the film corpus is more or less directly associated with *cinéma vérité*, and the films share the quality of having been made with fictional *cinéma vérité*-inspired aesthetics, which I aggregately call their ‘*vérité* aesthetic’.

An Air of *Cinéma Vérité* – *Chronique d’un été* (1961) by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin

Cinéma vérité emerged as an observational and participatory documentary genre in the late 1950s as a result of developments in light-weight camera and synchronous sound recording

equipment. It allowed filmmakers, notably ethnographic, anthropological, and sociological researchers and documentary filmmakers, to take their cameras and their light-sensitive film to the outside world, carrying them on their shoulders, and to film cultures and social settings around the world, reaching places that movie cameras had not had access to before.⁶¹ It afforded them an unprecedented mobility with the equipment on site, and fostered a looser, more flexible cinematographic filmmaking practice that was palpable especially on the level of how seemingly naturally people carried themselves in front of the camera. *Cinéma vérité* would represent the beginning of a new paradigm of documentary filmmaking, influencing fiction filmmaking around the world, and planting the seeds for other media genres such as reality TV and, more recently since the late 2000s, the autobiographical documentary work that can be found in YouTube vlogging.

The French origin of the term is reflective of the place where *cinéma vérité* thrived. Indeed, although *cinéma vérité* was employed and developed by Northern American and European filmmakers, its leading practitioner was French filmmaker and anthropologist Jean Rouch who collaborated on his films with sociologist Edgar Morin. In starting *cinéma vérité*, he was inspired by ethnographic film, such as that of Robert Flaherty, who was fascinated with foreign cultures, as well as by *kino-pravda*, developed by Dziga Vertov, who focused instead on taking a new look at the familiar. Another mode of observational documentary that was closely associated to *cinéma vérité* was direct cinema, which was developed and used around the same time by mostly Canadian, British, and American filmmakers, from Michel Brault to Robert Drew.

The ‘observational mode’ of documentary ‘stresses the nonintervention of the director’, and a surrender of ‘control’ over the subject matter.⁶² Specifically, and importantly, it focuses

61 Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington; Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 38.

62 Nichols, *Representing*, p. 38.

on ‘the act of filming real people in uncontrolled situations’.⁶³ It tends to use synchronous sound, long shots, and little editing. ‘In its purest form’ it does not use ‘voice-over commentary, music external to the observed scene, intertitles, reenactments, and even interviews’, which are techniques that other documentary modes do employ.⁶⁴ This is because where other, non-observational documentary modes may focus on driving an argument towards a ‘solution to a puzzle’, the observational mode is non-narrative and not didactic, and explicitly takes ‘paradigmatic form around the exhaustive depiction of the everyday’.⁶⁵ The camera’s presence ‘on the scene [...] testifies to its presence in the historical world’, and engages with what is ‘immediate, intimate, and personal’ in that world in ways that are similar to how someone would normally experience the everyday.⁶⁶ Essentially, the observational mode coincides with the notion of ‘showing’ the world ‘fortuitously’, rather than defining it or commenting on it.

Within observational documentary, direct cinema forks from *cinéma vérité* on the question of control. Direct cinema practitioners argue that the camera should be as objective as possible and should therefore avoid influencing the subjects the filmmaker sets out to film in any way. This is also called the ‘fly-on-the-wall’ approach. Arguably, the claimed objectivity of the camera is challenged by the subjectivity presumably involved in the filmmaker’s ‘selection’ and ‘arrangement’ of what to film.⁶⁷ Indeed, control that ‘would have been directed toward what occurs in front of the camera gets turned on those behind it’, as becoming a ‘fly on the wall’ requires much self-control on the part of the filmmaker.⁶⁸ Still, direct cinema prioritizes the directorial practice of being a silent, non-participatory observer, striving for invisibility.

63 Stephen Mamber, *Cinema verite in America: Studies in Uncontrolled Documentary* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: The MIT Press, 1974), p. 2.

64 Nichols, *Representing*, pp. 38-9.

65 Nichols, *Representing*, p. 39.

66 Nichols, *Representing*, p. 40.

67 Winston, p. 149.

68 Nichols, *Representing*, p. 14.

Cinéma vérité, on the other hand, is more lenient, and allows for the filmmaker's non-control not to be total. It acknowledges that the camera will inevitably have an effect on the subject. The aesthetic product of this difference is minimal and often the two genres get terminologically interchanged because the results can seem similar to an untrained eye. But whereas direct cinema is defined predominantly by its methodology, the methodology of *cinéma vérité*, although still predicated on the concept of non-control, is less strict and less definitive because it allows for interactivity between the filmmaker and the film. Indeed, *cinéma vérité* does not just have tenets from the observational mode of documentary, but also from what Nichols first called the 'interactive' mode and later updated to the 'participatory' mode of documentary.⁶⁹ Indeed, in the rebellious spirit of their *nouvelle vague* colleagues, *cinéma vérité* filmmakers liked the idea of a provocative role for the filmmaker.⁷⁰

The 'participatory' mode does not impinge on the 'observational' mode's reputation of achieving lifelikeness and authenticity. Indeed, early theoreticians and critics of *cinéma vérité* ascribed to the genre the unique power of giving viewers the 'sensation of life, of being present at a real event'.⁷¹ This is the quality ultimately pursued by New Wave filmmakers who were inspired by the genre. Arnheim's two orders of authenticity offer a lens through which we can think of the principles of non-control and control over *cinéma vérité* film, if we ascribe to the first, 'documentary' order of authenticity the 'observational' non-inferential mode of its workings, and to the second, 'aesthetic' order of authenticity its 'participatory' mode. Furthermore, to get a better sense of the visible impacts of these two genre-specific orders of authenticity on the films to be examined, we can think of the objects of this control or non-control as independent entities, through the terminological lens of Étienne Souriau (1953), which I will introduce here and continue to use in the case studies.

69 Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 2nd edn (Indianapolis; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), p. 184.

70 Misha Kavka, *Reality TV* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), p. 14.

71 Winston, p. 149.

In discussing the physical reality in front of the camera, Souriau differentiates between that which a filmmaker controls and that which he/she does not. He calls that which a filmmaker controls and actively stages for a film, the ‘profilmic’: ‘everything that really exists in the world [...] but that is especially destined for filmic use...’⁷² This includes everything that exists and happens on a film set for the premeditated purpose of being filmed, from the design, costumes, and lighting, to dialogue and *mise en scène*. In opposition to that, Souriau refers to that which the filmmaker does not control in front of the camera as the ‘afilmic’: everything that exists in the ‘usual world’, ‘independently from its rapport with the filmic art’, and that is not especially destined or created in order to be on screen, like, for example, rain or wind (as famously yearned for by D.W. Griffith).⁷³

As the name of the genre suggests, *cinéma vérité* is predicated on the promise of ‘truth’, and, in its credo, the afilmic is all but put on a pedestal in order to reach this truthfulness. Unlike classical fictional film, for example, which predominantly and almost exclusively captures profilmic reality, *cinéma vérité* strives expressly to capture more of afilmic than of profilmic reality, especially that which is populated by people. Nevertheless, as mentioned, *cinéma vérité* is more open than direct cinema towards capturing profilmic reality. In *cinéma vérité*, reality becomes profilmic as a result, predominantly, of being moulded by a director’s participation in what takes place in front of the camera.

To illustrate what the co-existence of the two orders of authenticity, of control and of non-control, and of profilmic and of afilmic reality looks like on screen, and to appreciate how it effects authenticity, let us consider the first *cinéma vérité* film, *Chronique d’un été* (1961) by Jean Rouch and sociologist Edgar Morin. The film, both genre-defining and self-aware, takes place during the summer of 1960 and its expressed goal is to investigate how the subjects of the film ‘*se débrouillent avec la vie*’. To carry out this investigation, Rouch and

⁷² Étienne Souriau, *L’Univers filmique* (Paris: Flammarion, 1953), p. 8.

⁷³ Souriau, p. 7. Albera also refers to Étienne Souriau’s filmic realities for his discussion on social *mise en scène*.

Morin ask their participants to converse on everyday life issues ranging from employment to happiness, and other areas that are typically considered by sociologists to be informative. Thus, they collect various ordinary folks' contrasting opinions on questions that concern the average person.

Coining the core concept of *cinéma vérité*, the first thing the narrator says, over footage of the Paris metro, is that the film was not 'played' by 'actors' but 'lived' by regular '*hommes et femmes*' – friends, colleagues, and acquaintances who agreed to '*une expérience nouvelle de cinéma vérité*'. His terminology reveals the film's pursuit of the first order of authenticity: indeed, he says the ideas expressed in the film are, for a large portion, those of the participants themselves. They are being themselves, is what the filmmakers seem to say. What they do on screen belongs, by extension, to afilmic reality: it is not 'acting' but 'living'.

Working from this basis, Rouch and Morin execute the 'participatory' mode of their film by profilmically influencing the conversation with provocative questions that would ensure that the topics they wanted to talk about would get addressed. Winston has compared this visible tactic to 'bullying' their subjects 'into conversation', emphasizing the forcefulness with which they impose themselves upon the conversation.⁷⁴ While they do not script the film, they actively try to steer dialogue.

Control is ceded again, however, as to how the subjects respond in these conversations. What they say, how they say it, whom they say it to, and any other details of the subjects' social performance are purposefully left afilmic. Their clothing, their hair, and their mood are all subject to their own choices and states of mind, as for example in the conversation with the filmmakers' primary subject, Marceline Loridan (Figure 1.2). Naturally, Loridan's behaviour may account for the presence of the camera and of her interlocutors, which are profilmic stimuli, but in the moment of filming, she determines how she occupies this moment in her own afilmic sense. The observational camera captures this stew of profilmic and afilmic

⁷⁴ Winston, p. 185.

reality in long shots and with direct sound, indexically faithful to the physical presence of the subjects.



Fig 1.2: Marceline Loridan, looking straight into the camera, with Rouch (left) and Morin (right)

This spontaneous behaviour is the final form of the physical reality that Rouch and Morin, as anthropologists, seek to capture – something which can only be discovered, not rehearsed or coerced. And yet, as Vsevolod Pudovkin wrote about those aspects of a film a director cannot always control, ‘the movements before the camera develop in accordance with their own laws’.⁷⁵ Indeed, in the case of *Chronique d’un été*, the laws that determine Loridan’s performance are those of social *mise en scène*. Rouch and Morin realized that they could influence this social *mise en scène* conversationally, by virtue of the ‘participatory’ dimension of *cinéma vérité*, to coax something that is in itself uncontrollable. Paradoxically, they thus stage spontaneity.

Staging spontaneity comes with a set of potential traps that could trouble the genre’s authentic effect. The participatory mode of the genre’s filmmaking process could be used to provoke and select behaviours that are more gregarious, flamboyant, and over-the-top than the subjects would normally have, to create a more extraordinary picture. This could make for

⁷⁵ V.I. Pudovkin, *Film Technique and Film Acting*, trans. by Ivor Montagu (New York: Lear Publishers, 1949), pp. 81-2.

potentially more entertaining viewing than ordinary behaviour does, and it could serve a self-promotional function for the filmmaker, who is, by virtue of having made the film, associated with the extraordinariness of his/her subjects. But this proneness to exaggeration, in its infancy at this stage, would only really find fruition years later in reality TV, a descendant of the genre, which concentrates on that instigatory dynamic between the camera and the subject. Nevertheless, by virtue of the film's design as a platform that forces subjects to account for themselves, the film can be thought of as an early form of reality TV.

Rouch and Morin are aware of this dynamic, but rather than leaning into it, they expose their participatory function in the film. They address their '*projet*' openly, bringing the discussion of the content of the film to a meta-cinematic level. In a sense, this allows them to be even more insistent on conversation topics, as they have already acknowledged their role. Their control over the film is itself treated afilmically because of the uncontrollable reactions their subjects can have to them on camera. In a way, by calling attention to that which they control, they highlight all the more that which they do not. The fact that the film seems to confess to its points of artificiality strengthens the viewer's potential recognition of its effect of authenticity.

What *Chronique d'un été* illustrates is that while authenticity remains intangible, balanced between its mediation and its source, the genre of *cinéma vérité* leads to a kind of authenticity that is specific in at least one way. Since the very distinct kind of aesthetic manipulation that *cinéma vérité* channels is interactive and participatory in kind, it follows that the profilmic object that this second order of authenticity acts upon is also of an interactive and social nature. Indeed, Rouch and Morin partook in both orders of authenticity to hone in, specifically, on their participants' ways of being interactive and social. The *cinéma vérité* feel, style, or effect, for which *cinéma vérité* is so loved, is, then, by virtue of the specific kind of documentary genre that it is, predicated on its mediation of an authenticity of

how people are social. Authentic sociality is *cinéma vérité*'s intended subject, and I offer it as the chief ingredient for what earns fictional films the characterization of having an 'air of *cinéma vérité*'.

The representation of authentic sociality is unique in a film historical sense too. Where human behaviour is something that cinema had, in most mainstream aesthetic movements, eras, and styles, sought to channel, stylize, and simplify rather than to capture directly in its natural chaotic state, *cinéma vérité* rediscovers and reclaims authentic behaviour not as something to be transformed and translated, but as an appealing aesthetic expression that deserves to be centre stage. It promotes the photogenicity of social performance and reframes ordinariness and everydayness as things that are rich in intrigues, drama, and meaning that should be savoured rather than ironed out. Indeed, in some cases there is even a double authenticity at play: as mentioned earlier, social performances themselves are expressions of a person's shades of internal authenticity. Thus, it is a genre in which social performativity reverberates on its own in a self-sufficient, familiar way. The reduced importance of narrative causality, both in *cinéma vérité*, as well as, to a lesser degree, in films of a *vérité* aesthetic, allows social performances to remain opaque, like masks for the inherent stew of people's individual complexity, which, in turn, our Goffmanian social gazes are drawn to contemplate and decipher.

New Wave *Vérité* Aesthetics

The way New Wave filmmakers sought to elicit the *cinéma vérité* feel, style, or effect, can be understood in several contexts. Indeed, *cinéma vérité* was especially well received by a branch of New Wave filmmakers in the 1960s that Geoffrey Nowell-Smith calls the 'poor

cinemas', as it presented a kind of mandate for a new cinematic naturalist aesthetic that was affordable since it minimized the need for a large crew or a studio.⁷⁶ Yet, their low-budget circumstances, although influential, do not fully explain their preference for the genre. *Cinéma vérité* also gave cinematic expression to the increasingly popular field of sociology, which arose in response to a need to examine everydayness against the backdrop of a drastically changing society in the 1960s. Thus, it was a genre that effected relevance, which was important to New Wave filmmakers. But independently from its accessibility and its contemporary savvy, filmmakers were also attracted to *cinéma vérité*'s effect of authenticity for its perceived ethical implications.

Authenticity mattered to New Wave filmmakers because of their counter-cultural status. Thomas Fillitz and Jamie Saris posit that 'counter-, or alternative movements' will pursue new kinds of authenticity in reaction to the 'experience of an unsatisfactory cultural situation' and to the 'inappropriate character of the present dominant norms and values of social life'.⁷⁷ As will be discussed in the case study chapters, the French pursued *vérité* aesthetics out of an interest in certain social niches, whereas the Czechoslovak films have a more political emphasis. Both exhausted by their respective filmmaking establishments – the *tradition de qualité* of 1950s France and the Soviet doctrine of socialist realism in Czechoslovakia – and by their, according to these filmmakers, stale and false representations of life, French and Czechoslovak New Wave filmmakers were inspired by *cinéma vérité* for its ability to show what a social experience of life really looked like.

As the new kids on the block, the New Waves embraced the rise of a genre that spoke to their concerns and that the established film industry did not welcome because it bypassed the need for so many of its branches.⁷⁸ The genre provided a means to satisfy society's post-

⁷⁶ Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, *Making Waves: New cinemas of the 1960s* (New York; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p. 3.

⁷⁷ Thomas Fillitz and A. Jamie Saris, *Debating Authenticity: Concepts of Modernity in Anthropological Perspective* (New York; Oxford: Bergahn Books, 2013), p. 16.

⁷⁸ Comolli, p. 52.

war longing for self-examination through self-observation. But bringing about new authenticity – a revived, reclaimed, updated authenticity – implied, for them, not just a change of aesthetics, but a breakdown, an overhaul, and a reboot of the act of filmmaking as a whole.

Drawing inspiration from *cinéma vérité* to create a *vérité* aesthetic translates into various forms of experimentation. *Cinéma vérité*'s relative flexibility and accessibility facilitate its adaptability into fictional film. Not only is *cinéma vérité* a deviation from the strict rules of observational documentary by allowing for the participatory mode, and thus challenges purism itself, but it also lends itself to further customization by others. This hybrid nature would entail a new fashion of sorts, which, while perhaps apparent to practitioners, would not be addressed critically as a movement until Jean-Louis Comolli referred to it as '*une certaine tendance du cinéma moderne [...] de fiction*' in a 1969 article dedicated entirely to the subject of what he calls direct cinema's '*jeu d'échange*' with fictional film.⁷⁹

One of the trends that will become apparent in the case studies is that afilmic reality – in various shapes and sizes – becomes more prominent in the filmmaking process than it was before. But, on the other hand, as fictions, the films abstract themselves from the documentary roots of the genre by severing the historical link between subjects and their representation on screen. Indeed, while *Chronique d'un été* is about the actual lives of real people, the films in the corpus portray fictional people, or at least, real people engaging in fictional events. Nonetheless, by portraying characters whose actions are primarily contextualized by their social environments, these films make visible real contemporary forms of sociality, and thus still carry out a small but not meaningless historical function.

I refer to the fruits of this fusion as the '*vérité* aesthetic' precisely because the amalgam of *cinéma vérité* and fictional film varied drastically and was materialized in such different ways, as the case studies will bring to light. Indeed, the *vérité* aesthetic can emulate *cinéma vérité*'s aesthetic of authenticity to different degrees, without necessarily being accomplished

⁷⁹ Comolli, p. 49.

using the exact same methods, let alone with methods that adhere to *cinéma vérité* principles. In fact, some of the films in the corpus are compared to *cinéma vérité* without having borrowed from its methodology at all, but are focused, rather, on its conceptual ambitions. The Goffmanian approach serves to gauge the social range of meaning in the films, and in doing so, the social gaze will engage, in the case studies, with each film's different *vérité* aesthetic, which becomes an important variable in the film corpus's varying representations of social performance.

1.4. Towards Analysis

The following case study chapters – chapters two, three, and four – will be devoted to the analysis of the film corpus's six New Wave films for their representations of social performance.

The analyses are driven by interpretation. John Corner says that since *cinéma vérité* is 'generally disinclined to "tell" the viewer much directly [...] a high level of interpretative work' is required from the viewer 'in converting the particularity of what is seen and heard into significance'.⁸⁰ In each case study, I will start by assessing how they situate social reality. I will especially seek out instances of sociality and interactivity and consider how to understand the social performances that arise in them. Borrowing William Rothman's challenge of 'transcribing *cinéma vérité* film' into a screenplay after the fact, the analyses will seek to establish the micro-stories the films' social dynamics tell.⁸¹ To do this, I will employ a Goffmanian approach. Thus, attention will be paid to the moments' social *mises en scène* and social frameworks, and to the behaviours, guided doings, and faux pas that they inspire the characters to perform, with the aim of painting a more precise picture of their social experience.

The social gaze is also a manner of engaging with the *vérité* aesthetic, and is drawn by each film's aesthetics in different ways. My own methodology therefore pays attention to the methodology of the films. In Klevan's excellent book, *Disclosure of the Everyday: Undramatic Achievement in Narrative Film* (2000), he analyzes films of various backgrounds and movements that 'acknowledge the everyday'.⁸² Because Klevan is interested 'to pursue those aspects of the films' achievements which can *only* be revealed by the films', he

⁸⁰ Corner, *Record*, p. 28.

⁸¹ Rothman, pp. 296-7.

⁸² Klevan, p. 30.

examines everydayness without considering ‘aspects of historical context or biographical and production detail’.⁸³ In contrast, my thesis is interested not just in everydayness as an aesthetic entity, but as the expressed chosen target for representation by a specific branch of New Wave cinema. Therefore, the analyses in this thesis will take an interest in both the historical contexts and the production techniques of the films.

On an organizational note, the six case studies are assorted into three chapters that are categorized according to linguistic, thematic, and internally chronological organizing principles. Each of the three chapters focuses on two films of the same language that showcase a similar specific facet of socially performed life that especially concerned thinkers and artists at the time. Thus, the first case study chapter, chapter two, examines sociality as it pertains to young adults in two French New Wave films. Chapter three will examine the social performance resulting from incongruous social realities in two Czechoslovak New Wave films. Finally, chapter four looks at Bourdieusian, middle class-conscious social performance, or, the social performance of *savoir-vivre*. Over the course of the thesis, these three facets of social life form a kind of arc of maturity, from rough to polished, and it will become apparent that this arc can also be applied to the respective *vérité* aesthetics used to depict this.

Finally, observational cinematography rejects the notion that only the filmmaker ‘really knows for sure’ what it is that the film shows.⁸⁴ It is in this spirit that I will now carry out a close reading of especially interactive parts of the films, through the lens of the Goffmanian social gaze with which I initially noticed the originality of these particular New Wave films, and with a heightened awareness of their pursuits of authenticity.

⁸³ Klevan, p. 3 (emphasis in the original).

⁸⁴ Colin Young, ‘Observational Cinema’, in *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, ed. by Paul Hockings (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2009), pp. 99-114 (p. 102).

2

Youth in Jacques Rozier's *Adieu Philippine* (1962) and Jean-Luc Godard's *Masculin Féminin* (1966)

Difficile, parfois, de séparer la jeunesse de sa représentation au cinéma. Ce qui souligne les circulations incessantes entre un état social et un fait cinématographique: la nouvelle vague aime brouiller les pistes.

- Antoine de Baecque.⁸⁵

2.1. Introduction

This chapter initiates my application of the Goffmanian approach to the analysis of the representation of the social performance of youth in Jacques Rozier's *Adieu Philippine* (1962) and Jean-Luc Godard's *Masculin Féminin* (1966). Godard's work is widely recognized as part of the broad New Wave canon. *Adieu Philippine*, on the other hand, is a lesser seen and lesser known early French New Wave film, produced, with difficulty, between 1960 and 1962. At the time of its release at the 1962 Cannes film festival, it was lauded by the *Cahiers du cinéma* as the quintessential New Wave movie for the distance it put between itself and the dismissed *tradition de qualité*, and was even chosen to grace the cover of their special *nouvelle vague* edition (Figure 2.1).⁸⁶ Godard, speaking about the film at the festival, compares Rozier to 'poets' Flaherty and Rouch.⁸⁷ So, while *Adieu Philippine* was filmed

⁸⁵ Antoine de Baecque, *La Nouvelle Vague: Portrait d'une Jeunesse* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009), p. 42.

⁸⁶ 'Numéro spécial', *Cahiers du cinéma*, December 1962, no. 138.

⁸⁷ Speech transcribed in Albert Cervoni, 'Enfin "Adieu Philippine"', *L'Humanité*, 31 October 1980.

before the actual emergence of *cinéma vérité* in 1961, by the time it premiered, it was received as part of the *cinéma vérité* lineage, making it an example of a film that exemplifies the wider zeitgeist, and thus, an interesting case to include in the corpus of this thesis.

Both films focus on contemporary life for the youth – a mysterious demographic that fuelled the *nouvelle vague*. *Adieu Philippine* looks at a group of late teenagers and young adults who get embroiled in a love triangle while they are confronted with the challenges of living in Paris during the emergence of consumer society and in the final years of the Algerian War of Independence, in 1960. *Masculin Féminin*, also set in Paris, portrays young adults who, at their turn, grew up with consumer society and experience the build-up of the events of 1968 against the backdrop of the polarizing presidential elections between Charles de Gaulle and socialist candidate François Mitterrand, in the winter of 1965.



Fig 2.1: A promotional photograph of *Adieu Philippine* on the cover of this *Numéro Spécial*

The *nouvelle vague* was not just interested in youth because of the young age of the filmmakers involved at the time, *jeunes régisseurs* who rebelled against an outdated cinema

helmed by people who were often of an older generation, or indeed a *cinéma de papa*, as it was called. The youth were also a point of interest because they were a ‘new’ or an ‘unrecognized actor’ in French economic, cultural, and political society.⁸⁸ To cater to this generation, and to bid for their disposable income, new kinds of media sprung up, including radio, press, and, famously, *yé-yé* pop music, inspired by African-American jazz music and British pop, which transformed into its own French pop creation and export that seemed to spawn a new starlet every week.

The young were also catered to by cinema. Speaking of the special meaning of the *nouvelle vague* to the youth, Antoine de Baecque writes that ‘*une génération a voulu s’y voir, souvent s’y reconnaître, parfois s’y opposer*’.⁸⁹ Their films reflected the youth’s aspirations and comings of age, their novel experiences and habits, their weaknesses and indulgences, and their fresh influence on the constitution of a modernizing society, not least by means of capturing their modern, hip forms of sociality.

Rozier and Godard were both especially interested in capturing how young people socialized: from ‘*ses habitudes, ses manières de parler*’, to their sex-lives.⁹⁰ Rozier was drawn to the young for their slang as well as for the way their world views contrasted with those of their parents. Godard was fascinated with the youth’s interaction with society, going to the clubs, cinemas, and cafés that they liked to hang out in. To represent youthful sociality, the sexual revolution, and youth culture cliques in direct and plausible ways, Rozier and Godard were both inspired by the sociological and anthropological underpinnings of observational cinematography and documentary.

Indeed, the boom in youngsters and the need to understand the new dynamics that they contributed to an emerging consumer society came hand in hand with the rise of the discipline of sociology. Bachelor and doctorate degrees in sociology were established in 1958, followed

⁸⁸ Pascal Ory, *L’Aventure culturelle française 1945-1989* (Paris: Flammarion, 1989), p. 155.

⁸⁹ Baecque, *Nouvelle*, p. 16.

⁹⁰ Baecque, *Nouvelle*, p. 16.

in 1960 by the academic journal *Revue française de sociologie*.⁹¹ ‘Everyday life’ was elevated to ‘the status of a theoretical concept’ because of the ‘upheaval in social relations’ that was caused by the sudden influence of a new, growing consumerism on ‘lived, daily’ rhythms.⁹²

But, as historian Pascal Ory argues, the real social impact of the spread of social sciences was cultural rather than academic. Indeed, sociology made a mark on artistic currents through ‘cultural agents’ who used sociological ‘concepts, forms, or justifications’ in their creative work.⁹³ An example is the work I have already studied briefly, of people like Edgar Morin and Jean Rouch, filmmakers with anthropological and sociological backgrounds who applied their technical knowledge to the making of the genre-defining *Chronique d’un été*, which impacted cinema around the world.

Out of all the films examined in this thesis, *Adieu Philippine* and *Masculin Féminin* are the most experimental, seemingly amateurist, and unconventional. They most openly espouse the anthropological and sociological functions the medium of film can have, which simultaneously binds them to less cohesive, heterogeneous, and sometimes clashing aesthetics. They capture moments of ordinary sociality with sociologically-minded *vérité* aesthetics. Taking a social gaze on these films therefore also entails an engagement with their sociological intentionality.

Although they do so to different degrees of explicitness, Rozier and Godard more or less treat their young characters like subjects of a study and their films as historical artifacts. The characters’ socio-cultural and political backgrounds are foregrounded, and this enriches their portrayal with a kind of statistical detail that lends gravitas to the films as factually minded, even if they are fictional. Indeed, while Rozier and Godard are drawn to the anthropological and sociological techniques of observational documentary, such as using

91 Ory, p. 166.

92 Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (Cambridge, MA.: The MIT Press, 1995), pp. 5-6.

93 Ory, p. 167.

handheld cameras, documenting real places of work and of vacation, or using interviews conducted from behind the camera, they absorb these techniques experimentally, romanticizing, metaphorizing, and exaggerating their effect away from the original purpose of these methods. Godard, who explicitly describes *Masculin Féminin* as a reception of *Chronique d'un été*, and promotes it in publicity documents as the 'winter' sequel of the first *cinéma vérité* film, uses these methods in a way that complicates *cinéma vérité*-like authenticity with a kind of duplicity.⁹⁴

I said in the theory chapter that films of a *vérité* aesthetic share the ambition to capture something historically truthful about society. In the case of *Adieu Philippine* and *Masculin Féminin*, perhaps this can be restated more specifically as the enterprise of showing one part of society, the older generation, something truthful about another part of society, the younger generation – a social reality that the older generation does not fully grasp.



Fig 2.2: Like a social report

94 'Dossier Presse ITV', provided by Argos Films [accessed May 2016].

As the slogan used on the poster of *Masculin Féminin* makes explicit (Figure 2.2) for example, Godard framed the film as delivering a report on ‘*le sexe et la jeunesse de la France d’aujourd’hui*.’ In that sense, the *vérité* aesthetics in these films can be thought of, to different extents, as having an informative function.

Pragmatically, Rozier and Godard offer the viewer a way into these social worlds by drawing from their personal relationships with non-professional and untrained actors who symbolize very niche youth cultures. The *vérité* aesthetic takes on the function of sociologically authenticating the fruits of this access. Whether deliberately or not, Rozier and Godard are positioned as cultural observers of social trends, and as directors whose films offer a kind of personal, exclusive, inside perspective on phenomena pertaining to the youth that outsiders had either misunderstood or never noticed. To meet these aims, these films, most poignantly of all the films studied in this thesis, embrace the technique of telling actors to play themselves – to improvise. In effect, they represent the fictional characters thus that a viewer is led to pose the question, at some point, whether the film is not actually a reportage on real individuals. But the way observational cinematography and improvisation are used to represent social performance ultimately differs wildly in each film, as we will see by taking a Goffmanian approach to understanding the social dynamics portrayed in them.

The plot of *Adieu Philippine* is about the blossoming of a love triangle around a protagonist who is on a journey from Paris to military service in Algeria via the paradisiacal island of Corsica. His story takes place against the backdrops of both modernization and decolonization. It is the least stylistically coherent film of the corpus, which might explain why it largely disappeared from public conscience since its release. Yet, within its avant-garde aesthetic tendencies, it offers striking moments of clarity, lucidity, and sincerity in its representation of instances of inter- and intra-generational sociality.

Inspired by turmoil in his personal life, as well as by the divisive political atmosphere of 1965 France, Godard portrays young Parisian love and sexuality between a socialist and a rising *yé-yé* pop star in *Masculin Féminin*. Godard's experimentation with sociological tools produces friction with his subjects, which creates for unique moments of sociality that seem self-explanatory on the surface, but that reveal a complicated, twisted, and surprising underbelly.

2.2. Coming of Age in *Adieu Philippine*

The Importance of Looking Cool

‘Deux, un-deux-trois!’: thus opens the film *Adieu Philippine*, with the voice of a musician rapidly counting down to a beat and kicking off a catchy, jazzy, upbeat song. At exactly the same time, the film opens on the first shot of the back of a camera operator as he himself looks through a large studio camera, numbered 4 (Figure 2.3).



Fig 2.3: The opening shot: another camera

The shot immediately starts to pan to the left to reveal what camera 4 is pointed at: a drumset, musicians, famous clarinetist Maxim Saury, a piano, and in the background, the acoustic foam walls of the studio in which the shoot takes place (Figure 2.4). Finishing its pan, the shot also reveals cameras numbered 3 and 2 pointed at the musical performance, and the crews of men standing around them, watching the show (Figure 2.5). The viewer becomes aware of the dual objects of the scene’s attention layered around each other: the musical show at the centre, and the TV crew doing their jobs around it.

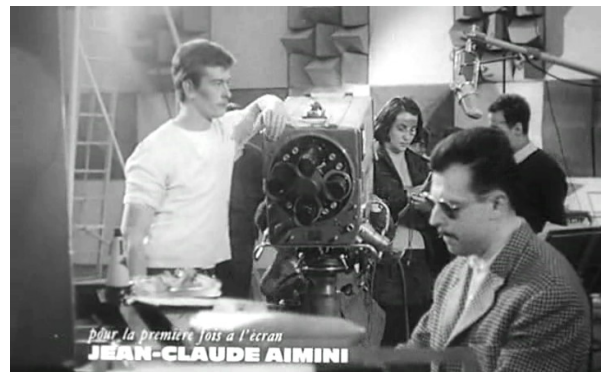


Fig 2.4: The crew and cameras 2 and 3



Fig 2.5: Maxim Saury facing camera 4

Next, a wide shot shows off the magnitude of this fancy, modern sound studio. Still not focusing on characters, this documentary-like introduction reveals Rozier as a media buff, more interested in the process of this live TV recording than in the musicians, although the music lends this introductory scene a pleasant excitement. Indeed, the following medium close-up shots focus on equipment: a camera, this time seen from the front as it rotates lenses, and a monitor. Rather than framing the musical show, as one would expect, the monitor frames a young man from the crew, leaning against a camera, waiting for orders (Figure 2.6).

Fig 2.6: *Aimini 'à l'écran' de télévision*Fig 2.7: *Aimini 'à l'écran' de cinéma*

Bypassing the intermediate of the monitor, the film now cuts to a nearly identical direct shot of this same young man, still leaning against a camera (Figure 2.7). The film thus replaces its focus on equipment with a new focus on this young man's experience. In the superposition of these two nearly identical shots, it is as if the film visibly chooses its mode of expression, sliding from documentary into fiction.

The young man is, in fact, the protagonist: Michel. Still anonymous to the viewer at this point, he can be seen somewhat obliviously hovering around the camera, watching where the operator moves, kicking cables, wearing a glove on one hand while nonchalantly smoking a cigarette with the other. Then, in a closer shot and in the first instance of dialogue, Michel's boss, the camera operator, instructs him to get him a pair of headphones that work, impatiently yanking out the current broken pair from the back of the camera. In response, Michel tells him brazenly to calm down, '*t'affole pas... y a pas le feu!*' [sic] to which the camera operator just tells him to hurry, '*allez, grouille-toi!*' as if accustomed to Michel's insolent behaviour.

Following orders, Michel leaves the studio to go on an errand for new headphones. The fact that Michel is a significant character is confirmed by the fact that the camera follows him out, leaving behind the studio. On his way out of the studio to the lounge, Michel playfully taps a colleague on the head to mess up his finely gelled hair, who mock-kicks him in the leg to retaliate. Through these two consecutive moments of disorderly behaviour, Rozier establishes Michel's playful self-confidence as an important facet of his personality, before kick-starting the plot.

Out he walks into the lounge to get to the front door, followed by the handheld camera, swagger in his stride, a cigarette poking out of his lips, sleeves rolled up, relaxed, young, and unwearied as he swooshes right past some important-looking men in suits, who occupy the lounge chairs looking like they own the place (Figure 2.8). The moment of Michel walking from one side of the lounge to the other is very short, and nearly unremarkable. But the image is aesthetically pleasing and conveys a strong impression of the character. If we are not to discard this moment as frivolous because it bears little narrative purpose, how can we think of the aesthetic significance of Michel's general way of being in this scene? Why does it impress, and how does it fall in place in the larger context of the film?



Fig 2.8: Michel has swagger

Even when the viewer can only see Michel's back in this instance, the moment feels charged with meaning. While Rozier begins to establish Michel's personality in the studio, there is an added layer to Michel's expressed confidence in this moment that is not necessarily visible through dialogue or plot, but which comes into view through the social context of the story. I argue that it is interesting to take a Goffmanian approach in a moment like this, by considering the social dynamics of this otherwise dull moment, to see what the shot of a young man simply getting from one place to the next may be conveying about what is at stake for him socially. In taking a Goffmanian approach, I will be engaging with the film's *vérité* aesthetics to assess what particularly achieves in drawing the social gaze.

One uninterrupted handheld shot films Michel as he exits the building, showing roughly what he sees, discovering the state of the lounge with him. The natural light that floods the lounge makes it look striking, and accentuates Michel's silhouette and body language. He has a model-esque ability to make his social performative body look good. As we saw in his interactions with his boss and his colleague, he has an awareness of the extent of the bad behaviour he can get away with. Michel overwhelms the frame with a sense of cool.

While Michel is not strictly interacting in this moment, he is nonetheless involved in a Goffmanian social situation by virtue of the fact that his behaviour is visible to, and meant for,

other people. Michel's body language, engaged in the simple act of walking, reveals a high degree of expressiveness: his sense of cool is not just for himself, it is also for those watching. Walking from the studio through the lounge therefore adds to the existing purpose of getting headphones the purpose of showing off. Michel is playing up the social role of the nifty TV set technician, and the moment constitutes an early instance of Rozierian comedy in the film, as Rozier plays off Michel's performance of cool against the underwhelming errand of collecting new headphones, which accentuates Michel's performativity in this moment even more.

Just outside the lounge's glass walls, there is a crowd of young women eager to see what is happening inside. They are Michel's primary intended social spectators. The men in suits sitting in the lounge, right by the glass for everyone to see, are also, no doubt, opulently performing their exaggerated lounge poses for the social gazes of these women (Figure 2.9). Although Michel does not directly interact with these men, they form unknowing participants to this wider, non-verbal social framework. They serve as a point of contrast to him. He seems emboldened by them sitting away from the action. His masculinity is materialized by his hands-on responsibilities on the set, signified by his technician's glove, his rolled up sleeves, the headphones he is carrying, and his obvious sense of purpose in contrast to their staticness. When Michel finally reaches the front door, he just asks the ladies politely if they will please let him through, thus subtly involving them into his social framework, setting the stage for their eventual meet-cute later, on his way back in (Figure 2.10).

Michel's coolness is all the more striking because Rozier succeeds in producing an effect of authenticity. Michel is not cool in a superheroic way, but in an ordinary kind of way. Indeed, as one critic wrote of the characters in the film, 'these young people pass right next to you every day in the metro and the street'.⁹⁵ Rozier's *vérité* aesthetic is heavily balanced towards the first order of authenticity, through his tendency towards observational

⁹⁵ 'Adieu Philippine', *Le Film français*, 1009, October 4 1963, p. 13.

documentary and a preservation of afilmic reality. Indeed, in a first instance, the locations in the film, including the occasion of this shoot, were genuine. Jean-Christophe Averty was really directing episode 26 of his live music TV show ‘ZZ memories’ starring Maxim Saury, and allowed Rozier to use it as his backdrop. In fact, to Rozier’s self-admitted surprise, *Adieu Philippe* represents a rare piece of historical documentation of the live TV recording practices of that period that he thought were so representative of a changing society at the time.⁹⁶



Fig 2.9: Catwalk



Fig 2.10: Juliette and Liliane’s gaze on Michel

As Sébastien Bénédict argues, it was a known New Wave practice to leave studios to go shoot films on the street, but Rozier added a twist to this by using studios as ‘natural décor’ instead.⁹⁷ The vast majority of the crew and musicians we see on the shoot were already afilmically part of its production, independently from Rozier’s own project within it. Jean-Claude Aimini, the non-actor playing Michel, was of course planted there by Rozier as a fictional character. However, Rozier does not transform him into a totally profilmic character whose actions are determined by Rozier – rather, Michel’s actions are partially, if not mostly, staged as a result of the interplay between the actor, Aimini, and the social framework of the afilmic studio. Michel’s way of fitting in leads the viewer at least to weigh the question

⁹⁶ Jacques Rozier, ‘Inventaire I’, in *Jacques Rozier: Le Funambule*, ed. by Emmanuel Burdeau (Paris: Cahiers du Cinema: Centre Pompidou, 2001), pp. 22-50 (p. 29).

⁹⁷ Sébastien Bénédict, ‘Détruire, disent-elles’, in *Jacques Rozier: Le Funambule*, ed. by Emmanuel Burdeau (Paris: Cahiers du Cinema: Centre Pompidou, 2001), pp. 82-86 (p. 83).

whether Michel is perhaps really employed in this studio, which draws the social gaze in even more on him as a social being, in search for clarification.

Scripting most of the film in indirect speech, Rozier encouraged his cast to improvise dialogue and to play the fictional characters as themselves. In addition to that, Rozier wanted ‘actor[s] whose language would evoke a whole world’.⁹⁸ Aimini was specifically cast from a specific social niche which Rozier calls the ‘*titi parisien*’ – a notorious social type that has historically been the subject of literary portrayal by Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas.⁹⁹ This type is defined in a large context by its Parisian working class origin, but, more evocatively, by its wit and its cocky proneness to talk back.

Being of this background, Aimini plays Michel as an authentic socio-cultural type, imbuing him both with pride and a style of expression. His slang, which the actor must be a genuinely regular user of in order for it to be pronounced authentically, and of which we will see more in the film, is like an identifying emblem of that social niche in reality. As Michel navigates the studio, the lounge, the sidewalk, and later, the place where he collects headphones – various Goffmanian social stages –, his improvised performance reveals the different facets of the actor’s *titi*-ness. Michel’s social performance is thus rooted in a real social micro-world and youth culture, which produces a socially specific effect of authenticity and helps to anchor the film in the historical world of 1960 France.

For example, the socio-economic implications of Michel’s use of slang add depth to the social dynamic between him and the men in suits, by implicitly raising possible stakes and pressures that might make him socially behave in such rebellious, defiant, or insubordinate ways towards people of another standing. His defiance and coolness are a source of power. The men in suits will never be seen in the film again, and thus their function on the social

⁹⁸ Ian A. Cameron and Mark Shivas, 'Interviews: Richard Leacock, Albert and David Maysles, William Klein, Jean Rouch, Jacques Rozier', *Movie*, 8 (1963), pp. 23-6 (p. 23).

⁹⁹ Rozier, p. 33.

stage of the lounge can exclusively be appreciated as contributing to the social *mise en scène* that produces this particular impression of Michel as a social being.

Michel's encounter with the girls by the door kick-starts the film's larger plot, as these will be the two girls he falls in love with to form a love triangle. Yet, with the very next scene, it is as if Rozier still insists on the authenticity of the circumstances. It serves partly to demonstrate that Rozier does not have the final say on the events taking place in front of the camera. Just after Michel walks out through the door past the girls, the next shot sees him entering the broadcast truck parked in front of the entrance, where he presumably comes to collect the headphones. Michel leans against the door of the truck which is equipped with multiple monitors watched over diligently by a stressed TV show director, the renowned Averty himself, and his assistant. Averty is shouting orders through a microphone to the camera operators in the studio. As he does this, he turns around and impatiently barks '*argh, bougez pas derrière moi!*' at the people behind him in the truck. As he says this, turning his head back for a split second, Averty nearly looks straight into the camera (Figure 2.11).



Fig 2.11: Averty demands order from everyone, both in front of and behind Rozier's camera.

This is because Rozier is the recipient of this command. Indeed, Averty is literally directing Rozier's minimal film crew, who came to capture this moment in live TV recording, but who are distracting Averty in the process. The moment effects authenticity not just

because of Averty nearly breaking the fourth wall, but because it springs from its live nature – it is captured on the fly. It demonstrates Rozier's hierarchy of action: afilmic reality is allowed to dominate Rozier's profilmic shoot. By including this shot, Rozier emphasizes their fluid compatibility. Drawing attention to the camera only strengthens the notion that the world he presents in his film has authenticity of a documentary order.

Rozier also partakes in the second order of authenticity. Michel's presence, as the only fictional character on the scene, serves as a vessel between afilmic reality and Rozier's narrative. Indeed, it is through Michel in the foreground, literally over his shoulder, that we experience the afilmic realities in the background (Figure 2.12).



Fig 2.12: Looking at social reality with and through Michel

He is present and acknowledged by the people in the truck. But he is also moderating his movement for the camera, as he stands just where he needs to for the shot to compose the image in the layered way just described. Michel is situated both as a buffer between reality and Rozier's film crew, as well as an artery for the viewer's social gaze on his experience of the various social environments that his place of work produces. Sociality becomes the locus for this merger of afilmic and profilmic reality, as performance makes it possible for Aimini to engage with reality as well as with fiction. The *vérité* aesthetic of *Adieu Philippine* has the

particular effect of situating these characters as interfaces that reflect something of society to viewers, while also reflecting humanity back into the society surrounding them.

Even if ‘Michel’ is a fictional invention that gives Rozier the opportunity to convey what life is like for someone who happens to experience a budding career as a camera assistant in 1960 France, Rozier ensures that it is a plausible representation of that experience by way of casting Aimini, and by asking him to socially engage with his afilmic environment as he would in his own life. Ultimately, by fictionalizing Michel’s participation as having the job of ‘cableman’ in that world, Rozier makes that world more personable and accessible to the viewer than a documentary about TV recording practices could have done.

Taking a Goffmanian approach to this introductory scene demonstrates that what looks superficially like a rapid sequence of expository shots presenting Michel’s working environment is actually rich in information about what this environment is like socially, and about Michel as a social being. Looking at social performance with this approach provides another perspective for understanding ‘what is going on’, and what might be motivating the characters to behave the way they do, even, and especially, in moments where nothing much of a narrative quality seems to happen. Taking a social gaze to interpret *Adieu Philippine*, as illustrated in this opening moment that reveals Michel’s brazen coolness, can move a viewer to be endeared by the youth. It allows a viewer to notice that the banality of their everydayness camouflages the microscopic self-assertion they adopt towards it.

Generational Theatrics

Rozier’s romanticizing representation of the youth reflects his taking a side. I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter that Rozier and Godard use a *vérité* aesthetic to present what

they deem to be a more accurate portrayal of the youth to the world. The fact that Rozier chooses to portray them favourably is linked to his overall view and observations on the state of affairs at the time. Many voices exclaimed the youth's ways of life as problematic. But cultural, artistic, and sociological agents, including Rozier, were enchanted by their ways, and wished to understand them.

While Michel is charming, energetic, and happy-go-lucky, this is counterbalanced by his tragic fate. The girls he meets by the studio entrance are best friends Liliane (played by Yveline Céry) and Juliette (played by Stefania Sabatini, voiced by Annie Markhan). They will all go on dates together in a café and to the aerodrome, where Michel reveals to them that he doesn't have much time to spend with them, without explaining why. Then, when Juliette is jokingly reading his palm to predict his fate and says, '*vous ferez bientôt un grand voyage*', looking at his hand, Michel first responds, '*où ça?*' before revealing that '*bien sûr, je pars dans deux mois au service*'.

As a French citizen of the male gender, he will be conscripted to go to war. Which war? Michel himself never says so explicitly because censorship law at the time of production prohibited Rozier's characters from referring to it directly, but the film makes it clear in the very last title card before the start of the film, which reads '*1960 – sixième année de guerre en Algérie*'. Indeed, between 1954 and 1962, after which *Adieu Philippine* was finally released, French cinema was subject to tight control.¹⁰⁰ Films that alluded to Algeria were either banned, restricted to viewers over eighteen, or recut with sensitive scenes removed. One of these films' perceived threats was the glorification of 'military insubordination'. Thus, *Adieu Philippine* itself never directly refers to the 'war' or to 'Algeria', while nevertheless alluding to it with silence. Thus, the ferry carrying Michel leaving the Corsican harbour of Calvi, in the final frame of the film, layered over with the '*fin*' title card, doubles

100 Antoine de Baecque, *Camera Historica: the Century in Cinema*, trans. by Ninon Vinsonneau and Jonathan Magidoff (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012; originally publ. as *L'Histoire-caméra*, Paris: Editions Gallimard, 2009), pp. 141-142.

metaphorically as the potential ‘end’ of his life, echoed by the ‘*adieu*’ of the film title (Figure 2.13).



Fig. 2.13: ‘*Fin*’ and ‘*Adieu*’

Part of the misunderstanding suffered by the young, then, lies in the fact that the criticism they receive seems to ignore the fact that they are being sent to war. Geneviève Sellier argues that Rozier’s invocation of the Algerian War does not carry political resonance as much as it is ‘implemented as a decisive means of distinguishing male from female’.¹⁰¹ Indeed, Rozier, although inspired by Italian neorealism, does not adopt their political tone and does not turn *Adieu Philippine* into a thesis film about the war. But while the drastic contrast between Michel’s fate and that of the girls does highlight gender differences, an additional way to consider Rozier’s reference of the Algerian War is as differentiating between young men and old men, or more generally, between the young and the old. Indeed, Michel is caught in a system where he and his mates need to risk their lives in ‘*la “sale guerre” des adultes, à leur demande, et sous leurs ordres*’.¹⁰² As the opening scene of the film already hinted at, there is a certain amount of mild but consistent friction between Michel and his superiors.

Just because Liliane and Juliette are not conscripted does not mean they are immune to the generational clash. Indeed, their parents resist their social lives, older married men flirt

¹⁰¹ Geneviève Sellier, ‘Women in the *Nouvelle Vague*: The Lost Continent?’ in *Reclaiming the Archive: Feminism and Film History*, ed. by Vicki Callahan (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), pp. 176-192 (p. 185).

¹⁰² Baecque, *Nouvelle*, p. 37.

with them and desire them without really caring about them, employers do not offer them viable opportunities, the establishment looks down at their manner of conceiving of their sexuality, and their country, France, takes their handsome young lovers away from them, shipping them overseas to potentially never return. And unlike the older generation, Liliane and Juliette care about Michel's fate, as they loyally, albeit clumsily, try to figure out a way to get him out of his military duty. The widespread dynamic of generational clashes seems to be one of the main observations of *Adieu Philippine* about society in general.

In thinking about making this film about a young conscript, Rozier said: '*Ce qui me frappait, c'était la ligne de séparation existant alors entre ceux qui avaient vingt ans, concernés par la guerre, et le reste de la population française qui semblait ne pas trop s'en soucier*'.¹⁰³ Rozier conveys this clash especially poignantly over a family meal in Michel's parents' dining room. The full resonance of the scene becomes apparent especially if we take a Goffmanian approach to understanding what drives each of the diners' social behaviours. This approach will help us to appreciate, in dramatic terms, the intensity that is so stereotypical of family meals.

The scene takes place soon after the aerodrome, just after Michel and his friends from work test-drive a second-hand Renault Frégate which they plan to purchase as a group to help them seduce girls. The car can be seen as an emblem of France's growing consumer society. With his boys, Michel is obviously at ease: their urban slang is the linguistic currency of their communication. Their manner of interacting is so personal to them, that it is almost an insider-language.

As he and his friends return into the suburb from their test-drive in the nearby countryside, Michel is awaited outside the local café by a dear old friend, Dédé. When Michel sees him, he shouts out his name and joyfully runs up to him. Dédé, however, seems temporarily lost in thought and does not immediately notice Michel running towards him

¹⁰³ Rozier, p. 29.

(Figures 2.14 and 2.15). When he is finally startled back into the present, his face noticeably lights up: his eyes sparkle, he raises his arms and emphatically grabs Michel by the shoulders, looking straight into his eyes. He struggles to find the words for this reunion, but Michel fills the silence with his usual idiolect: *‘Alors, ça y est, c’est fini? T’as bonne mine, t’es bronzé, hein.’* *‘Charrie pas’* retorts Dédé, telling him it has been *‘vingt-sept mois et demi’* they have not seen each other. Indeed, Dédé spent twenty-seven and a half months ‘tanning’ at military service, a joke which further anchors the film in the historical world of 1960 France.



Fig 2.14: Michel runs up to his friend



Fig 2.15: Dédé is slow to react

The interactive moment is very brief and concise, but tells an important social micro-story. Michel's social performance is confident, as usual: he is typically verbose and fast. Dédé, on the other hand, has a more vulnerable social performance. He speaks as if he has not spoken for a long time. His body language is tired and slow, each gesture seemingly carrying the weight of his intentions, each movement seemingly significant. With Michel in front of him, Dédé attempts to exert a similar kind of control over Michel's loose performing body, pinning him down momentarily by the shoulders to stand still, as if needing to take stock of him as a being first, before engaging with him as a social being (Figure 2.16).

There is an aesthetic dissonance between their two performance styles. Perhaps as a result of Michel's lack of experience, as a non-actor, with the technicality of 'blocking', or as a result of Rozier's need to choose shots that masked the characters' lips because a failed attempt at recording sound directly forced him to post-synchronize the entire film, Michel's

face is not always visible. In contrast, the professional actor playing Dédé, Pierre Frag, ensures that his face is always angled to be readily readable in front of the camera. His body language is controlled, elegant, graceful, and helpful for the camera to frame. Dédé's theatrical performance style is more forceful, and yet the film overall does not help placing it. This film set uses handheld cameras and natural lighting – these are not the filmmaking methodologies for which this kind of acting is destined. Instead, the film is designed for Michel's spontaneous performativity.



Fig 2.16: Standing still for a moment

The aesthetic dissonance is not solely the effect of differences in acting experience or of an amateur filmmaking approach. The dissonance also speaks more metaphorically to the kinds of differences in Goffmanian communication styles that one can come across in real life when interacting with friends one has not seen for a long time, estranged for a brief moment to their entire way of being, as, indeed, Michel and Dédé now are. Dédé even says, '*ça me fait tout drôle de vous revoir*', which further invokes the social gaze. Michel and Dédé's relationship experiences the consequences of being out of practice in communicating with each other, especially Dédé, who had been absent from everyday life and normal society for two and a half years, and whose military run involved a collapse of the everyday of sorts.

Tolerant of Dédé's state of mind, Michel handles his friend's disorientation without changing his own social performance, and invites him to come home to his parents' house for lunch. With this invitation to join a routine Goffmanian social situation, Michel is reintroducing him, as it were, back into regular everyday life. The social impression made on the viewer about the social roles these two friends take on in each other's company adequately sets up the lunch scene.

Shortly after the invitation, the film cuts to a shot of a dining room with four adults sitting around a set table of which a fifth place setting is missing its diner. This marks the start of the family lunch scene. It is a strange scene within the film because it seems to have no coherence with the rest of the film narratively, stylistically, and even geographically, given that it takes place in his family home and involves characters, Michel's parents, neighbours, and Dédé, whom the film does not return to. However, it is perhaps because it stands out so sharply that it is telling.

By starting the scene in the absence of Michel and Dédé, the film invites the viewer to consider the Goffmanian social situation as dominated by the people there. It is the private space of these four older characters, a space used in this instance not simply to eat, but for the particular purpose of hosting friends, which comes with a ritualized social framework of hospitality. The film first shows three shots from two different angles of the four adults waiting for Michel in silence at the table, fidgeting with their napkins and nibbling on some bread in anticipation of the meal. Finally, Michel's parents and their friends – the neighbours – crack and start tucking into the food, agreeing that '*les jeunes, ils vivent à l'envers*' as a means to justify their impatience.

The food platter they pass around is *tête de porc*, a kind of traditional and common charcuterie dish of which the unappealing name harkens to the old-fashionedness of this group. They wear old-fashioned clothes, speak of '*les jeunes*' as abstract beings with whom

they have nothing in common, and seem to be contently set in their uninformed ways and opinions. These four characters represent a kind of simplicity of lifestyle, an unexamined ordinariness and lack of self-awareness that the film had not shown previously.

Once Michel and Dédé join them, they have to deal with a social framework that is dominated by the dinner table conversations of the members of the older generation. Michel's parents and their friends speak loudly at the table, over each other, repeating generalizations and clichés, without going into depth on any of the topics they touch upon, and laugh at unfunny jokes. They make excited faces, wave their hands around angrily in bombastic gestures, and use their especially poorly dubbed voices in theatrically melodic ways, like caricatures (Figure 2.17). Their performativity looks like it was once appropriate for a popular or vaudeville style of theatre that is now out of fashion, and the aesthetic result in the context of this film lies closer to slapstick comedy: they look ridiculous.



Fig 2.17: Loud hands do the talking

Rozier films the entire lunch scene in medium and medium-wide shots from a handful of static angles that show most of the diners at the table in each frame. His cinematography is more conventional and less observational than it has been previously. In these shots, where voices and gesticulating hands get blurred and incomprehensible, the older actors come to represent what seems to be one interchangeable ensemble-character, their roles relatively

indistinguishable and therefore converged into one single voice of the ‘older generation’. The manner in which they talk over each other creates an impression of spontaneity, which draws a strained social gaze. The impossibility of actually understanding them reveals their lack of interest in having a functional and legitimate interaction. The social framework, therefore, is one of deliberate chaos in which it is difficult to find any footing. With the camera pointed most frequently straight at Michel, who behaves the same as usual, it is easier for the viewer to socially gaze at Michel than at his parents, and to consider the social experience they subject him to.

The manner in which Rozier alienates the viewer from the older generation is accentuated by the way in which his parents treat Michel. When they learn Michel bought himself a car with a payslip that his mother was expecting to go towards his rent and board, a fact which contributes to the socio-economic picture of his *titi* background, an argument erupts at the table. The immediate reaction of both his parents and their friends is to pedantically shout about how hard their lives were at his age. They try to discredit his decision by belittling him, saying ‘*MONSIEUR s’achète une voiture!*’, and laugh at each other’s jokes at Michel’s expense.

Michel is calm and mostly silent throughout their uproar, tactfully putting up boundaries between himself and the social attacks his parents weave into otherwise good-humoured banter. His social performance is both friendly and on guard, revealing the tapestry of habit and misunderstanding that colour his family life. While Michel is the target of the majority of the table’s jokes, his confidence and ease in handling the Goffmanian social situation deflects the damage. Michel is well practiced, it seems, at handling his elders’ criticism and concerns, and at dodging their reproaches. It is as if their rhetoric falls on deaf ears. After a while, when his parents are still attacking him, he tells them, ‘*hé ça va, je me tire dans deux mois!*’, which makes them stop.

What is revealed in the social *mise en scène* of this lunch scene is that the generational clash between Michel and his parents forms part of their ordinary lives. His parents' lack of understanding for Michel and his generation's attitude to consumption and to debt indicates a completely different world view. Whereas Michel is an artery between the viewer and the world he experiences, his parents serve more like barriers to theirs because of their apparent lack of connection with their own social reality. There is a great contrast between the role they think they are playing in Michel's life, and the role they actually play.

On the one hand, there is pathos to the older group's fears and concerns: their socio-economic fears of poverty, bad health, and politics that are brought up during the meal are fitting concerns for people who lived through the Second World War and who have experienced post-war France of the 1950s. This makes the viewer empathize with them.

On the other hand, in order to make his parents stop badgering him, Michel has to remind them that he is about to go to a new war and risk his life, something his parents need to be prompted to take seriously. They somehow seem to have forgotten that their son is leaving them very soon to go somewhere he may not return from. In self-pitying reaction to Michel's news of having bought a car, the old neighbour even says '*la vie est trop facile maintenant pour les jeunes*', blatantly negating the predicament young men like Michel and Dédé find themselves in. This is why the outdated performance style of Michel's elders is ultimately unforgivable, and why Rozier coaxes the viewer into disdain of these characters by presenting them through the prism of slapstick performance. Comedy and mockery succeeds in diminishing the importance of their opinions, whilst making a show of their irrelevancy as social beings with little influence over Michel as he tries to forge his path through life, and wards off attacks on his quest to gain authority over himself as a social being, if not a physical one.

The seriousness of the underlying implications of this social situation is especially put in relief by the scene's brief focus of attention on Dédé. Dédé is subtly isolated from the group, both cinematographically – very few shots look at him frontally – and stylistically, via the lack of his interactive input. Dédé remains a silent on-looker of what could essentially be described as another form of battle: family lunch. When asked about how he is by Michel's dad – *'Alors Dédé, qu'est-ce que t'as à nous raconter?'* – he responds in a tragically self-effacing manner, saying *'oh rien, rien...'* in his only verbal contribution to the scene. He carries a look of despair on his face before lowering his head to focus instead on his meal, having just witnessed the kind of conversation Michel was treated to in this company.

When he says this, the shot frames him alone as the outlier of the group, not just separated from the others by the frame, but especially by the social framework that he is excluded from (Figure 2.18).



Fig 2.18: *'Oh rien, rien... rien'*

Rather than contributing to the conversation with his story, he chooses not to, perhaps because the language required to express the presumably horrific memories from war, which are fresh on his mind, and the relief of being home, albeit to live through another form of conflict, is a kind of language that he presumably does not have, or wish to use, and which in any case this

group would not appreciate. Rozier's constrained *vérité* aesthetic in this moment compared to the rest of the film, reflects the lack of openness of this social situation.

Bénédict, in his analysis of the film, says that fiction smothers reality in this scene, that the voices of the 'grotesque' characters are 'forced', and that it shows the world around Michel and Dédé as 'disguised'.¹⁰⁴ In this 'fantastical climate' one has to hold on to reality like a 'lifebuoy', whilst still 'playing along' with the 'game', and while Michel is good at this, Dédé has only just returned and needs time to reintegrate.¹⁰⁵ In capturing how Michel's social performance houses repeated attempts to stand up for himself and to stay true to himself in the face of family life adversity, Rozier portrays the microscopic everyday heroism that exists in the act of holding on to the 'lifebuoy' of reality. As for Dédé, his abstinence from social performance suggests his understanding of the incompatibility of this social reality and the one he is carrying with him. In Dédé's self-imposed silence and isolation, he may not be of any vocal significance to the interaction, but by erasing a performance of self altogether, Dédé is Michel's reminder of what maybe awaits him: tragic blankness and silence, an end of self-expression, and an end of self of sorts.

As the ones to be conscripted to go to war, Michel and Dédé bond over their shared opposition to the older generation's social aesthetics of denial. Finally, Michel, as the vocal, agile, and familiar one, who is capable of playing his parents' social game while eluding its pitfalls, gives them an excuse for him and Dédé to both leave the table. When doing so, he quickly, without anyone else noticing, gives Dédé a knowing look, a wink, and jerks his head sideways to discreetly indicate it is time to get out of there, a Goffmanian guided doing that expresses, however briefly, their silent alliance (Figure 2.19).

Approaching this scene from a Goffmanian perspective as we have done, by looking at the social performances to reflect on what might be at stake for each of the characters, reveals

¹⁰⁴ Bénédict, pp. 84-5.

¹⁰⁵ Bénédict, pp. 84-5.

that the difference of perspective between Michel and his parents on what is important fragments the social framework of their family life, and weakens their relationships. Rozier's *vérité* aesthetic in this scene steers clear from afilmic reality and observational cinematography, in order to emphasize the contrast between his characters as social beings.



Fig 2.19: Michel's 'let's get out of here' look and nod

Indeed, through the second order of authenticity and a more deliberate use of clashing acting styles, Rozier casts the dining room as a heterogeneous social space, and suggests there is a spectrum of the aesthetic iterations of social behaviour that corresponds to the different ways a person can engage with reality. While Michel's character continues to beg the question of whether the film is a reportage on his life, the introduction of his parents' performances anchor the film in more subjective territory, suggesting that this is what they look like to someone like Michel because of how removed they are from his experience as a member of the younger generation. Thus, the performative dissonances are cinematic tools that point to more deeply rooted and serious dissonances between people in general. Mouellic says Rozier's filmmaking establishes a 'new rapport with reality', but perhaps another way to restate Rozier's achievement is that he subtly portrays his characters' differing rapports with reality.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Gilles Mouellic, "'Adieu Philippine" de Jacques Rozier, analysé par Gilles Mouellic', L'Académie du forum des images, Paris, 19 November 2010; online video recording, Dailymotion, 12 October 2010, <http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xg2d9o_cours-de-cinema-adieu-philippine-de-jacques-

There is a generational dynamic overlaying these different performance styles throughout the film. Other characters whose performance styles seem over-the-top, grotesque, and theatrical, are also of the older generation: the sleazy Italian producer Pachala who scams Michel and his friends by not paying them after having made them shoot a commercial, and Régnier de l'Île, an 'influential' man who sometimes takes Juliette on dates but who fails to help Michel out and who has harsh words to say about '*la jeunesse actuelle*'. Not only do each of these characters have individual, incongruent performative styles, but none of their performance styles match the natural, improvised, and spontaneous performance styles of the protagonists Michel, Liliane, and Juliette, and their peers. Further, the older generation's acting styles do not fit well with the *vérité* aesthetic of the film, whereas it embraces, welcomes, and flatters the acting styles of the protagonists. Indeed, the film aestheticizes a social reality that is harmonious with the young characters' manners of inhabiting it.

Generational misunderstandings form a universal theme. The youth's improvised performativity symbolizes a rejection of imposed formats of behaviour by their elders. Their improvised behaviour simultaneously signifies a new start: they are both breaking rules and embarking on a new emancipated search for how to be, not unlike the filmmakers of the New Waves did to the act of filmmaking. But, rather than that *Adieu Philippine* is a portrait of the youth's criticism of the older generation, the older characters' inability to communicate, to make themselves understood, and to face their children's reality with more honesty, specifically comprise Rozier's own criticism of the older generation *per se*. With this scene, Rozier cultivates the viewer's sense of sympathy: dismissive, on the one hand, of the unjustness of the attitudes of the four older people as they gang up on Michel, and charmed, on the other hand, by the brave way in which Michel maintains a sense of self-control, holds on to the 'lifebuoy' of reality, and asserts himself. The micro-story of the scene thus further frames Michel's rebellious social way of being as a form of survival.

A Break from Performance: the Club Med

To contrast the staleness stemming from the home in Michel's life, Rozier turns *Adieu Philippine* halfway through into a road movie, where Michel starts his gradual voyage away from society into the wild, and eventually, into the unknown. The journey starts at a relatively novel experimental vacation camp, *Club Méditerranée*, in Calvi on the paradisiacal French Mediterranean island of Corsica. This is followed by an intimate romantic road trip, ending with Michel's inevitable, and perhaps final, naval journey to military service.

In the previous scene, we saw how Rozier used social performance to reflect on people's relationships to reality. While the Algerian War is one pillar of the framework for the characters' lives, Rozier has said that he was also drawn to shoot the film against the backdrop of a country that was, at the turn of the 1950s into the 1960s, starting to experience the 'bienfaits' of a consumer society.¹⁰⁷ Kristin Ross argues that narratives of 1960s French culture often tend to choose between the story of the end of the French Empire and decolonization, or the story of French modernization and Americanization, when, in her view, the two stories share an intricate relationship that is more telling of the times than either story alone.¹⁰⁸ *Adieu Philippine* can be seen as a narrative of both. Through Michel's experience of being a conscript – something that is widespread and shared by other young men – and of going to this novel, experimental vacation camp – something that is more exclusive and unique – Michel personifies a connection between the two.

The Club Med is, indeed, a sociologically interesting by-product of a growing consumer society, targeted towards an increasing demand for a kind of momentary erasure of

¹⁰⁷ Rozier, p. 29.

¹⁰⁸ Ross, pp. 5-7.

the confines of social reality and social identity that matter so much in the socio-economically driven consumerist world of daily employed life in the cities. Instead, the camp claims to offer the antidote by replacing this social reality with a more pleasant, fun motivated, seduction oriented, and artificial model of social reality.

The experimental workings of the camp manifest especially through the change they effect on the way people carry themselves. To capture the camp's socially transformative impact, Rozier partly adopts an anthropological approach, invoking the first, documentary order of authenticity by pointing his observational camera at crowds of genuine, afilmic vacationers partaking in Club Med activities, and planting Michel, and later, Liliane and Juliette, in the midst of the commotion.¹⁰⁹ This *vérité* aesthetic is used for the coverage of various social rituals that define some of the camp's key processes.

The first images we see of the Club Med show multiple half-naked bodies lounging indistinguishably under especially designed shaded outdoor areas in very close proximity to one another, as if their limbs were interwoven (Figure 2.20). At the same time, a tropical-themed song starts to play in the soundtrack. The way in which the frame is suddenly overwhelmed with tanning bodies illustrates one of the key properties of a Club Med: its spatial arrangement.

Indeed, as Bertrand Réau argues, one of the distinctive particularities of a Club Med is that its 'ephemeral framework' permits a higher tolerance from participants as to the '*rapprochement de corps*' and the '*proximité physique*' that the spatial organization induces.¹¹⁰ Referring to Goffman, Réau adds that the '*rapprochement des corps induit par des logements plus petits que l'habitat habituel réduit "l'espace personnel" de chacun*', and this relinquishment of 'personal space' – 'the space surrounding an individual, anywhere within

¹⁰⁹ Rozier is not the only nor the first one to have captured the Club Med back in its early days. Greek film director Dimitris Dadiras captured the same crowds, excitement, and party atmosphere at the Corfu Club Med in his 1960 film *Rantevou stin Kerkyra* (*Rendez-vous in Corfu*), although it forms part of a film that has a more conventional narrative structure and acting styles.

¹¹⁰ Bertrand Réau, 'Évasions temporaires: socialisations et relâchements des contrôles dans les villages de vacances familiaux', *Espaces et sociétés*, 1(2005), no. 120-121, pp. 123-39 (pp. 130-1).

which an entering other causes the individual to feel encroached upon' and thus forced to perform on some level, constitutes a form of release of control, which the camp deliberately intends to induce in their participants.¹¹¹



Fig 2.20: A mosaic of skin and hats



Fig 2.21: Michel in the crowd

It is difficult, at first, to identify Michel amongst the mosaic of tanned vacationers, which is surprising since the viewer has come to see him as the charming and gravitational leading figure who is nearly always the centre of attention (Figure 2.21). Our failure to immediately have our eye caught by Michel in the frame signals a change in our social gaze too: Rozier captures a shift in the function of social performance in a space like this.

The Club Med was an organized vacation camp, where its athletic and entertainment activities, clothing, and meals were organized so as to accentuate communality. In her analysis of the representation of 1960s society in New Wave cinema, Annie Goldman notes that these '*clubs de vacances*' serve as an escape from quotidian social organization into a place of social '*nivellement*', or leveling, effected by a '*conditionnement subtil*'.¹¹² This conditioning is carried out through the '*suppression de la monnaie, vêtements que la vie au bord de la mer réduit au minimum*', and through the daily programming of forms of entertainment and activities that reward different qualities, skills, and strengths than those that are normally associated with success, instead encouraging their vacationers' cheerfulness and

¹¹¹ Réau, pp. 130-1; Erving Goffman, *Relations in Public* (New Brunswick; London: Transaction Publishers, 2010; originally publ. New York: Basic Books, 1971), pp. 28-29.

¹¹² Annie Goldman, *Cinéma et Société Moderne: Le cinéma de 1958 à 1968: Godard, Antonioni, Resnais, Robbe-Grillet* (Paris: Editions Anthropos, 1971), p. 61.

buoyancy, which Goldman notes are not necessarily the ‘*apanage*’ of members of the highest social classes.¹¹³ Thérèse de Raedt notes the Club Med’s growing symbolism: ‘*Très vite le Club Med prit l’ampleur d’un véritable phénomène de société pour les Français: y passer ses vacances signifiait accéder à un monde idéal, à un monde de rêve.*’¹¹⁴ To many, this was a form of utopia, away from the rat race of everyday life, a place where people could be ‘*homo ludens*’, and stop worrying about designing their social behaviour for the purpose of upward socio-economic mobility.¹¹⁵

Indeed, one of the reasons Michel is so hard to spot in the expository shots of the Club is that everyone there is wearing identical beach-appropriate clothing items that the Club Med gave them upon arrival, through which the Club induces a loss of individualism. These items of clothing – Hawaiian flower garlands (*leis*), Tahitian pareos, and sailor’s caps – originate from various different cultures that connote a tropical beachside lifestyle in distant, inaccessible places. They do not match, but as pieces of an identical costume that are handed out to everyone, they turn all the visitors into Club Med-ers, whose bodies signify vacation. By extension, every Club Med vacationer also morphs their behaviour into an abstract kind of vacation performativity, making them appear like a bee-hive when engaged in group activities.

By placing Michel in the midst of these tanning bodies, Rozier does not assign more protagonism to him over others, which mimics the social leveling and assimilating that occurs at a Club like this. Simultaneously, Aimini, the actor, is improvising, following the current, and fitting in with the crowd. So, although we were used to seeing Michel as the focus of the frame, in this new social environment he is a part of a whole, which reflects the influence the

¹¹³ Goldman, p. 61.

¹¹⁴ Thérèse de Raedt, ‘Le Club Med: L’idéalisme d’une époque’, *French Cultural Studies*, 21 (August 2010), no. 3, pp. 216-35 (p. 216). (Italics in the original).

¹¹⁵ Goldman, p. 61.

afilmic social staging Rozier allows the Club Med to exert over Michel as a character, so as to capture the process of his assimilation into its culture.

At a certain point into Michel's stay, Rozier shows a special ritual of a Club Med holiday: the arrival of new vacationers. The moment documents their assimilation from scratch. The Club Med likes to promote the presence of new arrivals with a big celebration, as the number of people present is one of its main assets. It depends on a high number of vacationers to signal the popularity of the camp, to reduce the amount of aforementioned personal space, and to draw the vacationers' attention to the community rather than to their individual lives at home. Liliane and Juliette are amongst these new arrivals, secretly coming to surprise Michel on his trip. Again, Rozier makes use of his fictional protagonists to serve as an artery into a social experience by planting Liliane and Juliette on the bus with everyone else.

The film cuts to a road. A bus can be seen storming towards the camp (Figure 2.22).



Fig 2.22: 'Les nouveaux arrivants.'

Over the image we hear one of the Club Med organizers on the public announcement system: *'Chers amis, les nouveaux arrivants qui vont venir de Marseille seront dans quelques minutes au bureau. Je vous demande donc... de venir tous... avec votre paréo, votre collier de fleurs, votre sourire... au bureau! D'accord?'*, to which everyone can be heard responding in a resounding loud agreement: *'D'accord!!!'*

As the bus full of newcomers arrives and unloads, the crowd of half-naked vacationers do as they are told: they welcome them by jumping on them like excited children, cheering loudly, breaking out in anthems, clapping, helping them with their luggage, giving kisses and lifting them on their shoulders. Chanting people start forming dancing circles and people take turns dancing in the middle next to the bus, while vacationers are still getting their luggage. As soon as Liliane and Juliette step off the bus, they too are swallowed by the crowds. Young men lift and throw them into the air, planting kisses as often as possible. There is a tribal and hysterical sense of sociality that accompanies the act of shedding individuality (Figures 2.23 and 2.24). In the montage of this welcome ritual, Rozier surrenders to the afilmic reality of the Club Med, ceding control to its chaos, and observing as the characters he planted there are absorbed into this uncontrollable, determined mob.



Fig 2.23: Juliette lifted on someone's shoulders



Fig 2.24: Dancing in a circle

What is remarkable about the social framework of this brief situation is that the welcoming committee carrying out the ritual of assimilation is largely composed of the guests themselves. The Club Med provides the instruction, the location, and the props, but the social environment is largely co-created by the guests. Their Goffmanian behaviours form a social framework, encouraging uniform social behaviour from the newcomers. They make use of their numbers to swarm the newcomers and transmit their contagious attitude via their overwhelmingly loose, undressed, accessible, and euphoric sense of sociality. This framework provides the escapist setting in which people can retire not just their clothes, but also the

social façades that their professional daily lives force them to maintain. The Club Med is a vacation from the acknowledgement of reality in general, which it facilitates by replacing that reality with one where there are simple and fewer rules.

After this induction, Rozier documents a few more big events, dances, and group games involving genuine, afilmic crowds. Michel, Liliane, and Juliette stay at the Club Med for a while, and participate in its general sense of mindless euphoria and play, which puts their own romantic story on temporary hold, as they are preoccupied, instead, with the other sexual prospects around them. The extent to which Michel, Liliane, and Juliette have retreated from reality is brought into relief by the moment when they snap back into it, which is manifested, again, in their social performances. This happens towards the end of their stay at the Club Med, and narratively marks their decision to leave.

One night, after a physical group game where men carry women in a game of piggyback, Liliane and Juliette make their way to the bar to order cokes, the two of them surrounded by three suitors. Immediately, a young man with a black jacket enters the frame from the right, deliberately timing his interjection to arrive at the bar at the same time. He assertively claims some ‘personal space’ at the crowded bar, going against the main flow, and when he slightly turns his face, we recognize Michel. Michel grabs Liliane’s arm right before she is about to be whisked away by the crowds again, and tells her ‘*on part demain*’, to which she complies with ‘*d’accord*’ (Figure 2.25).

This very brief moment’s narrative purpose is to announce the end of the Club Med experience and the beginning of a new adventure. But in addition to that, something about Michel’s way of defying the social framework of the bar draws a kind of social gaze that the Club Med had put on hold. Compared to the Michel who was invisible in the crowds of tanned undressed bodies, Michel seems to have condensed his social performativity into a newly determined and more serious leading style. His black jacket and purposeful,

authoritative body language are in strong contrast to the relaxed, half-naked, unconcerned way of life encouraged by the Club. Suddenly his entrance on the right hand side of the frame, his deliberate timing, and his tall assertiveness appear to form the social performativity of a self-assured young man. Further, the imposition of his individualistic presence on the film throws into relief the original relation between background and foreground that the Club Med had thus far leveled out: Michel is assertively assuming his fictional protagonistic position again, and distinguishing himself from those who continue to be Club Med-ers, and who, as a result of Michel's own ascension to protagonistic status, now look like extras in the background.



Fig 2.25: '*On part demain.*'

Michel's sharpened character willpower redresses the film world as being under Rozier's control and as having a specific fictional direction. As much as the Club Med was a vacation from reality to the participants, it was also an interlude that symbolically served as a vacation from plot. Michel's looming departure has given him a sense of urgency that drives him towards the final act of the film, leaving a genuine instance of 1960 communal life behind in favour of real romance. Social performance is portrayed, here, as a means for a character to claim his narrative.

Conclusion

Adieu Philippine exemplifies a *vérité* aesthetic film that emphasizes the first, documentary order of authenticity. In this thesis, none of the other films will be as unapologetically documentary as this film, nor earn the description of being a ‘naturalist masterpiece’.¹¹⁶ Indeed, with the use of observational cinematography, improvisation, and, in some cases, real events as settings for his scenes (as we saw in the opening of the film and at the Club Med), Rozier captures social reality in a way that not only documents the inherent social *mise en scène* of these settings, but that also accentuates it by using his protagonists as performative vessels for an appreciation of that social *mise en scène*. By taking a Goffmanian approach to engage with the characters’ social performances in these moments of sociality, we discover that social performance subtly reflects the power dynamics of social spaces. Indeed, Michel’s rebelliousness and defiance are aimed at forces that control his social reality, such as his employers or the Club Med. Michel engages with these afilmic social realities in a way where his social performance serves to assert himself against their authority. This contributes to thinking of him as a social being.

In other moments, such as in the lone scene at home with Michel’s parents, Rozier contrasts his *vérité* aesthetic by reverting to more classical filmmaking, using static cinematography and little improvisation in order to echo the routine, stale, predictable qualities of the social space of Michel’s parents’ home and to observe them with more scrutiny at the same time. In this private space, social performance is represented on a spectrum, from naturalistic, by Michel, to tragic, by Dédé, and to overly theatrical, by his parents and their friends. These different performance styles reflect manners of relating to

¹¹⁶ Michel Marie, *The French New Wave*, trans. by Richard Neupert (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing, 2003; first publ. as *La Nouvelle Vague : une école artistique* (Paris: Editions Nathan, 1997)), p. 96.

social reality, and thus, tell the story of deeper personal dissonances. But they also reflect a more symbolic perspective on social performance, whereby Michel's behaviour is compatible with the film's overall naturalistic aesthetic, whilst, as I have argued, that of his parents' and that of other older characters, seem out of tune in a ridiculous, and even ethically reproachable way.

Thus, on the one hand, through the first, documentary order of authenticity of his *vérité* aesthetic, Rozier anchors the film in the specific historical context of 1960 France and the specific professional and vocational social constructs that made up social reality at the time. And, on the other hand, Rozier touches upon more abstract, universal themes of generational conflict through the second order of authenticity, exemplified by his introduction of a spectrum of performance styles. The film culminates in a kind of celebration of the youth and their manner of discovering the social world around them, in both historical and allegorical ways.

In Godard's *Masculin Féminin*, the romanticization of the youth is somewhat dampened. The following analysis will look closely at *Masculin Féminin* for the achievement of a more contentious *vérité* representation of the youth's social behaviours.

2.3. Scrutinized in *Masculin Féminin*

Paul y pratique encore ce sport national de la Nouvelle Vague qui s'appelle la drague, mais c'est le couvert de la sociologie (...).

- François Bégaudeau.¹¹⁷

Indirect Directness

As I mentioned in the theory chapter, I use the term ‘*vérité* aesthetic’ to encompass the variety of different *cinéma vérité*-inspired aesthetics that sprang out of *cinéma vérité*’s influence on the New Wave. Although both films studied in this chapter focus on the same theme of youthful sociality, and were made with inspiration from observational documentary, the transition from *Adieu Philippine* to *Masculin Féminin* comprises the biggest variation in *vérité* aesthetic within the three case study chapters of this thesis, as the analysis will articulate. *Masculin Féminin* explicitly consists of a *cinéma vérité*-inspired film, being described in the publicity documents as the ‘*chronique d’un hiver*’ counterpart to the original *cinéma vérité* film, *Chronique d’un été*, sharing the same producer, Anatole Dauman, and even carrying the seemingly journalistic poster tag line of ‘*le sexe et la jeunesse de la France d’aujourd’hui*.’ However, Godard’s reception is not straightforward, nor does it draw the social gaze in the same way as Rouch and Morin did.

Godard’s unique interpretation of *cinéma vérité* is evident from the beginning. He starts the film abstractly with a brief whistled rendition of the start of *La Marseillaise*, the French national anthem, followed by a couple of stock sound effect gunshots over the main title card of the film, of which the first word, ‘*MASCULIN*’ is deconstructed into three cards, ‘MA’,

¹¹⁷ François Bégaudeau, ‘Masculin Féminin: Le Monde de Jean-Luc Godard Tel Qu’il Est’, *Le Monde* 2, 5 August 2006, pp. 44-7 (p. 47).

‘SCU’, and ‘LIN’, followed by a single card that reads ‘*FÉMININ | 15 FAITS PRÉCIS*’ (Figure 2.26). Both the deconstruction of words, cut up into their syllables, and the use of gunshots will be repeated in the film like motifs of surrealism and eccentricity. The initialization of the viewer into the film is marked, then, by a preparation for unrealness.

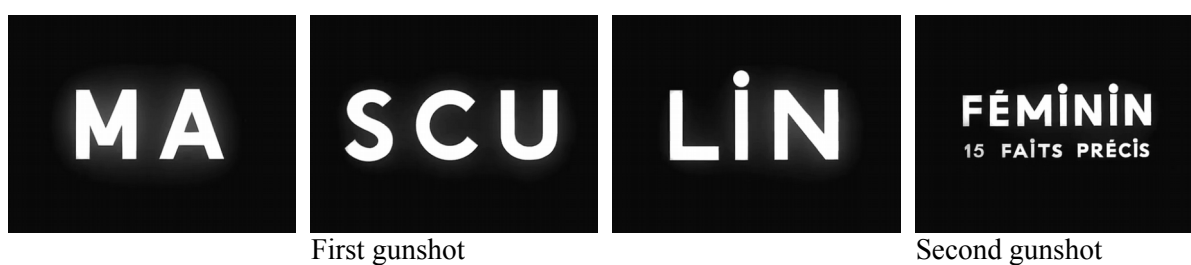


Fig 2.26

The juxtaposition of these aural and visual effects represents a kind of membrane to the film world, warning the viewer of the break with reality by using obviously artificial sound and a formal manipulation of non-vocalized text, whilst also suggesting continuity with reality through the factually-minded subtitle: ‘*15 FAITS PRÉCIS*’. Throughout the film, the viewer is forced to second-guess which of the things they are shown is fact and which is fake. This preoccupation with instability mirrors the instability of meaning we experience in everyday life. Indeed, in everyday life, people value sincerity more than its opposite, which is why people look out for insincerity.

Immediately after the slightly jarring title presentation, the film opens with a shot of the ‘masculine’ protagonist, Paul, shot statically from an eye-to-eye level, straight-forward perspective, framed from the chest-up. Paul is played by the recognizable New Wave star Jean-Pierre Léaud, made famous as the protagonist Antoine Doinel by François Truffaut’s *Les 400 Coups* (1959) six years earlier. While minimal, his surroundings reveal his setting to be a generic Parisian café. Seated, he is looking down at something out of the frame, reading out words as his arm moves in a way that suggests that he is writing. His face is in concentration, consumed with the act of writing, not socially performing at all.

Paul reads out his words slowly, and out of context they sound deconstructed. It is hard at first to pick up the thread of what he is saying, as if the film itself is reluctant for the viewer to follow his thoughts. The medium close-up shot pulls at the viewer's Goffmanian instinct to interpret Paul's facial expressions, but there are very few to be seen. A moment into the shot, he stops. He grabs his pack of cigarettes from his pocket, flicks a cigarette into his mouth, and checks out his surroundings while lighting it, while the light of the café simultaneously illuminates his famous face, before casting his eyes back down on the text (Figures 2.27 and 2.28).



Fig 2.27: What's happening?



Fig 2.28: Jean-Pierre Léaud

In the background, we hear the noise of a filmic traffic ebbing and flowing, emanating from the streets outside the location. Louis-Albert Serrut notes that the various sounds of the city that Godard captures play a big role in defining 'the expression of the urban universe in which the characters live'.¹¹⁸ Just like every director studied in this thesis, the locations were real, and in addition to that, Godard followed, at least aurally, the first order of authenticity. If the phone rang in the café in which they were shooting, his crew instinctively assumed that they should make sure it was disconnected for the duration of the shot. Instead, Godard would tell them to let it ring and let the café waiter in the background handle it, regardless of

¹¹⁸ Louis-Albert Serrut, *Jean-Luc Godard, cinéaste acousticien: des emplois et usages de la matière sonore dans ses oeuvres cinématographiques* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011), p. 175.

whether they were shooting or not.¹¹⁹ Godard was interested in capturing sound interjections that originated naturally from the location, and intermittently and selectively resisted his crew's habit to tame the afilmic world to make it more profilmic. These sounds anchor Paul's existence within what appears like real social reality.

This long opening shot suggests authenticity, transparency, and directness. Yet, in this strange introduction of the protagonist, Godard does not allow the viewer to really grasp him. There is a contradiction in the *vérité* aesthetic used to represent Paul and the effect that this produces. Although framed frontally and up-close, his facial expressions are inaccessible because he looks down and is not, in this moment, socially performing. The directly recorded sound of him reading out loud his own writing, although helpfully making audible something that the viewer cannot see or read first-hand because it is not in the frame, is counterproductive because it almost makes language seem incomprehensible. The sound of traffic outside is abstracted from its source, and Paul does not interact with it. The only thing the social gaze knows for sure, at this early stage, is that, in the real world, or what Bill Nichols calls the 'historical world', this young man is the famous actor Jean-Pierre Léaud.

Godard's *vérité* aesthetic is indeed unusual. As has often been remarked and analyzed in Godard scholarship regarding his unique film style, Godard takes a Brechtian meta-cinematic approach to most of his films. In fact, the character, Paul, shares Truffaut's character Antoine Doinel's last name, pointing to the meta-cinematic identity that Godard gives him. Similarly, his use of the genre of *cinéma vérité* seems to be self-referential, insofar that Godard signals his use, and adopts some of its trademark styles, without necessarily implementing its principles. Executing a conceptual analysis of his work along these lines, Yosefa Loshitzky has deduced from Godard's use of observational documentary methods and from the film's many instances of revealing its own making, that *Masculin Féminin* is another

119 Michel Vianey, *En Attendant Godard* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, Editions Bernard Grasset, 1966), pp. 138-45.

example of Godard's films in which the real subject is representation itself.¹²⁰ My study of the film will reflect on what the implications of these self-referential devices are for how social performance is represented.

In this opening scene with Paul, it is as if the camera is targeted seemingly sincerely at the main subject, when, in fact, the camera simultaneously withholds the full picture. Indeed, the *Sight and Sound* reviewer noted about the film that 'its major events take place off screen: Paul's seduction of Madeleine, and his death', which raises the question of how to place what the film does show.¹²¹ Unlike *Adieu Philippine*, where the camera most often took its cue from the actors and mostly remained mobile as it moved around them, *Masculin Féminin* is mostly filmed with static shots. The camera operates not from an ambition of documentation, here, but more from an intent of delineation and confinement. While Godard organizes the film set to embrace the afilmic qualities of the various real locations' social *mises en scène*, the camera itself is not set up to fully grasp these social micro-stories, and focuses instead on one specific piece of the whole. Thus, the remarkably long shot of Paul from the chest-up shows him doing nothing of interest, and draws the viewer's attention instead to what happens outside of the frame with sound and with Paul's gaze somewhere over the camera. The viewer's social gaze becomes aware of context, as something that is intentionally being withheld. In *Masculin Féminin*, social performance arises in this push and pull between an aesthetic of directness that at the same time masks from vision what these characters socially experience.

After a disproportionately long shot of Paul's face reading a text out loud, the film finally cuts to a wide shot of the location to reveal the café and its main architectural and decorative features, several tables and chairs, the windows, the bar, and the front door. The cut

120 Yosefa Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995), p. 43.

121 Richard Roud, 'Review', *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1966, repr. in *Masculine Feminine; a film by Jean-Luc Godard*, ed. by Robert Hughes and Pierre Billard (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1969), pp. 264-7 (p. 265).

is prompted by a girl who just walked in, ordering a hot chocolate, taking off her winter coat and closing the door behind her: this is the ‘feminine’ protagonist, Madeleine. The shot is in diametric opposition to the one preceding it in terms of scale, action, and focus (Figure 2.29). It sees Paul cast off to the side of the shot, nearly out of the frame. Instead, the shot focuses on the café that has now come to life as a social environment, thanks to Madeleine’s arrival.

In a long uninterrupted shot, Paul sparks up a conversation with Madeleine, and from this moment, the film signals a shift from his solitude to sociality. It is an ordinary, innocuous moment of sociality in which two strangers with friends in common strike up a rapport in a public setting that traditionally welcomes such interactions. The awkward framing that nearly cuts Paul out harkens back to the New Wave’s amateurist aesthetic. But, there is more to this framing than its haphazard aesthetic may suggest, which a Goffmanian approach helps to decipher.

Paul, the main conversationalist in this scene, is not just barely acknowledged by the frame, his face sometimes cut off entirely when he moves, but he is also barely acknowledged by Madeleine, who, rather than acknowledging Paul when he asks her ‘*c’est bien vous Mademoiselle Zimmer?*’ is focused instead on looking at herself in a pocket mirror (Figure 2.30). The framing, then, seems to deliberately challenge Paul’s presence.

Madeleine’s distractedness gives the impression that she came here on her own, and that her presence here is not profilmically dictated by the camera, but by her own afilmic intentions. As Paul continues to talk, she continues to use the Goffmanian props she has to divert her attention away from him. She opens a magazine, and pages through it with purpose. Her social performance of focus on the magazine makes it unclear to her interlocutor, as to the viewer, whether she is even listening to him anymore. She assuages these uncertainties by occasionally giving very brief answers, using the minimal amount of words necessary to maintain the interaction, all the while paging through her magazine.



Fig 2.29: Paul, barely in the frame



Fig 2.30: Madeline and her pocket mirror

The magazine becomes both a material and performative shield to the social interaction. Materially, it draws attention away from her to itself. Performatively, it is a social prop that allows her to look preoccupied with something else. In both cases the many objects she holds and plays with – the pocket mirror, the magazine, a piece of paper, a pen – evidence her unavailability to fully participate in this conversation. Ignoring Madeleine's lack of interest, Paul is keen to make a connection but Madeleine is more hesitant. There is a lack of cuteness to what is essentially supposed to be their meet-cute.

Suddenly, the long, uninterrupted shot that Godard had of Madeleine and Paul talking, now slowly but assertively dollies and zooms in to frame Madeleine alone, in a medium shot, intensifying Madeleine's lack of expressiveness with purpose (Figure 2.31). This noticeable camera movement happens simultaneously as Paul asks her something about her life, and thus catches her in a moment of talkativeness. As Madeleine tells Paul she is trying to make it in the music industry, and that she is currently recording, she continues to leaf through her magazine, but as she demonstratively holds it up to the approaching camera, the title of the magazine is now visible too, '*Mademoiselle Age Tendre*'.

Not only does this explain what she is preoccupied with, but through its blatantly intentional visibility, it adds symbolic depth to the barrier between Paul and Madeleine's

struggling connection. It is as if Godard is suggesting that this kind of journalism, targeted at a young female demographic, is impacting the way women and men interact and flirt with one another. Again, the relatively straightforward nature of the scene's composition is suggestive of a *cinéma vérité*-inspired non-interferential approach meant to glean certain sociological facts about these two subjects. And yet, the element of the shot that would constitute one of the sociological discoveries of this approach – the magazine Madeleine reads – is clearly planted there as a profilmic prop, as the obvious camera movement and the seemingly agreed upon manner of temporarily holding up the magazine for the benefit of the camera, strongly suggest.



Fig 2.31: ‘*Mademoiselle age tendre*’

While we may know very little about a standoffish Madeleine, Godard seems to playfully invite the viewer to infer what they think of her based on what she reads.

Mademoiselle age tendre plays a recurring role in the film, serving not just as a prop, but also having its offices feature in the film as a genuine filming location that will be Paul's place of work as well as Madeleine's. Therefore, this strengthens the sense that, despite an aesthetic that at first glance seems undramatic and authentic in a *cinéma vérité* kind of way, Godard is making a statement pertaining to the connotations of *Mademoiselle age tendre*, and uses its

reference not just to hone in on a specific social niche, but also to lend his film gravitas as a sociological study by quoting real cultural objects.

If the social gaze is drawn in this scene, this is done with caution. The viewer navigates the film world to distinguish between what is reliable afilmic material, and what is highly constructed fictional material, as Godard makes use of both, simultaneously. That which is made to look like it is part of the social *mise en scène* uncovered by Godard's use of the first, documentary order of authenticity, may actually be part of a much more conventional kind of *mise en scène*. Her props do have a Goffmanian function in that they serve as a means to deflect attention away from her social performance, and thus, paint a picture of her character as a social being, but simultaneously, the props clearly have a narrative function too in the composition of Godard's portrait of '*la jeunesse d'aujourd'hui*'.

As Madeleine and Paul get more engrossed into their conversation, Godard focuses on more obvious socio-economic and political issues. Madeleine and Paul talk about employment, since Paul is looking for a job, and Paul mentions he just finished military service. Madeleine, still reading her magazine and playing with her hair in a kind of mannerism, absentmindedly asks about military service whether '*c'est amusant?*' While Sellier argued that military service served to differentiate between female and male in *Adieu Philippine*, perhaps that is much more so the case in *Masculin Féminin*. Madeleine's question betrays her naiveté.

In contrast to Madeleine, Paul has a wholly different perspective. Off-screen, we hear Paul's voice giving a very thoughtful reply to Madeleine's throwaway question, by comparing the functioning of military systems to capitalist businesses in Marxist terms. This immediately catches her attention, as she stops reading to look up at him, perhaps caught off guard by the sudden change in register of the content of their conversation. Paul is not in the frame while he gives his answer. Instead we see Madeleine socially performing her increased attention for

him. Where Rozier often placed his protagonists in the foreground of a social experience that was happening in the background, Godard simply uses Madeleine as a mirror for a social experience that is off camera, and that we are not privy to. The moment draws our social gaze because Madeleine is socially performing her interpretation of him (Figure 2.32).

Then the film cuts to a shot of Paul, mid-sentence, who appears to be reading from the notes he was writing earlier (Figure 2.33). With the cut, Godard suddenly reveals the social framework of their interaction to be slightly different than the viewer may have thought, judging from looking at Madeleine's reaction alone. Whereas before, the voice speaking was not visible, a fact that allowed Godard to create some amount of suspense about the social performance of the speaker, with the next shot, he reveals that Paul is reading instead of speaking spontaneously.



Fig 2.32: Captivated



Fig 2.33: Giving a presentation

While it is perhaps implausible that someone would just read out their Marxist analysis of their military experience to a pretty stranger in a café, the *vérité* aesthetic of the shot – especially the afilmic quality of the setting – wants to suggest that this *would* really happen. At the same time, Godard's heavy-handed editing and the staged – literally orated – quality of the dialogue suggest that this moment of sociality is not as much a reflection of historical 1965 French sociality, as it is Godard's reconstructed interpretation of it.

The act of reading out a response, instead of spontaneously orating it, may be metaphorical of the difficulty Paul has to connect and communicate with people, as already established by the active effort of the camera to exclude him from the frame. Yet, it is also a platform through which Godard makes known his protagonist's, and perhaps his own, Marxist ideologies. Thus, he uses taste in literature, again, not just to more finely describe Paul as a character socio-economically and politically, but specifically, to bring out the opposition between him and Madeleine. The moment heavy-handedly establishes their incongruent socio-economical and political situations and views on life. Godard uses the guise of seemingly innocuous ordinary conversation to slip in these charged facts about their political identities.

As Paul explains his views, the moment becomes illustrative of the different ways in which they face their respective comings of age as young adults. The character of Madeleine is based on the actress playing her, Chantal Goya, who would, during the shoot, become an internationally renowned French pop singer. In this scene, Madeleine has made it clear that her main ambition is fame – she is currently recording *yé-yé* pop songs. Gaining authority of self, in her eyes, would entail being accepted into the capitalistic entertainment elite. Paul, on the other hand, expresses his concern for authority of self as ownership of self in Marxist terms, explaining how the lack of break time in the '*milieu ouvrier*' has meant that '*un ouvrier ne s'appartient plus.*' Their comings of age are driven by opposite ideals, referenced by their politically charged tastes in literature and philosophy.

The sociological intention of filming conversations in *Chronique d'un été* was to make subjects known and relatable on their own terms. Instead, Godard's emphasis on socio-economic and political identity traits, combined with his various ways of withholding the visibility of the characters' respective forms of sociality, has the effect of stereotyping the protagonists. While the genuine awkwardness of Madeleine and Paul's interaction lends the

scene authenticity and draws the social gaze, this awkwardness only thinly masks Godard's profilmic manipulation. Indeed, 'the last-minute dialogues, sometimes even prompted in mid-take, show Godard's talent for improvisation but also his determination not to allow the actor time for any improvisation of his own.'¹²² The way the characters are portrayed, then, is not as much a result of their own improvisation as it is of Godard's. Godard turns Paul and Madeleine into portents of certain sociologically stereotypical characteristics, rather than presenting them as members of a recognizable social reality. He lets these differences drive some of the dramatic tensions between them. Their conversation is not so much an interaction between two strangers as it is a clash between two opposing worlds, that of capitalism and that of Marxism – and these were indeed the two ideological paradigms that young people could align themselves with at the time.

Godard was undoubtedly spurred on by the French political environment at the time of filming during the presidential campaigns of the conservative old guard, incumbent Président Charles de Gaulle, on the one hand, and the new left wing contender, François Mitterrand, on the other hand. Godard further plays with socio-economic and political categories by organizing his characters into these categories according to gender. Thus, Godard makes of Paul and his best friend Robert, who lives in a car, chain-smoking left-wing revolutionaries. Madeleine, her housemates, and Miss 19, another girl in a similar position as Madeleine, are, in turn, presented as go-with-the-flow, Pepsi Cola drinking, free-market enthusiasts. This gendered categorization, in a strange way, politicizes sex. The film is the most sociologically minded of all the films examined in this thesis not just because of its explicit use of tools of qualitative sociological research such as interviews and surveys, but because of the way Godard's characters are intentionally designed to be identifiable as belonging to specific social camps by those tools.

¹²² Gilles Mouellic, *Improvising Cinema* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), p. 51.

The emphasis on a system of categories is recurrent more damningly towards the end of the scene. The meet-cute has a heightened, surrealistic, and tragic ending, which puts Godard's representation of this encounter into perspective. At the end of Paul and Madeleine's conversation, the film cuts to a wide shot taken from a new angle, near the bar, looking at Madeleine's back and at Paul's front, and revealing the café space behind him. There are people sitting there that the film had not acknowledged before (Figure 2.34). Since Paul and Madeleine are situated between them and the door, these people would have had to pass through the frame in order to sit there. Godard never gives the impression of cutting time out from their conversation. And although traffic outside and phones ringing inside were made audible, these people's presence inside the café was not. This further throws Godard's aestheticization of social reality into disarray. These characters' presence in the café is incompatible with the basic idea of the film's documentary character.



Fig 2.34: Other people?

Taken metaphorically, perhaps the sudden revelation of the presence of other people in the café suggests that Paul and Madeleine were oblivious because they were absorbed in their own conversation, albeit in a way that involved Madeleine performing that she was bored. There would be a strange romantic quality to this, were it not for the fact that their

conversation was barely flirtatious. Instead, their oblivious bubble may be generationally motivated.

The people sitting behind them are a couple and their child. The parents are in the middle of having a vicious argument, slinging harsh insults at each other. It almost instantly escalates to become very loud, and drowns out the sound of the voices of Paul and Madeleine, who are still carrying on their conversation in the foreground, but whose inaudibility almost relegates them to extras rather than protagonists. When the wife starts to drag her little son, Patrick, out of the café, the husband runs after her and wrestles him out of her grip. Then, the wife comes back inside for her purse, grabs a gun from it, and shoots her husband dead on the sidewalk.



Fig 2.35: Paul sees her gun and still yells '*la porte!*'

For some absurd reason, Paul and Madeleine are not reacting to this loud couple, even though the film makes it impossible for the viewer to ignore them. As the couple stumbles out of the café, Paul loudly shouts at them to close the door so that the cold breeze does not come in. When the woman ignores him and grabs her gun in front of him, he just tries again – '*la porte!*' (Figure 2.35). Paul is responsive to the intrusion of cold air, but the sound of shouted insults, let alone of gunshots, goes absurdly unheard. This couple's tragedy represents a

wholly estranged and unrelatable scene of life to the world that Paul and Madeleine inhabit. To them, the extreme surrealism of this couple's interaction is invisible.

This moment can perhaps best be understood as illustrating the manner in which Godard conceives of inter-generational relationships. Indeed, unlike *Adieu Philippine*, in which the protagonists engage with adults, the absence of any named characters older than Paul and Madeleine and their friends gives Godard's portrayal of '*la jeunesse*' an insular quality. This insularity is perhaps a property of French youth culture itself. In the conclusion of his 1957 investigation on 'the youth', Henri Perruchot writes:

La jeunesse se juge seule, sans appui. [...] Ne sachant à quoi se raccrocher, se sentant plus ou moins perdue dans le chaos moderne, [...] elle a nié tous les valeurs [...] de la société des adultes. [...] Estimant à tort ou à raison qu'elle n'a à compter que sur elle-même, elle aspire à se donner des règles, des valeurs propres, des hiérarchies, des modèles, à réinstaurer un ordre, à créer une société plus fortement cimentée que celle où elle a grandi.¹²³

The notion that the young perceive the world like a split image between the social model of normality they share with each other, and the strange ways the world is lived in by everyone else, is reflected by the manner in which older characters appear to the main characters. The young only seem to notice older characters if they are involved in surreal incidents and extraordinary circumstances, like murders or self-immolations, or because they feature in a violent erotic film or in a re-enacted play, or, alternatively, because they are famous – like superstars Brigitte Bardot and Françoise Hardy who appear in the film in cameos. Instead of normally interacting with adults, Godard portrays the young as experiencing social reality in a way that is totally divorced from, for example, this married couple.

Narratively, Paul and Madeleine might benefit from heeding the foreboding signs of the circumstances of this couple. Their own relationship will also end with Paul's death. But Paul and Madeleine's shared youth makes them impervious to the problems experienced by a

¹²³ Baecque, *Nouvelle*, p. 41. For a contemporaneous discussion of post-war youth see Henri Perruchot, *La France et sa Jeunesse* (Paris: Hachette, 1958).

couple from a different generation, which are represented like alien phenomena on the periphery of their conception of social reality. So, rather than letting the characters' differences as social beings reveal themselves through spontaneous interactivity, as Rouch and Morin strived to do in *Chronique d'un été*, Godard uses the second order of authenticity to aestheticize an experience of social reality that is fragmented by age, gender, and political views.

Restroom Romance

The estrangement experienced by the young is not exclusively a reaction towards members of the older generation. Indeed, *Masculin Féminin* can be seen as a portrait of the difficulty that young people may have in expressing themselves and in communicating with each other too. The film spends a lot of time monitoring its characters in conversation with each other. But their conversations often have jarring, awkward qualities to them. They do not feel natural like they do in *Adieu Philippine* or in *Chronique d'un été*, even if some of Rouch and Morin's subjects were self-admittedly very nervous and anxious about being on camera. This is not because the performances are theatrical or stylized in conventional acting terms, on the contrary, the performance styles are quite natural. But there is in these performances a certain disconnectedness to what they are saying that causes them to seem awkward.

This is particularly visible in the first conversation Paul and Madeleine have in the film after meeting. Narratively, at this point, Madeleine has helped Paul to a job at the magazine offices of *Mademoiselle age tendre*. A brief montage of observational footage shows that in their working lives they cross paths in the office. Paul, however, is desperate to get her alone to talk in private, and tracks her down in the office bathrooms.

It is one of the more unfortunate locations for an attempt at seduction in the film corpus. Indeed, in *Adieu Philippine*, we saw Michel, Liliane, and Juliette going on dates in exciting, inspiring, and beautiful locations. From the TV studio set and the aerodrome to their Corsican road trip, the settings in which their relationship bloomed carried the promise of lift-off, of dreams, of possibilities. Rozier treated his cast to paradisiacal locations to perform their comings of age. In contrast, Paul and Madeleine's relationship seems to be the victim very early on of unromantic, deadly, or stale locations. They are not inherently horrible since they are just ordinary, but in their grey, functional, and clinical aesthetic, they are particularly unsuitable for romance.

The montage primes Paul and Madeleine's moment of sociality in the bathroom. Godard overlays the montage with a narration by one of Madeleine's girlfriends (Catherine, at this point not yet known to the viewer), who asks herself the question '*aujourd'hui, Paris, à quoi rêvent les jeunes filles?*' In reply to her own question, she lists types of '*jeunes filles*', from factory workers and young hairdressers to prostitutes and bourgeois students, comments on their different sex lives, and concludes her narration with '*la française moyenne n'existe pas*'. As Susan Weiner notes, '*À quoi rêvent les jeunes filles?*' is the sort of mildly sociological question that magazines like *Mademoiselle Age Tendre* would pose and fail to properly answer.¹²⁴ Indeed, Catherine's answer exemplifies a thought process that works with stereotypical categories and that we also witnessed in the opening scene. Just as her narration ends, Paul and Madeleine's bathroom conversation starts, placed there like a dramatized answer to the question.

For reasons that are, at this point, unclear to the viewer, Paul bursts into the washroom of the office bathrooms – a small white room with a sink, a range of coat hooks, and another door with a handle from which hangs Madeleine's recognizable purse. Paul pauses, and leans

¹²⁴ Susan Weiner, *Enfants Terribles: Youth and Femininity in the Mass Media in France, 1945-1968* (Baltimore; London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), p. 190.

back against the wall, tensing up. As if readying himself for a job interview, Paul briefly has a thought for his presentation and runs his hand through his hair. Finally, Madeleine appears from the cubicle, and when Paul does not enter after her, it becomes clear that he is there for her.

Ambushed by Paul, Madeleine is glorified as the main object of focus. Godard films the space with a medium shot that frames them both. As Madeleine walks over to the right to the sink, the camera pans with her, dropping Paul out of the frame on the left, only to have him reappear in the mirror above the sink on the right, staring right at her. Paul's obsessive gaze on her thus never really leaves the frame. Madeleine, who finds no cover from being visible to him, is trapped in the expectation to socially perform for him (Figures 2.36 and 2.37). But rather than running away from the social situation, Madeleine seems to relish in this moment of exhibitionism.



Fig 2.36: Restroom rendez-vous



Fig 2.37: Paul's gaze still in the frame

In the analysis of the opening scene, I questioned how believable it was to see a young man reciting his Marxist analysis of military service to a stranger, and a similar sense of disbelief emerges in this scene. Yet, while a lengthy, intimate, and personal flirtatious conversation between two people who barely know each other by the sinks of the office bathroom seems implausible, Godard's manner of filming it certainly attempts to inspire belief and to make it look like this would really happen.

Madeleine opens the conversation with small talk about work. Paul responds briefly but quickly turns the conversation to the desired topic of their flirtatious relationship, claiming that she had promised they would go on a date today, which she denies: '*j'ai jamais dit ça*'. At this moment, Godard makes the first cut of the scene to a medium close-up shot of Madeleine taken from next to Paul's point of view, which invokes the social gaze not just on one, but on two Madeleines: the one in the room and her reflection in the mirror (Figure 2.38). Just after the cut, Madeleine repeats herself, '*j'ai jamais dit ça*'. The first time she said it seemingly still belonged to that part of the conversation that operated within a social framework of small talk, but the second comes after the cut, and suggests an intensification of their social framework, coupled with an increased amount of attention on Madeleine's social performativity. While this may have been filmed twice from two angles, the effect of including her repetition is to give the impression that she is dissatisfied with Paul's silent reaction to her denial. Indeed, although Madeleine denies having promised to go on a date, by repeating herself, she is inviting a longer conversation about it and making herself available, at least, for a discussion of the theme.



Fig 2.38: Two Madeleines.

Madeleine's denial sparks a debate about honesty: Paul argues she's a liar, when Madeleine says she thinks she's not. Her honesty becomes a subjective matter, and thus, whether Madeleine actually did, or did not, promise to go on a date with Paul today, is no longer the question. Making something factual subjective is part of the wider playfulness in which their social interaction dabbles. Madeleine, as the only one visible in this long shot, performatively encourages this. Off-screen, Paul asks awkward questions, '*je ne vous plais pas comme garçon?*' and '*est-ce que vous trouvez que mon nez est trop grand?*', but Madeleine handles his interview skillfully. Her answers to his questions are short, she taunts and teases him, gives him playful smiles, and evades giving any direct answers.

Throughout the process, she also does her hair and her make-up, as if she is elaborately sculpting the social mask in front of his eyes over and over again. Godard captures this like a bewitching ritual, revealing her gestures to be a combination of habit and seduction. As her actions draw attention to her hair, her lips, her cheeks, she is performing her prettiness. Finally, like a bullseye shot to his heart, when she applies lipstick, she faces Paul directly, knowingly performing the sensual gesture of applying lipstick not just for herself in the pocket mirror, but for Paul who stands right in front of her, peaking over the mirror (Figure 2.39). The seductive effect of Goya's way of being on camera is captured in its integrity by the uninterruptedness of Godard's shot. So, on the one hand, Madeleine displays a sense of social performative self-control, confidence, and savvy ease.

Showing Madeleine separately without intercutting it immediately with reaction shots of Paul allows the effect of Madeleine's social performance to dawn on the viewer from a similar point of view and proximity as that of Paul. Indeed, the viewer is encouraged to be drawn into her charm as she giggles, becomes pensive, thinks about her answers, or looks distracted, and to put themselves in Paul's shoes.



Fig 2.39: Casting a spell

On the other hand, a closer Goffmanian look at this shot reveals the construct of her social performance. Just as we saw in the opening scene, Madeleine uses props, such as pocket mirrors, magazines, and pens, or in this case, her make-up items, to deflect attention away from facial social performance and to shield her from the intense gaze of her interlocutor. Her make-up and hair grooming also offer her something purposeful to do, and thus spare her from doing nothing and revealing her nervousness, which is something Paul does suffer from.

As Weiner notes, she does her hair repetitively, even though it is already perfect, which starts to reveal itself to be somewhat of a nervous tic in the film.¹²⁵ Pauline Kael writes that while Madeleine's face looks pretty but 'empty' in the film, it is only in front of the mirror that 'her face becomes alive', as if energized by the sight of her own social self.¹²⁶ It may be because it offers her refuge from the pressure of a one-on-one interaction. Indeed, her reflections in the two mirrors may reduce its intensity. Moreover, Madeleine has the option to check her appearance while she is being interrogated by a boy, and thus to make adjustments

¹²⁵ Weiner, p. 190.

¹²⁶ Pauline Kael, 'Review', *The New Republic*, 19 November 1966, repr. from Pauline Kael, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, in *Masculine Feminine; a film by Jean-Luc Godard*, ed. by Robert Hughes and Pierre Billard (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1969), pp. 280-8 (p. 283).

to her social performance as the interaction goes along. This gives her an upper hand in this interaction. With these tricks up her sleeve, Madeleine makes being the centre of attention look easy, even though a Goffmanian approach to her social performativity reveals the effort involved. With Madeleine answering questions seemingly honestly, it is as if Godard conceives of a *vérité* aesthetic where the point is to see how long she can keep going without showing cracks, as if finding evidence of the artificiality of the way people communicate and express themselves reaches a greater truth, than simply observing the surface of what it looks like.

At the end of this long uninterrupted shot of Madeleine doing her make-up, ending with her sensually applying her lipstick, the film, as if reaching a tipping point, now cuts to a medium close-up shot of Paul, who, not unsymbolically, is thirstily drinking a glass of water. The tables have now turned, and it is time for Madeleine to conduct the interview and to ask Paul the questions.

Paul looks nervous, serious, and timid, as if he finds it hard to understand the social framework, unable to reconcile his own sexual desire for her in that moment with polite conversation (Figure 2.40). Madeleine probes him: *‘pourquoi vous avez envie de sortir avec moi ce soir?’*; *‘il y a rien d’autre qui vous intéresse chez moi?’*; *‘quand vous dites sortir, vous voulez dire coucher? Allez répondez-moi vraiment’*; and *‘est-ce que vous sortez souvent avec des filles?’* He answers in short, abrupt sentences, and has a slight frown glued to his face.

In his responses to Madeleine, he stares towards her blankly, or looks up to the ceiling to avoid eye-contact, and sometimes lowers his eyes to the ground when he says something particularly personal, such as admitting to his attraction to Madeleine and to his desire to sleep with her, or defensively confirming going out with girls sometimes (Figure 2.41). At a certain point, he lights a cigarette. This is his social performative prop, and it makes him look cooler, calms him down, and gives him something to do with his hands while he is cornered

but forced to answer Madeleine's probing questions about his attraction for her and about his sex life (Figure 2.42).



Fig 2.40: a tense Paul

His uncomfortable social performance reflects the intensity of the social framework that Madeleine was better able to evade. Unlike her, he has no mirrors to escape into, or other objects he can target his focus on. Unlike her, he is literally up for scrutiny against a blank, clinical, sad bathroom wall. Backed up against it, he looks trapped, and unhappy to be in this interaction, even though he originally instigated it, chasing Madeleine into the bathroom for this purpose.



Fig 2.41: Avoiding eye-contact



Fig 2.42: Trapped

The film cuts back to Madeleine again for a while, and then back to Paul, as the intensity of their questions escalates. But this is not a traditional application of the shot-reverse-shot format of filming dialogue. ‘*Oui, ça me ferait plaisir de coucher avec vous, et vous?*’ announces Paul suddenly at one point, seemingly in response to a question that Godard cut out of the film, and therefore somewhat randomly. And, ‘*et avec des putains, vous êtes déjà sorti?*’ asks Madeleine, the girl who earlier was giggling sweetly at Paul’s joke about his big nose. There is a sense, therefore, that words are put in their mouths that clash with their afilmic instincts and personalities, which suggests the non-improvised quality of the dialogue here.

The interaction is carried out in an interview-like way, echoing Catherine’s earlier sociological question, ‘*aujourd’hui, Paris, à quoi rêvent les jeunes filles?*’ Indeed, Godard, has said that the film is about surveys – he takes surveys of his characters, and the characters take surveys of each other.¹²⁷ Godard presents the purpose of this methodology to be aimed at capturing the youth’s own opinions of themselves. But the questions are surprisingly explicit, which makes them sound forced. The answers they give are personal and informative, but taking a Goffmanian approach to this moment shows that the suggestion that Paul desired this interaction to happen seems implausible.

The accounts of how the film was made reveal that Godard was more of an active participant in this social interaction than is visible. Apparently, a walkie-talkie was used to feed lines to his actors from outside the bathroom. While they were filming, the questions that Godard would order his actors to ask each other came as surprises, and required them to think on their feet for responses.¹²⁸ This is likely to have enabled a kind of unrehearsed spontaneity in their performances, which is what gives them a kind of improvised aesthetic that initially

127 Pierre Daix, ‘An interview with Jean-Luc Godard’, *Les Lettres Françaises*, 21 June 1966, repr. in *Masculine Feminine; a film by Jean-Luc Godard*, ed. by Robert Hughes and Pierre Billard (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1969), pp. 236-49 (p. 237).

128 Vianey, pp. 155-60.

draws the social gaze. But the fact that the actors themselves did not know what questions they would be asking until right before they had to vocalize them, meant that their social performance during the question-asking portion of their dialogue seems disconnected. This may explain why Godard does not focus on showing the protagonist who is asking the questions, but rather on showing the one answering them.

Pragmatically, then, through the subterfuge of Godard's questions, the actors are forced to reveal to each other some of the ways in which they would handle these kinds of sexually charged and intimate interactions in real life, even if these are topics that they may not have ever considered or expressed themselves about. When Godard asks each actor to evaluate the other's physique, they might be making things explicit that they had kept to themselves thus far. The sense of discomfort, of strain, and of effort put into their social performances stems from the actors' need to negotiate the boundary between the afilmic and the profilmic, between how much to give away about their own feelings on the subject of sex and love, and how much to inject it with things they make up for the character in a split moment.

Godard is like the social framework puppeteer, steering the conversation into a direction in which his actors, without rehearsal, are coaxed into personally confessing to their sexual attitudes and preferences. While the manner in which Paul and Madeleine ask Godard's questions comes across as rigid and impersonal, many of their answers possess a vulnerable, confessional, and painful sincerity, which is coaxed out of them by Godard's socially voyeuristic methodology, and which effects a historically rooted representation of the 1965 French youth. But Godard's use of the sociological tool of interviews is at the cost of his cast's sense of comfort about being themselves, which it was the expressed aim of Rouch and Morin to do.

Certain elements of the way Godard handles this scene are suggestive, again, of a directness and an authenticity that are misleading. Godard cuts back and forth between them a

few more times, seemingly haphazardly. Indeed, it seems as though he may have filmed Madeleine's side first, for example, and Paul's side second, as there is no continuity of conversation from cut to cut. This gives their edited-together dialogue a sense of chaos and randomness, which creates an impression of authentic sociality. This chaos and randomness are not, however, the products of the afilmic social *mise en scène* that the film suggests they were.

Another indication that Godard creates the impression of allowing afilmic elements to enter the frame that are actually profilmic, is on the level of the soundtrack. While they are talking, a soundtrack of office conversation and mumbling and of phones ringing can be heard, laid over the visuals. Despite the fact that the sound is fitting for an office, it was asynchronous and non-diegetic, and spliced in, pretending to be diegetic. To borrow Jeanne Hall's analysis of a similar device in the 1960 direct cinema film *Primary* by Robert Drew, 'pairing [...] asynchronous sounds and images for conventionally realistic effects' represents a 'strategy of *cinéma vérité* self-validation'.¹²⁹ The difference is that Godard does not even actively try to mask the lack of directness of this sound, as the audio clips appear and disappear randomly throughout the interaction. Even though the audio clips render office sounds in their own authentic way, and do not sound manicured, they play a more impressionistic role, peppered in to create an accurate office bathroom effect, rather than that they mimic documentation, reminding a sharp-eyed viewer of the construct of the film.

Unlike Rouch and Morin, who openly steered conversations in *Chronique d'un été* so that the viewer had a fuller idea of what led to a subject's behaving in a certain way, Godard does so secretly as a third interlocutor from behind the scenes. The way Paul and Madeleine's interactivity is represented on screen does not give the full picture of the social framework that produced this interactivity. Although the social gaze is drawn to the authenticity of the

¹²⁹ Jeanne Hall, 'Realism as a style in Cinema Verite: A critical analysis of *Primary*', *Cinema Journal*, 30 (Summer 1991), no. 4, pp. 24-50 (p. 30).

performances of the characters because the actors were instructed to speak for themselves to the extent that they came up with answers on the spot, this authenticity is limited by the fact that Godard obfuscates the context that creates these performances. The discomfort Godard captures is not just the afilmic embarrassment of the actors in talking about sex or the diegetic awkwardness of the characters' flirting which causes awkwardness in the scene. Rather, it is actually the effect of his own methodology. What is authentically conveyed in these long shots of them improvising answers to uncomfortable and intrusive questions, is not as much their opinions on sex, but rather their manner of handling the secretive condition of the interaction. Had Léaud and Goya been in charge of creating the social framework Godard claims they are, and developed the romantic interaction in their own way, the conversation is likely to have gone very differently and resulted in different answers. But by not being in control over their own conversation, whilst needing to pretend that they are, their performances are not as readily understandable as the performances were in *Adieu Philippine* or in *Chronique d'un été*, and have a forced quality.

Paul's pain to be there and Madeleine's varnish of ease contributed to the film's critical receptions. Indeed, Truffaut, who had originally discovered Jean-Pierre Léaud as a child actor, wrote Godard an angry letter where he expressed his sadness at finding out Léaud could feel anxiety rather than joy in front of a camera, and compared Godard's tortuous manner of scrutinizing him to that of an 'entomologist'.¹³⁰ But the more vicious reaction came in response to Madeleine.

Bégaudeau proposes, as quoted in the epigraph, that flirtation is only a cover for Godard's sociological endeavours.¹³¹ As stated on the film poster, Godard sets out not just to depict the youth, but their relation to sex, specifically. He takes an interest in depicting love and affection in the context of the wider sexual revolution. The pill was going to be officially

¹³⁰ Truffaut 551-B313, Collection Cinémathèque Française [accessed May 2016].

¹³¹ Bégaudeau, p. 47.

authorized in 1967, a year after the film's release, and the film, in which the characters address contraception and abortion, thus forms part of that discussion. Women were about to gain easier control over their reproductive capacities for the first time in history, changing the landscape and implications of sexual intercourse forever, and causing an especially severe divide between generations.¹³² Sex was, as all the films in this thesis demonstrate, an important topic of its time, a topic that parents were not as well equipped to advise their children on, having grown up in very different worlds.

Godard's manner of addressing '*le sexe*' in *Masculin Féminin* does find hints of the panicked parental perspective. The film depicts very little romance. Instead, Godard insists repetitively on a long catalogue of sexuality-related moments and issues in the film: heterosexual and gay couples and make-out sessions; *ménages à trois*; casual sex, or, '*baiser*'; talking about not wanting kids; birth control; dangerous, non-medical, self-induced abortion; prostitution; and eroticized sexual assault in a fake porn film. The *New York Post* reviewer of the film at the time describes these as 'little sex shocks' to the audience.¹³³ In France, one appalled reviewer asks: '*Vos filles ressemblent-elles à ces horribles petites Françaises?*'¹³⁴ Godard's bleak representation of the modernization of the youth's attitudes to sex seems designed to upset parents.

In reporting on the youth, Godard plays into parental fear by presenting his scandalous stories under the factual guise of social reportage. Having shot the film with a documentary cinematographer, Willy Kurant, using Kodak 4X film, known for its sensitivity and for its grainy aesthetic, and using a *vérité* aesthetic that exhibits its openness to afilmic reality, Godard achieves a visual look that advertises as truthful, but that may actually come closer to

132 Colin MacCabe, *Godard: a portrait of the artist at 70* (London: Bloomsbury, 2003), pp. 191-2.

133 Archer Winsten, 'Review', *New York Post*, 19 September 1966, repr. in *Masculine Feminine; a film by Jean-Luc Godard*, ed. by Robert Hughes and Pierre Billard (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1969), pp. 272-3 (p. 273).

134 Jean-Pierre Esquenazi, *Godard et la société française des années 1960* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2004), p. 242.

propaganda.¹³⁵ However, Godard's interest in sex is not necessarily sociological. While sociological methods are used, Godard's interest in them seems more formal than integral.

A similar role for sociology can be found in one of his earlier films, *Vivre sa Vie* (1962), which has many aesthetic similarities with *Masculin Féminin*, from its organization into segments, to its *cinéma vérité* style. In it, Godard overlays a montage of the protagonist, Nana, a young woman who decides to become a prostitute to earn a better living, doing her work, with the voice-over narration of a woman, presumably Nana, asking questions about her profession and receiving studied answers from a man as if quoted directly from a questionnaire about prostitution in 1962 Paris. The voice-over of the questionnaire is sometimes mismatched with what the montage shows, as if made for different visual material. This not only accentuates the making of the film in a Brechtian way, but it also casts the extremely dry and informative tone of the voice-over as ultimately unable to truly capture what the profession of a prostitute entails. The sociological tone is one amongst many tools that Godard uses to present different facets of his protagonist's experience. Similarly, the sociological tone with which Godard addresses sex in *Masculin Féminin* expresses an interest more in the strange form of sociological discourse, than in the sociological underpinnings of the sexual landscape of 1965 France.

Godard's meta-cinematic posturing as having made an authentic film succeeds in drawing the social gaze, but through a Goffmanian engagement with what the social gaze finds there, the viewer simultaneously becomes aware of the limits of this authenticity, and is thus made aware of a heightened barrier between the afilmic and the profilmic.

¹³⁵ Antoine de Baecque, *Godard: Biographie* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, Editions Grasset & Fasquelle, 2010), p. 312.

Social Performance Traps

I just discussed how Godard obfuscates his active role in creating the social frameworks of his characters' interactions, social frameworks he presents as being theirs alone. While the film showed there to be two young people interacting, the film did not show Godard, outside of the frame, communicating with them as a third interlocutor. The way they performed the interaction, however, hinted that what happened in front of the camera was influenced by activity behind the camera. Thus, as a viewer, we were not given all the ingredients to map out the dynamics of the social *mise en scène* that gave rise to the characters' social performances, but we became aware of a dynamic that stems from behind the camera.

A similar situation can be sensed in the following segment. This moment is perhaps the most titillating to a social gaze, because of the way it draws attention to the gap between what Godard suggests is happening on screen, and what is actually happening on the set. Halfway through the film, Paul has quit his job at the magazine to become a survey researcher for the French Public Opinion Institute and starts working on a survey designed specifically for young French female subjects. It is yet another mode of presentation for Paul and Godard's perpetual search for an answer to the question of what young French girls want. Paul's change of careers is addressed in a conversation at the very start of the segment, which is titled '*dialogue avec un produit de consommation*'.

The segment consists in one long uninterrupted immobile shot of the same girl, nineteen-year old Elsa Leroy, who was elected *Mademoiselle 19 ans* by the magazine *Mademoiselle age tendre*, which is how she knows Madeleine and Paul. The shot, in its long unbroken focus on one person, echoes Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests* (1964-1966). The uninterruptedness in the *Screen Tests* serves to capture the entire ritual of people's behaviours from start to end. Similarly, in this segment, Godard does not let up with Miss 19, and

captures the entire cadence, rhythm, and personality of her unrehearsed, unedited, natural social performance. But, whereas Warhol's *Screen Tests* were silent, the inclusion of sound, and specifically, of Elsa's answers to Paul's sociological survey questions from behind the camera, give the focus of the shot a sociological spin – her social performance is tied to what she says, the meaning of her body language taken in tandem with the questions she receives and develops answers to. Her performance is, in other words, ideal for a Goffmanian approach.

While Godard describes the film as a series of surveys, this is the only interview in the film that poses as an official interview for the national survey institute. It is conducted nearly entirely unidirectionally between an interviewee and an interviewer, with the exception of a few moments where Elsa asks questions back. Because of the aesthetic set-up that formalizes this segment as a proper interview, the viewer's social gaze adjusts to the expectations that arise from interviews and the particular social frameworks they exist in.

The sociological tool of the interview, according to Norman K. Denzin, has been 'the basic information gathering tool for the social sciences [...] for a full century'.¹³⁶ Its creation of meaning is 'contextual, improvised, and performative' and it channels our 'performance-based, dramaturgical culture', or, in other words, our Goffmanian social reality.¹³⁷ *Chronique d'un été* exemplifies the kind of sociology that sees interviews as a tool that offers 'an authentic gaze into the soul of another' and that elevates the interviewee's 'narrated experience', or 'personal confessional' as 'the authentic'.¹³⁸ The interview succeeds in formatting the social framework of an interaction in such a way that what the interviewee says is interpreted to be an authentic expression about themselves. Indeed, in a sense, the shot

136 Norman K. Denzin, 'The reflexive interview and a performative social science', *Qualitative Research*, 1 (2001), no. 1, pp. 23-46 (p. 23).

137 Denzin, p. 24.

138 Paul Atkinson and David Silverman, 'Kundera's Immortality: The Interview Society and the Invention of Self', *Qualitative Inquiry*, 3 (September 1997), no. 3, pp. 304-25 (p. 305).

seems to mimic the belief that there could be nothing more visually honest than a long uninterrupted shot of a person answering questions.

In postmodernism, however, authenticity is less of a certainty, as the interview merges the ‘personal confessional’ with entertainment.¹³⁹ Interviews become a means to make ‘private [...] lived experiences’ a ‘public commodity’ with entertainment value. This has the effect of ‘objectify(ing) individuals’.¹⁴⁰ Godard’s use of the interview seems to explore this invisible boundary between sociology and entertainment. Paul’s interview of Miss 19 toes the line between listening to and observing a person as they narrate their experience, and objectifying that narrative for entertainment or shock value, which, as we saw in the context of Godard’s representation of sex, is one feature of his methodology.

Narratively, this segment serves as a kind of early climax to the film, consolidating some of the themes that have been peppered throughout it, notably sex, love, and politics, into one explicit confrontational conversation. The segment’s intertitle ‘*dialogue avec un produit de consommation*’ warns the viewer of Godard’s bias, his objectification of the subject as the capitalist stereotype, and his disregard for the principles of objectivity of the scientific method that he uses for a different purpose. It indicates that the actual purpose of the interview here will be a mixture of mock sociology and shock entertainment. But the moment nonetheless, and perhaps despite itself, manages to capture something authentic about the social reality of this young 1965 French woman.

For the duration of the entire interview, Elsa Leroy has the same pose. She is leaning against a windowsill, posing seemingly comfortably in its open frame, wearing a woolly sweater, her hair done, and a smile professionally glued to her face, as she looks either at Paul or straight into the immobile camera (Figure 2.43). The asymmetrical structure of the interview is crucial in formatting how the Goffmanian approach is applied. Leroy, as the

¹³⁹ Atkinson and Silverman, pp. 304-25.

¹⁴⁰ Denzin, p. 28.

interviewee, is the only one of the two to be exposed in the frame, and this places the full emphasis of the camera on her body. The only way the viewer is made aware of Paul's social performance is via his voice. There is a second layer of asymmetry as a result of the confrontation of fiction with reality: whereas Paul is a fictional character, Leroy is a real woman genuinely participating not just as herself, but as the real Miss 19 – an afilmic subject of a profilmic interview. So while Godard calls the segment a 'dialogue', in actuality, just as was the case in the bathroom romance scene, answers are prioritized over questions, and full weight is put on Leroy's responses as historical evidence for the state of the youth 'today'.



Fig 2.43: Professionally friendly Miss 19

Leroy was somewhat of a starlet at the time, having won, as she ingenuously explains in the opening questions of the interview, a car, trips, and lunch with superstar Johnny Halliday as a result of being elected *Mademoiselle 19 ans* by the readers of the magazine *Mademoiselle Age Tendre*.¹⁴¹ Leroy both represents the readers, presumably girls of her age, as well as the magazine. Her ambassadorship of the magazine implies that she plays the interviewee role as an entertainer and as a spokesperson, but also as an ordinary French girl. Indeed, her body language reveals a combination of professionalism and youth. Leroy seems poised and at ease with the task of socially performing the kinds of responses a Miss 19 is

¹⁴¹ Leroy recorded an EP, following in Chantal Goya's footsteps. While her musical career was short lived, the process immortalized her as part of the French *yé-yé* craze nonetheless.

supposed to have to the questions she is asked on camera. Thus, the interview is exploited by both parties, by Godard for sociology and entertainment, and by Miss 19 for the purpose of advertising.

The interview starts with questions about Leroy's friendship with Madeleine, and moves swiftly on to her ambassador role as Miss 19: '*C'est merveilleux, j'ai tellement eu d'avantages, tu peux pas savoir. [...] J'ai gagné des tas de choses merveilleuses, j'ai eu une voiture, des voyages fantastiques, partout.*' Her use of exaggerated terms like 'marvelous', 'fantastic', and 'everywhere' serve to sell the whole concept of her role, and thus, by proxy, to smother the theme of the magazine in positive-sounding words. Leroy's use of superlative terms reflect her intention to be unquestionably endorsing. The core concept of electing a young person to talk about how much they love their life after it was changed by a magazine is so that they advertise the magazine using their *own* language, with words that resonate with her generation of consumers. For this part of the interview, then, she plays the social role of a shameless advertiser for the magazine: this is, after all, expected of her as Miss 19. At the same time, playing the social role of Miss 19 can be seen as a protective measure against intrusion into her privacy as Elsa Leroy. By answering as Miss 19, rather than necessarily as herself, she can put some distance between her and the interview.

As the interview progresses, Paul tries to chip away at this practised, polite, public relations front to get to the Elsa Leroy underneath Miss 19. The questions start becoming more and more intrusive and challenging, whilst also becoming more personal and revealing that there is not really a 'survey' at the centre of this conversation. Being filmed in real-time in one uninterrupted take, rather than consisting of highlight snippets edited together, the viewer gets to see Elsa Leroy's manner of handling the escalation of the tone of the interview. Starting this change in topic, Paul asks her about her education. Leroy admits that she stopped studying once she got elected. Paul then asks: '*vous préférez mieux avoir votre voiture que*

vos deux bacs?’, opposing in this case materialism to intellectual ambition. The question is rhetorical, since it is already known to the interviewer that she owns the car, and thus the question seems to invite her to confirm that she prefers material goods over intellectual ones in a manner that discredits her. But Leroy is ready for this trap and responds that she has both – a degree and a car. In reaction, and without a moment’s hesitation, Paul breaks from his interviewer-like even-keel tone and chuckles as he responds ‘*ah bon*’, impressed by her dual achievements.

Paul’s spontaneous chuckle is meaningful too in another sense. Accounts of the manner in which the scene was shot by Godard’s former assistant, Pascal Aubier, reveal the deceptive use of its asymmetrical features.¹⁴² Godard instructed Aubier to ask Leroy if she would be part of the film, and to invite her to come to the apartment that would serve as the location, to do some test shots, perhaps purposefully channelling Warhol. Without her knowledge, the test turned out to be the real shoot. While she posed for the camera, Léaud was positioned behind the camera with a discreet earpiece on, and was fed questions to ask her by Godard, who was hiding in the next room. Godard thus uses Paul, a relatable, friendly, age-appropriate peer, to serve as his non-threatening avatar in this interaction. The questions Paul had been asking her were actually questions Godard came up with on the spot. Again, Godard influences his characters’ social framework secretly from the sidelines.

The chuckle represents a rare moment where Léaud’s Paul, rather than Godard’s Paul, interacts with Leroy, and thus reflects a moment of authentic social performance from his part – authentic because it engages more fully with what is at stake in the afilmic social *mise en scène* that the viewer may not be privy to, rather than in the profilmic social *mise en scène* of the scene as Godard presents it. The cause for his chuckle might be that he is potentially aware of the fact that Godard’s set-up in this instance did not deliver the embarrassing sound

¹⁴² Baecque, *Godard*, p. 313.

bite which it seemed he was fishing for: that of Leroy, a symbol of capitalism, the '*produit de consommation*', admitting she preferred having a car to having an education.

The next question demonstrates a more assertive approach on Godard's behalf. There is a brief moment where we suddenly hear the sound of giggling girls, serving, perhaps, as another instance of asynchronous sound masking as diegetic sound, to cover for the time it takes for Godard to think of his new line of questioning and feeding it to Léaud over the earpiece. Then, Paul launches into the question: '*D'après toi, le socialisme a-t-il encore de l'avenir?*' Leroy is slightly taken aback – '*le socialisme? c'est ça que tu m'as demandé?*' – and eventually admits to her inability to properly answer because '*je suis pas tellement qualifiée pour te répondre*'. It becomes clear that Godard is devising an attack on Miss 19 in political terms, aimed at trapping social performances that he thinks discredit her. Paul asks several guiding questions to coax an answer, suggesting, for example, that she think about socialism in terms of being the opposite of '*la vie à l'Américaine*'. When Leroy still hesitates, Paul simply asks her to describe '*la vie à l'Américaine*'. This question ignites something passionate in Leroy.

Having traveled to New York City as part of her winning 'Miss 19', the question gives Leroy an opportunity to sincerely express her admiration for 'America'. Her voice changes in timbre, and is suddenly lighter, dreamier, more elated, but also more nostalgic, and she slightly tilts her head and looks out in the distance, grasping onto her memories, displaying more emotional sincerity than in anything she has said thus far (Figures 2.44 and 2.45). While the change in social performativity is subtle, the long shot of her maintaining the same pose makes it immediately noticeable:

MISS 19: C'est un rythme de vie très rapide, sans doute, très libre! Non, je te dis ça parce que j'ai eu la chance d'aller aux États-Unis, et de voir ce que c'était... C'était assez extraordinaire, c'était bien, ouai, vraiment... Tout est différent de la France, tu comprends... On vit... On travaille beaucoup, mais tout est rapide, tu a l'impression de courir sans arrêt, d'être très important, d'avoir des tas de choses à

faire. C'est la femme qui a le rôle important, tu comprends, aux États-Unis, c'est pas mal.



Fig 2.44: Elsa in Paris



Fig 2.45: Elsa dreaming of 'America'

Now, she is responding as herself first and foremost, speaking from her personal experiences. The manner in which she raves about 'American life' is idealistic, but it represents a rare moment of straightforward, convinced, and committed social behaviour that originates from the subject, rather than from the duplicitous film set of *Masculin Féminin*. Responding genuinely as herself rather than as Miss 19, she embodies most sincerely the young women she represents.

But as soon as she finishes her sentence, Godard cuts this inspired *élan* short by changing the direction of the interview yet again, in what seems like a spiteful decision. This time, his new line of questioning successfully embarrasses her and gets her to make a mistake. Paul asks her for the meaning of '*réactionnaire*'. Trying to be a good sport, having not answered so many questions already, she replies '*réagir contre beaucoup de choses*', failing Godard's vocabulary test. And finally, at the end of the interview, Paul quizzes her again, '*tu sais où il y a la guerre en ce moment?*', to which she replies with no, after which the film moves on to the next scene.

Leroy is the victim of an imbalance of power. Rather than initiating the conversation, she can only respond to Godard's cues intended to become the performance that Godard

envisions for this sequence: '*le point de vue devient une force contraignante qui transforme les personnages en éléments d'une démonstration à laquelle ils n'ont pas accès*'.¹⁴³ Leroy loses control over the impact of her social performances because the asymmetry of the interview's social framework prevents her from influencing it in return. She has not defence for the Goffmanian impression management faux pas Godard was trying to draw from her, to illustrate some aspect of her generation's shortcomings, such as their perceived political ignorance and blind acceptance of the capitalist lifestyle associated with the United States.

Unlike conversations in *Chronique d'un été*, the 'dialogue' here does not have the function of capturing authentic personal experiences. Instead, the micro-story of the segment seems to suggest that Godard was using the interview as a vehicle for social embarrassment. The result of asking her repeated questions about something she admits that she knows nothing about, questions which she even tells Paul that she 'dislikes', is that Godard can sculpt Leroy's social performance into a negative portrait of her as someone whose position of authority over a generation says something about that generation's general state. While Godard douses the situation in an appearance of objectivity, using Paul's credentials as a survey researcher and documentary cinematography, it is in fact highly subjective, and expressive of his own dismissal of Elsa Leroy and her generation.

While it is possible that a contemporaneous audience would have been convinced by Godard's assassination of Leroy's character, its strength has faded with time. Instead, what draws the social gaze is the switch Leroy makes from giving cookie-cutter answers to being truthful about how much her trip to New York City inspired her. With this moment, Leroy reclaims authority over her narrative, and demonstrates that her generation had legitimate dreams and desires that she represents sincerely, unapologetically, and vulnerably. Her sincere response stands out from the more embarrassing brackets in which it is framed. It represents one of the youth's moments of runaway independence from Godard's deceptive

143 Esquenazi, p. 241.

traps, and thus, paradoxically, perhaps comes closest to achieving a portrayal of the youth of France ‘*aujourd’hui*’ compared to everything else in the film.

Although Godard’s use of certain interaction formats is marked by a calculating dynamic, there was also a sincere dimension to Godard’s project. He believed that it was because his characters are ‘still’ young, and that they are ‘more open’, expressive, and eager to socialize and to connect with people in ways that are not as guarded as the older generation, and not yet discouraged by the shortcomings of language, that they make ideal subjects for a film that tries to document a social group’s way of life.¹⁴⁴ For Godard, what makes this film necessary is that it presents an opportunity for an audience to ‘talk’ to young people, and to better get to know them, via film.¹⁴⁵ Whether Godard intentionally ignored Leroy’s genuine interest in a topic to switch to a topic she was clearly not interested in, or whether he did not think to let Leroy say more on the topic of her choice so as to actually document something characteristic of the youth of 1965 France, is a mystery. Thankfully, the moment, including Godard’s participation in it, was captured, inviting a social gaze on it, that, with a Goffmanian approach, allows for a re-interpretation of the scene’s more precise story.

Conclusion

Godard’s *vérité* aesthetic in *Masculin Féminin* is the most challenging of the film corpus. The film claims to tell social stories about the French youth of 1965 in the vein of *Chronique d’un été*, but taking a social gaze on various segments reveals that the social storytelling involved is not as straightforward as the *cinéma vérité* film it sequels. The film resembles *Chronique d’un été* by focusing on young, energetic, talkative characters who, although they are not

¹⁴⁴ Daix, p. 239.

¹⁴⁵ Daix, pp. 239-40.

featured as themselves, do play versions of themselves. By following them as they navigate various aspects of their social lives, the film draws a social gaze on their way of being.

But it deviates from *Chronique d'un été* in Godard's execution of the use of similar ingredients, specifically, by masking the degree to which he employs the participatory mode of the genre. He emphasizes observational footage of Parisian streets, real locations populated by afilmic extras, long uninterrupted shots, and direct sound. But Godard partakes in a greater manipulation of the frame than he lets on, and the conversations he captures take subtle turns that feel ever so slightly forced, disingenuous, and disconnected from the context the film presents. While the characters' social performances draw a social gaze, by the same token, the social gaze becomes attuned to the incomplete depiction of the social framework that supposedly produces the social performances in the film, ultimately forcing the viewer to question the veracity of the fact that the film is rooted in the social reality of 1965 France. While Godard's profilmic methods seem to result in dismissive portrayals of the youth, when the characters' genuine engagement with the social situation Godard stages for his actors bypasses his grip, this is when he manages to capture, whether deliberately or not, the most convincing portrait of the youth.

2.4. Conclusion

Adieu Philippine and *Masculin Féminin* both, in different ways, draw a social gaze upon their young adult characters. They cast their lens on young social beings whose forms of sociality confuse their parents' generation. Rozier and Godard emerged as filmmakers who infiltrate these youthful scenes to capture some of their unique social environments with the aim of representing this new perspective on life.

Taking a Goffmanian approach towards the two films' varying representations of sociality has revealed that while both films are interested in capturing historically grounded facts about the youth, they also allegorize them to very different effects. While, as we saw, some scenes in the films were filmed using more traditional cinematography, more so in *Masculin Féminin* than in *Adieu Philippine*, both films experiment with the first order of authenticity by employing observational cinematography and improvisation. In *Adieu Philippine*, observational cinematography is applied to scenes in which the cast of non-actors participate in afilmic social situations, such as at the studio or at the Club Med. Thus, the improvisation Rozier captures is rooted in historical reality. The cinematography complements the performativity. In *Masculin Féminin*, on the other hand, observational cinematography is used to capture the streets of Paris without characters. When it comes to filming scenes with his cast, the extent of the afilmic world that is allowed to influence the scene is reduced. Performativity, is, in fact, much more a result of Godard's manipulations than the film lets on. Indeed, Godard uses his *vérité* aesthetic to signal spontaneity, by lingering voyeuristically on his cast with very long, uncomfortable shots that capture everything about their behaviour. But taking a Goffmanian approach to the scenes he captures

reveals, in fact, that Godard does not also fully reveal the social framework in which these behaviours arise.

In both films, the second order of authenticity is used to accentuate the divide between the youth and their elders. In *Adieu Philippine*, older characters are portrayed with overly theatrical and generic performance styles that clash not just with the naturalistic performance styles of the youth, but also, by virtue of the first order of authenticity, with the ordinary afilmic behaviour of the background actors who populate many parts of the film, and thus, with the film world in general. In *Masculin Féminin*, Godard captures a similar allegory by simply erasing normal older characters altogether, only portraying grown-ups when they are involved in extreme and sometimes surreal situations, to illustrate the chasm between their social worlds.

Crucially, however, where Rozier operates from an ambition of documenting behaviour as it arises in plausible, if not always afilmic social reality, Godard complicates this by manipulating the social reality that gives rise to the social framework in which his cast are to perform, so as to force them towards awkwardness, as if predicated on the idea that truth lies on the fringes of social behaviour, rather than in its normalcy. At their extremes, Rozier humanizes the youth to a social gaze whereas Godard estranges them.

Although Godard stereotyped his characters as '*les enfants de Marx et de Coca-Cola*', the following chapter will look at true children of Marx: regular teenagers and parents living in 1960s socialist Czechoslovakia as depicted by the Czechoslovak New Wave films *Černý Petr* (*Black Peter*) (1963) by Miloš Forman and *Intimní Osvětlení* (*Intimate Lighting*) (1965) by Ivan Passer. In these two films, social performance is shown to respond to the contradicting pressures and demands of the collective and the individual. In various pointed ways, they reflect on the predicament of playing incongruous social roles, and on the way in which social performativity channels the experience of a split sociality.

3

Split Sociality in Miloš Forman's *Černý Petr* (1963) and Ivan Passer's *Intimní Osvětlení* (1965)

3.1. Introduction

This chapter is devoted to an analysis of the representation of social performance when it arises from a split experience of sociality, in Miloš Forman's early Czechoslovak New Wave film, *Černý Petr* (*Black Peter*) (1963) and in Ivan Passer's debut feature film, *Intimní Osvětlení* (*Intimate Lighting*) (1965). *Adieu Philippine* and *Masculin Féminin* touched upon the issue of heterogeneous social spaces and the experience of incompatible performance styles and social frameworks. In *Černý Petr* and *Intimní Osvětlení*, however, the incongruence of these social roles, while resulting from different circumstances in each film, echoes the wider fractured social climate that was particular to 1960s Czechoslovakia.

While the French and Czechoslovak New Waves have historical and stylistic similarities as European New Wave cinemas of the 1960s, one important difference consists in the way the Czechoslovak New Wave was subjected to a particularly severe curtailment of freedom of speech that impacted and transformed both the act of filmmaking and everyday life as a whole. As normal life was politicized, social performativity became a censored mode of expression in itself, and filmmakers were faced with the challenge of addressing the fractured state of social life without being suppressed for doing so.

Before delving into the films, I will introduce Forman and Passer as filmmakers interested in authentically depicting their social surroundings and the particular *vérité* aesthetics they developed to do so. I will also touch upon the place of these films in the corpus, and on the unique variables that they bring to a study, like this one, of the transcultural tendency towards an aesthetic of authenticity of the 1960s cinematic New Wave. But first, I will present a brief history of the Czechoslovak New Wave, as it is a history less known than that of the *nouvelle vague*, and as it sheds light on the emergence of the predominantly French genre of *cinéma vérité* in this part of the world.

At the end of the Second World War in 1945, as decided at the Yalta Conference, the Red Army liberated Czechoslovakia from Nazi occupation. Czechoslovakia joined the Soviet Union as a satellite state in 1948 through a coup orchestrated by the recently elected Czechoslovak Communist Party with Soviet support. The 1950s were spent by the government focusing on the ‘re-education’ of the Czechoslovak population in Communist ideology, uprooting ‘bourgeois traditions’, and effectively teaching the value of ‘outward conformity’ using oppressive methods such as brutal Stalinist purges and show trials to suppress dissent, and any form of opposition.¹⁴⁶

The impact of the decade-long social atmosphere of the pressure to conform on ordinary citizens resulted in a kind of split between public and private life. One learned to see public life as a theatre for performed agreement, for dogmatic participation, and for a capitulation of sorts to the experience of totalitarianism. Private life became the exclusive realm for people to exercise some measure of authority of self, retreating to their proverbial kitchens to cautiously express sincere and critical thought. Social performativity therefore emerged sharply in this social reality as a tool with a polarizing function: adequately

¹⁴⁶ Mary Heimann, *Czechoslovakia: the State that Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011, first publ. in 2009), p. 210.

conforming to the political narrative and masking the truth in one context, and cautiously shedding this mask in another.

In 1956, three years after Joseph Stalin's death, Nikita Khrushchev, then leader of the Soviet Union, openly denounced Stalin's authoritarian methods. He thus ushered in a new socialist era of reform that would spread throughout the Eastern Bloc, known as the Khrushchev Thaw. This was followed in several satellite states with new cultural and artistic movements, such as the Polish Film School that emerged in the late 1950s. For various reasons, the Thaw did not reach Czechoslovakia until the early 1960s, and 'in 1960 [...] the ruling Czechoslovak Communist Party was still one of the most authoritarian and uncompromising in Europe'.¹⁴⁷ It was only in the early 1960s that a cultural and artistic New Wave was able to not just fend off total oppression, but to take root for five years as a counter-cultural movement reacting to the establishment.

The Czechoslovak New Wave film movement officially began in 1963 with the release of a handful of mostly first-time feature films by a group of more or less recent graduates from the Prague film school, FAMU (*Filmová a televizní fakulta Akademie múzických umění v Praze*).¹⁴⁸ *Černý Petr* is one of those first films, directed by Forman with the writing assistance of his long-time friend Ivan Passer and of his collaborator Jaroslav Papoušek. Passer made *Intimní Osvětlení* two years later, at the height of the wave, also based on a script co-written by Papoušek.

Under socialism, the film industry in which Forman and Passer were working had its political stipulations. While the French film industry that yielded *Adieu Philippine* was subject to censorship on the topic of the Algerian war, the Czechoslovak New Wave was subject to a much more pervasive and ideologically controlling kind of censorship.

Nationalized in 1948, the film industry was under the control of the Ministry of Culture. Its

¹⁴⁷ Heimann, p. 212.

¹⁴⁸ Translation: The Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague.

purpose became the advancement of the definitive artistic doctrine of the Soviet Union: socialist realism.

First articulated by Andrei Zhdanov at the 1934 Congress of Soviet Writers, the doctrine required that art should not be of 'objective reality', but of 'reality in its revolutionary development' towards the ideal of communism. Furthermore, it should 'be able to glimpse our tomorrow' and therefore create 'works of high attainment, of high ideological and artistic content', which, unlike Western romanticism, would not just be a 'utopian dream', but become a Soviet actuality through 'preparation' and 'conscious planned work'.¹⁴⁹ Politically correct films showed the 'simple greatness of man' and 'his ability to transform the world, to create a new socialist society' and 'communism [triumphant], one way or another, over its enemies'.¹⁵⁰

This doctrine was paired with a Kafkaesque bureaucratic system that consisted of artistic councils that held filmmakers in check and tweaked the content of scripts before green-lighting them. Censorship was carried out in inconsistent ways to keep artists on their toes; 'In truth, no one could ever be certain what politically correct, socialist realist art was supposed to look like', writes Applebaum.¹⁵¹ Describing the state of the film industry in the pre-New Wave period, Forman wrote that 'the country's culture was, in practice, degraded to the status of a special branch of education and propaganda'.¹⁵²

Having witnessed the punitive repercussions suffered by older generations of filmmakers as a result of openly challenging the socialist realist doctrine in the late 1950s, Forman, Passer, Papoušek and their peers 'first learned to read between the lines, and then

149 Andrei Zhdanov, 'Soviet literature: The Richest in ideas, the Most Advanced Literature', in *Problems of Soviet Literature: Reports and Speeches at the First Soviet Writers' Congress*, ed. by H.F. Scott (New York: International Publishers, 1935)

150 Alice Lovejoy, *Army Film and the Avant Garde: Cinema and Experiment in the Czechoslovak Military* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), p. 375.

151 Anne Applebaum, *The Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe* (London: Penguin Books, 2013), p. 359.

152 Miloš Forman, 'Chill Wind on the New Wave', *Saturday Review*, 23 December 1967, pp. 10-1; pp. 41-2 (p. 11).

learned to write between the lines'.¹⁵³ They were greatly aided on this quest by the formal training they received at FAMU. While every student would excel in unique styles that would come to sculpt the richness of the Czechoslovak New Wave, ranging from a continuation of the Czech tradition of surrealism, to absurdism, fantasy, historical dramas, musical comedy, and Gothic horror, according to their cinematography professor Jaromir Šofr, the most important quality that united them all despite these unique styles was to 'not be conforming'.¹⁵⁴

Forman and Passer were especially galvanized by their rejection of the hypocrisy of the representation of everyday life by socialist realist film. Passer recounts seeing films showing workers living in luxurious apartments that were clearly studio-built, when in actuality Czechoslovakia was experiencing a housing crisis.¹⁵⁵ As a result, Forman and Passer made films that are exemplary of Fillitz and Saris's description of 'counter-cultural movements': in the face of 'unsatisfactory cultural situations' they felt the need to create their own form of authenticity to reflect on the 'inappropriate character of the present dominant norms and values of social life' as expressed by socialist realism.¹⁵⁶

In developing their aesthetics of authenticity, Forman and Passer drew from their education. FAMU offered them exposure to foreign films that the general public was barred from seeing. Illustrating the vague legality of the curriculum, Passer has recounted how their film history professor started each academic year saying 'if you tell anyone outside of the school that I am showing you these films, I will deny it'.¹⁵⁷ So, in addition to Russian film and documentary, Forman and Passer were exposed to various recent and contemporary Western

153 Pawlikowski, BBC2. Notably, there was a film festival in 1959 called Banska Bystrica festival where Elmar Klos and Jan Kadar showed a film that the ideological watchdogs deemed 'bourgeois', for which they were banned from working for two years.

154 Pawlikowski, BBC2.

155 Olivier Père, 'Interview with Ivan Passer', *Festival de Fribourg*, 27 July 2012, <<http://www.arte.tv/sites/fr/olivierpere/2012/07/27/interview-with-ivan-passer/>> [accessed 2 January 2016]

156 Fillitz and Saris, p. 16.

157 Ivan Passer, 'LFS Masterclass', Letní filmová škola uherské hradiště, Uherské Hradiště, 23 July 2016; online video recording, YouTube, 29 July 2016, <<https://youtu.be/UTXmTUPg7lQ?t=33m53s>> [accessed 5 September 2016]

cinematic movements and styles, such as Italian neorealism, British Free Cinema, and French cinema.

Forman and Passer agreed that ‘the only way to make films in this Godforsaken country’ could be summarized by four simple filmmaking principles that acted as their unofficial manifesto of sorts: their films would be comedies, shot in real locations, using natural available light where possible, and with non-professional actors.¹⁵⁸ On the one hand, these principles mirror Italian neorealism as well as the basic ingredients of documentary drama. With these methods Forman and Passer distance themselves from the blatant artificiality of socialist realist studio-shot films.

On the other hand, there were added practical benefits to this manifesto that were specific to the Czechoslovak context. Indeed, their methods facilitated the practical evasion of censorship by putting physical barriers between themselves and potential spies. Shooting in real locations put distance between their films and the heavily monitored Barrandov film studios. Using no artificial light, non-studio actors, and often no added costume or make-up, significantly reduced the size of crews and, with that, the possibility for spies to infiltrate their productions. While the decision to make comedies primarily stemmed from their sensibilities and tastes, with hindsight, Forman believed that they evaded political attention because comedy was not taken as seriously.¹⁵⁹ The subject matter of both films also helped to prevent alarming the artistic councils. Their treatments and scripts about ordinary people seemed so banal, uneventful, and boring, in their words, that they were seen as benign and harmless.

Forman and Passer would apply their manifesto in *Černý Petr* and in *Intimní Osvětlení*, both employing non-actors for satirical comedies about ordinary people living everyday life, shot in real locations and lit only by natural light. However, Forman and Passer built on these basic elements with quite different *vérité* aesthetics, taking more or less distance from the

158 Père, ‘Interview with Ivan Passer’

159 Peter Hames, *The Czechoslovak New Wave* (London: Wallflower Press, 2005), p. 110.

emphasis on the afilmic usually made by the genre of *cinéma vérité*. Thus, whereas Forman is open to scriptlessness, improvisation, and observational cinematography, Passer's *vérité* aesthetic is achieved with an elaborate script in a more classical way with a premeditated use of the camera and no improvisation whatsoever, in service, nevertheless, of capturing sociality authentically.

Indeed, within the context of this thesis, *Intimní Osvětlení* deviates from the kind of *vérité* aesthetics we have examined thus far and that we will examine in *Černý Petr*, by removing itself further from the improvisational and observational roots of *cinéma vérité* of his colleague and partner, and by capturing authentic everyday sociality through a more classical, stylized, and premeditated representation, which we will also continue to see in the next chapter with Rohmer. Forman, Passer, and Papoušek are often teamed together for their aesthetic similarity, and referred to by some scholars, like Peter Hames, as the 'Forman School'. One of the side-effects of studying these two films is that it will give us the opportunity to explore how Passer's version of this method differs from that of Forman.

It is worth noting that while the Czechoslovak New Wave was faced with political restrictions and limitations that forced them into a subversive creative bubble, it did not, by contrast to the French New Wave, operate under commercial pressure. Since the film industry did not nationally operate in a market context, and since filmmakers were employed by the studio and received a monthly wage, they were spared the pressure to make their films profitable but were encouraged, instead, to win international awards. This placed them in a unique creative position that allowed them to have several films financed over the space of just a few years. This combination of political and economic factors is likely to have contributed to the particular creative fervor of the Czechoslovak New Wave.

The Czechoslovak New Wave ended in 1968 with the cessation of what became known as '*Pražské jaro*' – the Prague Spring – the title of a classical music festival that came to

define a period of several months of intense cultural and social liberalization spurred on by Alexander Dubček's introduction of a reform program called 'Socialism with a human face', upon becoming Chairman of the Czechoslovak Communist Party in January of 1968. Far too liberal for the USSR, this period was swiftly and aggressively put to an end by the military invasion of Czechoslovakia in August of the same year. After Dubček was supplanted and his reforms were reversed, Czechoslovakia entered a period of transition towards 'normalization', which would last until the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989.

In the direct aftermath of the invasion of 1968, a blacklist was established of around one hundred banned film titles, including Passer's *Intimní Osvětlení*, and, in a special section of just four films 'banned forever', Forman's *Hoří, má panenko* (*Firemen's Ball*) (1967), his last Czech film before he went into exile in the United States. This perhaps reflects the true threat to Soviet hegemony that the authorities saw in Forman and Passer's ability to make seemingly uneventful but funny documents of ordinary life. Indeed, the French critic Louis Marcorelles said of the Czechoslovak New Wave's varying adoptions of direct cinema and *cinéma vérité* to depict the everyday, 'for Czechoslovakia' this in itself was 'revolutionary'.¹⁶⁰

As films that focus on the aesthetic of everyday life, rather than on socialist fantasies of everyday life, *Černý Petr* and *Intimní Osvětlení* represent sociality through a varyingly authentic and satirical lens. They thus present interesting cases to study with a Goffmanian approach. We begin with *Černý Petr*. Based on the book of the same title by Papoušek who co-wrote the script with Forman, *Černý Petr* looks at a young man, Petr, and his teenage experience of everyday life around the town of Kolín in 1963. The film follows Petr as he navigates the contrasting perceptions and experiences of the everyday world by members of different generations. These clashes are portrayed through banal, yet ludicrous, interactions with colleagues, family, and friends.

¹⁶⁰ Marcorelles, p. 108.

Intimní Osvětlení depicts what the social performance of multiple social roles simultaneously looks like in the context of family life. As a close and careful visual examination of the microcosm of the household, *Intimní Osvětlení* peels back the sociological layers of intimacy that are shown to exist between different members of a family and their friends, through an intricate use of framing and montage. In its domestic abstractness, the film considers the phenomenon of experiencing split social realities under one roof.

3.2. Role Models in *Černý Petr*

I still dislike grand manner, operatic emotions, pathos, still distrust gestures and attitudes that are larger than everyday life. I believe that if you look at it carefully, ordinary behavior packs more than enough drama.

- Miloš Forman.¹⁶¹

Puppets and Puppeteers

The film opens with a shot of a door and a window. In walks a middle-aged man, closing the door on the town square of Kolín behind him. As he walks further into the space, the camera pans across to reveal a sleeping grocery store, fully stocked, neat and tidy: ready for business. The dullness of the moment clashes with a bombastic opening soundtrack of Julius Fučík's military march '*Vjezd gladiátorů*' ('The March of the Gladiators').

This soundtrack is used only very briefly, like an explosive call to alertness on the part of the viewer. As the store manager walks over to a radio, his steps almost perfectly synchronize with the beat of the 'march', which creates a comedic dichotomy between his arrival at the grocery store and a gladiator's entrance in a colosseum, and plants the seed of spectacle that likens the grocery store to a gladiator's arena.

When he turns a knob on the radio, the volume of the soundtrack lowers, suggesting its diegetic origin. But as soon as the manager disappears in the back of the store, leaving the camera to take in the cash register while the title cards start to appear over the image, the song dies down, suggesting, instead, that it is non-diegetic. By matching the manager's steps to the rhythm of the march, and by lowering the volume of the song with the manager's turning of a knob on the radio, only to let it die down by itself, Forman indulges in formal playfulness to

¹⁶¹ Forman and Novák, pp. 49-50.

create a film space, not unlike that of Godard, which provides no consistent sense of what is real and of what is artificial.

Forman's post-production manipulations thus throw an otherwise observationally captured visual world into ontological imbalance. This dynamic between observational footage, respectful of the first order of authenticity, and the formal playfulness of the second order of authenticity, is a consistent trait of the film that makes Forman's *vérité* aesthetic more comparable to Godard's than to Rozier's. However, where Godard duplicitously manipulates the execution of the performances, Forman refrains from doing this. Forman aestheticizes social reality not as a background, but as a symbolically charged social context to authentic performances.

As soon as the brief but pregnant use of '*Vjezd gladiátorů*' ends, and the title card appears in a funky 1960s white font (Figure 3.1), an entirely different kind of song starts to play: '*Život je pes*' ('Life's a dog'), a hit in the big beat genre, sung by Semafor Theatre star Pavel Sedláček, who is also an actor in the film.¹⁶² From this moment, Forman initiates his experimental *vérité* touch. Visually, the credits roll over observational footage of the manager opening the door to his female employees.



Fig 3.1: 1960s font and food packaging



Fig 3.2: What is that camera doing here?

¹⁶² The song was composed and written by the Semafor Theatre's Jiří Šlitr and Jiří Suchý, who composed the music for the film.

They enter the store one by one, some of them with blatant bed hair, one has a bike, and, as soon as they notice the crew and the camera, most of them look straight into it, intrigued by its presence (Figure 3.2). While their actions are minimal and purely practical, their appearance is nonetheless comedic. Forman finds a way to laugh at normality, and to highlight its inherently clumsy style.

As refreshingly authentic as these images may be, the song overpowers them, distracting us from them slightly. The song is mismatched to the visuals, hinting to no connection between its young, upbeat, poppy, up-to-date sound and the documentation of middle-aged women coming to work at the grocery store – other than that they may both, in their own way, anchor the film in a specific historical time and place. Starting with the familiar, slow-paced tune from Tchaikovsky's *Nutcracker Suite*, Op. 71A, the song '*Život je pes*' suddenly transforms into a poppy big beat number, giving a youthful spin on a classic melody. Even if the young are physically absent from the frame, the song makes youth culture momentarily but undeniably present to the viewer. The superposition of Czech pop music with the grocery store introduces from the beginning a dichotomy of parallel attitudes towards social life. At the basis we have the routine of the adults. Superimposed upon it, is the way the young have received it and made it their own. This juxtaposition has the effect of casting the grocery store not just in its afilmic state, but as a metaphorical space as well: it contributes to framing the scene that takes place there as more than just a documentary slice of life.

By the final note of the song, the film has moved to the changing room, guiding the viewer deeper into the microcosm of the grocery store. Within, the female clerks are getting ready, doing each other's hair, applying lipstick, and chatting about their favourite songs on the radio. Their chatter is the first instance of diegetic, directly recorded dialogue and therefore this moment feels like the beginning of the film. The sound of their chatter lands the viewer in the grocery store specifically as an afilmic realm, in a way that immediately draws

the social gaze. By physically going to this room and capturing the sociality of the clerks within it, the film announces to the viewer that it will not just concern itself with the grocery store as a place of consumption, but also, and especially, as a place of work.

Indeed, the film can be seen as taking the viewer behind the scenes of a grocery store. *Adieu Philippine*'s opening scene at the recording studio was an afilmic place of work, with its own social *mise en scène*. Similarly, the setting for *Černý Petr*'s opening introduces the viewer to a layered, tiered, and multifaceted kind of professional social environment. Forman's observational footage of actual store clerks and customers does make this introduction somewhat of a historical document of 1963 socialist grocery stores. However, Forman layers this authentic space with a dual purpose. Not interested in grocery stores from a documentarian's point of view alone, Forman nimbly induces the viewer to think of the grocery store through the metaphor of the theatre.

This metaphor starts with his use of the '*Vjezd gladiátorů*', which likens the store to a spectacular combat arena. Further, the changing room is aptly located in the back of the store, behind a set of curtains. The clerks are like actors getting their costumes on and their hair and make-up ready, and the manager claims the role of *metteur en scène*. He demonstrates this when he enters the changing room to inform his clerks that a young apprentice will be joining them today, and asks them, as if already directing their dialogue, to 'be polite when you talk to him'.

The effect of theatricalizing the grocery store as a place of social *mise en scène* is that it lends an appreciation of the scene, taking place within it, to a Goffmanian approach. The store's different areas come with different social stakes that create social frameworks for subtly different kinds of social behaviour. For example, when the manager enters the changing room to announce to his female employees that they have an apprentice starting today, one of the women says, 'Mr. manager, don't come in here, we're getting changed!' His response

reveals their familiarity, ‘oh, bodies like these I’ve already seen a few’, in response to which another woman teasingly asks, ‘a body like mine?’ before the conversation devolves into one about ‘big backsides’ and ‘big guts’. The conversation is a funny instance of authentic banter that illustrates the staff’s shorthand. The film thus presents the grocery store as a well-oiled social system with its set habits and interaction rituals.

Although the film has acted more like a fly-on-the-wall documentary so far, and has therefore not been crisply narrative, Forman derives dramatic suspense from the introduction of an uncontrollable variable – the young trainee. Like a portent of fiction, the trainee’s anticipated arrival raises expectations from a Goffmanian point of view, as he is bound to have to adjust to the routines, customs, and conventions of this social environment, while also having to overcome the hurdles of being younger and less experienced than the grocery’s employees. As soon as the manager leaves, the women start speculating as to who this trainee might be. When one of the older clerks states, ‘if he’s a trainee then he’s surely sixteen years old’, one of the other clerks answers, ‘so then he’s not for us’. This brief exchange makes explicit the generational gap that exists between the store’s staff and their trainee, a gap that had already been suggested by the soundtrack. Again, then, the generational divide is depicted here, as it was in *Adieu Philippine* and *Masculin Féminin*, in terms of the generations’ clashing social worlds.

Providing the answer to their curiosity, and to ours, the film now cuts to a shot taken from inside the shop window outwards, observing a young man making his way across the street through traffic (Figure 3.3). A melody from the theme song ‘*Život je pes*’ softly sounds in the background. Again, music serves to infuse the shot with meaning: this is not just a random afilmic young man captured as a member of the afilmic crowd on the town square; it is the protagonist, the trainee, Petr (played by Ladislav Jakim), a virtual poster-boy of the youth culture heralded by the theme song. When he arrives in front of the store, Paul pauses

on the sidewalk to comb his hands through his hair a couple of times. His gesture contrasts comedically to the female clerks' elaborate beauty ritual in the changing room, and further casts Petr as wildly unprepared for the social theatre he is about to enter.



Fig 3.3: Our first glimpse of Petr

We never see Petr physically enter the store. He just appears next to the manager in a later shot, rather than entering through the front door, as if he is thrown into the situation. This highlights the barrier that seems to exist between the store and the outside world. In fact, the camera will never exit the store to show it from the outside. Forman preserves the feeling of the grocery store as a microcosm by only showing the outside world as shot from inside, through the window. In fact, the film presents the store like a world of its own, paying attention to the details of the various social dynamics that unfold within it. Selectively, the outside world – employees and customers who are unaware of the camera – choose to enter the store and partake in its social choreography. This is signified by the repeated shots of the manager opening the door to let employees and customers in, like a host. Petr, in a sense, has no choice, as the apprenticeship is something that he is forced to do. Having introduced the store as a place of routine for the clerks, Forman uses Petr to consider it anew from the perspective of a novice.

Petr's discovery of the store, and with it, our rediscovery of the store through his experience, begins, aptly, with a training session. The film cuts to the middle of a conversation, in which the manager reassures Petr, 'you'll pick it up, Petr, don't you worry, you'll pick it up', with a noticeably paternal tone. The film then cuts to a shot of them standing in the back office, where the manager gives Petr the following description of his job:

SHOP MANAGER: Our store is self-service, and I'll give it to you straight about what is what. We give our customers our full confidence, our *full confidence*, and we trust them one hundred percent. But sometimes there will be a few customers who will, like... sometimes want to steal something, you know? And your duty will be to watch over them well. You need eyes everywhere, but of course in such a way that the person you are watching *doesn't know* you are watching them, get it? They *must not* know that you are watching them. It's not...there's nothing....wrong with that, nothing distrustful! Basically, you're just there to prevent them from stealing something, and in this way, we educate our customers, basically, about honesty.¹⁶³

The social interaction is one-sided, and Petr does not utter a word in this moment. Nonetheless, he is engaged in a Goffmanian social situation. The nearly uninterrupted long shot of the manager giving Petr the details of his apprenticeship may make the conversation seem straightforward. However, taking a Goffmanian approach to it reveals that it is contextualized by multiple superimposed social frameworks, and that the manager's social performance seems to do justice to several different social roles. Firstly, aware of Petr's youth, the manager takes on a fatherly tone, vying for Petr's trust by saying 'I'll give it to you straight'.¹⁶⁴ The manager also treats Petr with encouragement, like a protective teacher who is committed to helping Petr understand the ropes, but also, to passing on his craft down to the next generation. The manager's apparent desire to come across as trustworthy and patient is so strong that it incites suspicion.

Tied into these paternal and educational roles is the manager's already established role as social *metteur en scène* of the store. Indeed, the manager's instructions sound like the poetically vague directions one might expect hearing a director communicate to an actor. His

¹⁶³ The emphases added serve to highlight my personal interpretation of the actor's change in tone and volume.

¹⁶⁴ Translated from 'Já ti to řeknu na rovinku jak je to...'

focus on the ‘way’ in which the job should be done – watch people without being seen looking – emphasizes the behaviour, and thus, the social performative duties, of a security guard over his operative duties. The manager also induces Petr to think of the larger narrative in which his social role operates. He feeds him the idea of the job’s educational aspirations. This comes across like a disingenuous rationalization of dubious methods, like a fiction that serves to absolve the manager from any wrongdoing. The film thus represents Petr as an oblivious pawn, unaware of the manipulative dynamics he is subjected to.

Most remarkable about this moment of sociality is the manager’s use of language, which seems slightly out of place in the grocery store arena: ‘we trust them 100%’; ‘you must have eyes everywhere’; ‘there’s nothing wrong with that’; and ‘we educate our customers’. At the extreme, the manager uses the kind of deceptive populist rhetoric one might expect from a briefing for socialist State Security agents. While the double meaning seems blatant to a current audience, this language must have struck a particularly raw chord to a contemporaneous audience in the Czechoslovak socialist context, in which social life was dominated by an atmosphere of permanent fear.

The unexpected sharpness of what was supposed to be a boring briefing is matched by the framing. As the manager lectures Petr with vivid earnestness, the camera zooms in on him until his face nearly fully occupies the frame. Once the zoom ends, on a close-up shot of the manager and his raised finger, he looks almost threatening (Figures 3.4 and 3.5). The manager’s actorial performance style is unprofessional, consistent with the way the other non-actors have played characters in the film thus far. Yet, because of the clear intentionality of the camera, this instance of sociality distinguishes itself from the kind of authentic banter Forman’s observational camera captured in the changing room, for example. The manager’s briefing consists of a heightened moment of expressiveness, resembling a political mission statement. By politicizing the social theatre of the grocery store with political language,

Forman exposes the synecdochical relation of the store to socialist society. Indeed, by setting the film behind the scenes of a grocery store, in a sense, Forman makes the film about the behind-the-scenes of socialist everydayness in general.



Fig 3.4: 'We trust our customers one hundred percent'



Fig 3.5: 'The customers must not know that you are watching them'

While the cinematographic manoeuvre of the zoom draws all the more attention to what the manager says, it also appears to mimic the authoritative position the manager holds over Petr. Overlaying the vaguely political allegory is a complex generational dynamic. The manager's position of authority as a boss, a father figure, a teacher, and a director casts Petr in a role of inferiority. When the camera is fully zoomed in on a close-up of the manager as described above, there is seemingly nowhere else for the film to go but to seek his interlocutor's reaction, and thus, the film cuts to Petr. We have not seen Petr up close yet, but in this first medium close-up shot of his face in the film, Petr's blank expression reveals the naiveness and innocence of his youth (Figure 3.6).

Filmed over the shoulder of the manager, looking up at him, Petr's face doubles as a blank canvas for the manager to influence. Petr is oblivious to the political undertone and dubiousness of his manager's influence on him, rather than being on guard. When the manager finishes with 'we educate our customers in honesty', Petr gives the manager a gullible smile and a knowing nod. Instead of inspiring real confidence in the viewer as to

Petr's understanding of the briefing, these facial gestures seem more like social performative guided doings that his young Goffmanian life has taught him as tending to be interpreted by adults as signs of trustworthiness.



Fig 3.6: Wide-eyed Petr

By the end of the briefing, Petr is portrayed as a character with the simple and earnest motivation to do well, or at least, to avoid failure. But, simultaneously, Petr is also portrayed as unable to read into the nuance of what the manager is asking of him. Thus, Forman sets up a comedic two-parter that raises the viewer's expectations as to how Petr is going to execute instructions that it seems he has not fully understood. This, in turn, calls into question what was perhaps the manager's most relevant social role in this situation – that of manager. Indeed, the potential of failure in this scene is carried by both characters in this moment, which intensifies the promise of comedy.

Petr's nod marks the end of the training session, and is followed immediately by a cut. The film cuts to a shot of the grocery store in which afilmic people are really shopping. The camera smoothly changes focus from the foreground of the shot, where a clerk's hands take products out of a basket and lay them out to log them in the cash register, to the background, where the aisles are populated by customers. There, Petr walks into the frame, appearing from

one of the aisles, wearing a white uniform similar to the one the clerks and the manager are wearing. In effect, Petr walks on the social stage of this grocery store.

This observational footage of the grocery store in its afilmic state, from the customers to the goods on the shelves, shifts the film back into reality again, and historically anchors it in 1963 Kolín. It also puts the training session into perspective. The wholesome appearance of the grocery store in motion, populated mostly by housewives in prim dresses, clashes with the picture of deceptive criminality the manager has painted of it in the bubble of his office. Petr's serious demeanor matches his manager's tone, but now that we see Petr in the environment, the manager's briefing seems exaggerated.



Fig 3.7: Hostile Petr

Petr's face carries a focused expression of hostility as he earnestly but furtively monitors the space (Figure 3.7). When a customer comes up to him and appears to be asking him where to locate a product, Petr maintains his almost hawk-like demeanor while pointing towards the left of the frame, their interaction inaudible. The fact that we cannot hear him, and that his performance is only physical in this moment, gives his behaviour a heightened quality compared to the normal people around him. It has the effect of drawing attention to the fact that he is playing an overt social role. Captured with a long lens, seemingly unaware of the

camera, it is Petr who is the ironic subject of a social voyeurism that he himself is directing at others. The film cuts to the manager, who stands by the curtain separating the store from his office, and observes Petr from a distance. He is the voyeur in this instance. A brief moment later, he beckons him to come back to the office.

As he follows the manager all the way to the back of the office, Petr's behaviour changes back to normal. He relaxes his hostile expression and becomes subservient again. 'From personal experience', the manager tells him, 'if you stand there with a uniform on, the customer will know you belong to the collective,' and, 'if you go out there without white uniform, surely, like I once did, you'll manage to catch one or two thieves'. The manager exerts his social role as social *metteur en scène* by advising a costume change that is aimed at preventing customers from identifying him as staff. But in justifying the costume change, the manager also subtly changes the social framework of Petr's social role. Whereas at first, the manager described the social framework of the job in terms of an educational ambition, now he frames it in terms of the sport of catching thieves. The act of catching thieves becomes encouraged over the act of preventing theft. By introducing the elements of camouflage and the incentive to catch thieves into his training of Petr, not only does the manager discourage customers from making contact with Petr, but he also likens them to prey.

The manager does this while continuing to talk to Petr like a son, tapping him encouragingly on the shoulder. However, the kindness and patience in his voice do not fully mask their saccharine constitution. When the manager has left the office, Petr scoffs slightly, but his scoff is an expression of his boredom overall, rather than a reaction to the manager's instructions. Indeed, Petr is still unaware of the manipulation that the viewer senses the manager is subjecting him to. Forman initiates a back-and-forth pattern between Petr and the manager, between the changing room and the stage, between the manager's inconsistent instructions and Petr's attempted social performative interpretations of them. Through this

pattern, Forman builds the effect of escalation which is materialized, at every stage, by Petr's social performance.

When Petr walks out to try a second time, wearing only his bomber jacket, he looks eerily similar to a State Security agent. The sequence starts with a shot of him spying on customers from behind a signpost, hidden so that he may more blatantly stare at people (Figure 3.8). The film then cuts to a montage of shots of customers' hands and faces handling products. They are shot with a long lens that allows the observational camera to keep its distance, and thus does not interfere with the customers' afilmic actions. Whereas Petr was focused on people in general before, now, the camera seems to mimic Petr's newfound subjective awareness specifically for the chaos of the hand choreography involved in shopping (Figure 3.9).



Fig 3.8: a spy out of place



Fig 3.9: Buying or stealing?

Although this observational footage shows what shopping genuinely looks like, the framing and the editing make the viewer aware of Petr's restricted and targeted perspective on it. The shots turns something that is familiar to a social gaze – people shopping – into something estranging. Zoomed in on, these are the hands that his manager claims could perform theft. What is normal and benign is in this moment transformed into something potentially dangerous and criminal.

Adopting this social framework of suspicion, Petr roams around the aisles like a predator. He approaches customers unhesitatingly, and looks in their baskets while giving them mean looks. The customers around him start noticing his strange behaviour. Whereas everyone else there socially behaves in accordance with the commonly shared rules of public social behaviour, Petr's behaviour is dehumanizing. Neither staff nor customer, Petr exists in a kind of 'no man's land' of behaviour in the social framework of this store. In the process of seeing his own social surroundings as teeming with possible thieves, Petr not only starts to lose his grip on his own sense of reality, but also on his sense of self. Unlike *Adieu Philippine*, in which the protagonists' behaviours looked authentic by contrast to the older people, whose behaviours seemed disconnected from reality, here, it is Petr who looks grotesque as a result of clashing with his surroundings.

After a short while of Petr behaving in this abrasive way, the manager calls him back to the office for a third time, punctuating a scene that lacks a conventional narrative structure with a third act of sorts. Indeed, the scene has an accentuated constructed quality that draws attention to the consequential relationship between Petr's increasingly odd behaviour and his manager's instructions. Slightly impatient now about Petr's inability to be inconspicuous, the manager literally compares him to a 'policeman', and thus makes even more explicit the political allegory of this training session. But by formulating the comparison as an accusation, the manager places the responsibility of Petr's police-like behaviour in Petr's hands. This intensifies the absurdity of the situation, since it was the manager's description of the job, combined with his use of a political kind of rhetoric, that prompted Petr to perform this way in the first place.

By portraying how the manager, Petr's supposed teacher, shifts the blame for Petr's police-like appearance onto Petr, Forman highlights the issue of influence and control over social behaviour. Indeed, while the pattern of Petr's back-and-forth between the office and the

store clearly evidences the manager's continued influence on Petr, Petr's own inability to notice this dynamic makes it possible for the manager to deny his responsibility from one conversation to the next. As a result, Petr's performance seems even more untethered. Petr is trapped inside a social performance of a social role that was prescribed to him.

After this third and final feedback, the film cuts to a shot of Petr back in the aisles, holding a pack of flour, and pretending to read the fine print on the packaging while casting his eyes sideways to spy on people that way. Having gained a strategic muscle, Petr uses the flour as a Goffmanian prop to socially disguise himself as one of the customers (Figure 3.10). Again, Forman emphasizes Petr's earnest desire to do well, but the result of his well-intended efforts are ludicrous. Filmed with a long lens shot taken straight-on, the high level of visibility of Petr's attempts to become invisible expose the absurd contradiction that is at the heart of this task, as well as at the heart of the manager's conception of the social world of the grocery store.



Fig 3.10: In disguise, pretending to read the flour pack to better spy on people.

Finally, wound up by his desire to please his manager's hunger for catching thieves, Petr thinks he has seen a man steal something. Unsure about his assessment, he asks one of the female clerks what to do, who excitedly orders him to run after the thief. Petr rushes after

him out onto the street, but as soon as he catches up to the man, he freezes. His training provided him with no tools to actually handle an interaction with a potential thief in the real world. Finding himself to be entirely useless and unprepared without the manager's instructions, Petr winds up following the potential thief around town for the rest of the entire afternoon, always a step behind him, without ever interacting with him, and without coming back to work. Petr's slow-paced chase is portrayed in a long, stretched out, and absurdly funny and humiliating scene all through the town. It provides the final punchline of an elaborate comedic sequence that traces Petr's escalating failures at his job, both social performative and operative.

While this opening scene has the narrative function of establishing Petr's personal context in the film, its main effect is to introduce the convoluted social reality in which Petr and his peers are brought up. As Peter Hames says about Forman's films, 'they have stories that serve only as a pretext for social observation, with conventional narrative development virtually ignored or elided.'¹⁶⁵ Throughout this elaborately constructed scene, Forman emphasizes the social dynamic of influence between people of authority and their pupils, sons, or inferiors. When Petr first arrived at the store, as an innocent, naive, young man, he served as a point of contrast to the grocery store's staff. Through the training session, which consisted of a series of corrections and executions between a role model and a gullible teenager, he has descended into the bizarre social realm of the store.

Forman strongly suggests that Petr's transformation is partly the result of the theatrical nature of his manager's influence. To execute the role his boss describes for him, Petr diligently follows his actorial social performative notes. In the process he turns into a puppet. Something as physically self-explanatory as intercepting someone, is turned, in Forman's hands, into a scene of confusion and slapstick comedy. The physicality of the comedy

¹⁶⁵ Peter Hames, 'Forman', in *Five Filmmakers: Tarkovsky, Forman, Polanski, Szabo, Makavejev*, ed. by Daniel J. Goulding (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 50-91 (p. 67).

represents the dissociation between Petr and the physical actions that constitute his social performance. He is rendered useless without having someone to pull his strings.

His social transformation is therefore also a reflection of the puppeteer, whose instructions have led him to behave in grotesque ways. Petr's behaviour seems even more dehumanized by contrast to the effect of authenticity produced by the customers and their afilmic behaviour of normalcy. Even his own father, who comes to spy on his own son at work on another day, will let Petr know that his appearance 'doesn't look pretty'. The perceived ugliness of Petr's performance hints at the existence of an ugly, morally questionable social reality, that exists alongside the more benign, and ordinary social reality captured by the observational camera that is carried by the customers. Thus, Forman aestheticizes a fractured social reality.

Conformism is an important force in Petr's transformation. In the 1985 essay 'The Power of the Powerless', which was circulated in samizdat form and intended to clarify the workings of the socialist dictatorship, Václav Havel described ordinary people who capitulated in their ordinary lives to the rules imposed on them about how to behave, what to say, and what to do, as both 'victims and pillars' of the totalitarian regime.¹⁶⁶ Petr's capitulation to his boss, by blindly following orders, certainly makes him partially responsible for his conduct. But he is also a victim. The farcicality of Petr's resulting social performance is less a denunciation of him, than of his manager as a bad role model. The manager represents a member of the older generation, in a position of authority, who 'establish[ed] the rules' of the 'spectacle' that Petr was forced to play a role in.¹⁶⁷

In this scene, Forman portrays the generational conflict between teenagers and their elders as fought over the territory of everyday expression. Indeed, while the manager wants to

166 Václav Havel, 'The power of the powerless', in Václav Havel et al., *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens against the state in central-eastern Europe*, trans. by Paul Wilson (Hoboken: Taylor & Franics, 2009; first publ. in 1985), pp. 10-59 (p. 14).

167 Ewa Mazierska, *Masculinities in Polish, Czech and Slovak Cinema: Black Peters and Men of Marble* (New York; Oxford: Bergahn Books, 2008), p. 100.

inculcate Petr into a certain behavioural world view, Petr's inability to do so, as symbolized by his slapstick performance, reflects the incompatibility of this world view with that of the youth. The grocery store thus truly symbolizes, in that sense, a gladiator's colosseum that entraps Petr and forces him to perform something he does not naturally feel inclined to perform.

'Ahoj!'

Divorcing one's sense of self in order to perform the required social role is a consistent theme of the film. While the opening scene in the grocery store establishes Petr's inability to fit into the world as it is laid out for him by adults, Petr is much more receptive towards the social world he shares with his peers. Indeed, as he and his friends enjoy their social lives, go to cafés, go on swimming pool dates, act out petty rivalries with peers, and go to the big dance, Petr and others of his age display a certain amount of insecurity that motivates them. While Petr was eager to impress his manager to avoid getting in trouble, what genuinely drives the youth is the validation of their peers.

This is especially visible in a big party scene which starts right after Petr has been on a swimming pool date with Pavla (Pavla Martínková), the girl he has a crush on. Under socialism, private kitchens are typically, historically, and symbolically thought of as providing the social space for freedom of expression.¹⁶⁸ Kitchens were potentially private, safe spaces where the state could not monitor its citizens. But, in Petr's case, his kitchen happens to house another kind of oppression that he needs to escape from. Living in his meddlesome and intrusive parents' small apartment, Petr is forced to wear a social mask even there. Born and

¹⁶⁸ Lori Handrahan, *Gendering Ethnicity: Implications for Democracy Assistance* (New York; London: Routledge, 2002), p. 17.

raised in Czechoslovak socialist society, teenagers did not feel they were benefiting from it, and as a result, the Czechoslovak youth experienced a particularly severe ‘generational alienation’.¹⁶⁹ To escape the social spaces dominated by their figures of authority, Petr and his peers gravitate towards places of socialization that tend to consolidate around their shared interests in the types of music, activities, and entertainment that shape their youth culture.

The crown jewel of spaces representative of youth culture in *Černý Petr* is a large ice rink that is turned into a dance hall for a twist dance party. Petr has asked Pavla to come to this party as his date. In the first shot of the party, a long-lensed observational documentary shot frames a crowd waiting for the music to start (Figure 3.11). As the music begins, they all start to dance, turning the image into a sea of moving bodies that draws immediate attention to the sheer size and popularity of the event. In three quick jumps, the frame expands to show the entire venue, and with it, the health of this youth culture (Figure 3.12). The liveliness of this party contrasts sharply with the more stifled social environments observed in other parts of the film.



Fig 3.11: A sea of dancing bodies



Fig 3.12: A genuine socialist twist party

To film *Černý Petr*, Forman’s *vérité* aesthetic continues to combine non-interferential observational cinematography of real people who show up to real locations and engage in afilmic activity. With the party, this practice is pushed to the limits, and rivals the amount of

¹⁶⁹ Lovejoy, *Army Film*, p. 135.

orchestration Forman engaged in to set up the audition in *Konkurs*. Indeed, just like in *Konkurs*, Forman genuinely organized a big dance event, rented out the ice rink, hired the twist music band and distributed posters around town.¹⁷⁰ Once these profilmic ingredients were secured, Forman hoped that the rest of the party would afilmically orchestrate itself. Based on the footage, it looks like this method yielded a robust amount of genuine afilmic extras from the Kolín community. The genuine, afilmic revelers who populate the frame are dressed in their own party outfits, and equipped with their own motivation to enjoy themselves. Most of them perform in obedience to the social *mise en scène* of the music: the dance floor is filled with avid youngsters twisting and shaking their bodies to the music with remarkable skill. Indeed, with this scene, the film most strongly executes its documentary function as a historical artifact, as it successfully makes a record of the specific Western music-inspired dance moves that exemplify one of the ways in which the Czechoslovak youth culture expressed itself in 1963. Fictionally, however, the party gives Forman an elaborate social theatre for him to embed Petr's storyline into. Indeed, Forman masters the ability to integrate profilmic action into an elaborate afilmic social framework by allowing his cast to improvise accordingly.

The fictional thread starts seamlessly. Surrounded by people dancing, the observational camera travels through the dance floor until it stops, its lens pointed seemingly haphazardly at a table with two people looking slightly bored and waiting for something to happen (Figures 3.14 and 3.14). They are Čenda (Vladimír Pucholt) and his side-kick, Zdeněk (Zdeněk Kulháněk), characters whom the film has already introduced in the swimming pool scene just before this party scene, where they had gotten into a disagreement with Petr and Pavla.¹⁷¹ They sit at the table perusing their social surroundings.

¹⁷⁰ Many of the tunes are recognizable from *Konkurs*.

¹⁷¹ Upon discovering Vladimír Pucholt while shooting *Černý Petr*, Forman would cast him as the lead in his next film, *Lásky jedné plavovlásky* (*Loves of a Blonde*) (1965).

Suddenly, Čenda stands up, his body swaying with drunkenness, and asks Zdeněk to ‘watch me’ as he walks across the room to talk to the girl he has a crush on, only to sit down next to her in silence, and walk off again, without ever saying anything to her. By opening the dance party scene in this way, Forman draws attention to the ubiquity of social failures. The comedic aspect of the scene is not mean-spirited. There is an affectionate dimension to Forman’s interest in showing teenagers’ awkward stumbles through life. Indeed, although some of Forman’s older characters are subject to his scathing mockery, Forman’s comedically voyeuristic perspective on teenagers is mostly celebratory: showcasing their social failures is not a satirical criticism of them, as much as it is a portrait of a kind of bravery to try and fail, as emblems of an attitude to life that dissipates with age, at which point it is replaced with a false sense of certainty about how things should be done.



Fig 3.13: Čenda and Zdeněk at the party



Fig 3.14: Čenda, left, worse for wear

When Petr and Pavla arrive, they immediately catch Čenda’s eye, who, in his inebriated state, yells out at them from across the room: ‘*Ahoj!*’ Pavla and Petr turn to see who is calling their attention and recognize Čenda as ‘the guy from the pool’. Petr nods in return across the room and mouths a barely audible, truncated ‘*hoj*’ under his breath that is drowned in the noise of the party (Figure 3.15). Rather than letting Petr’s self-effacing greeting remain understated, Forman cuts back to Čenda’s reaction, and thus enriches the interaction. Čenda has a mysterious look on his face, spits on the ground, and stands up (Figure 3.16). Zdeněk

pulls his arm and in a panicked tone, alarmed perhaps at the idea of being left alone at the party, asks him, ‘where are you going?’ without getting a response.



Fig 3.15: Petr and Pavla notice Čenda



Fig 3.16: Čenda has a glass gaze

Meanwhile, back on the other side of the room, Pavla too asks Petr, ‘where are you going?’, a question that becomes poetically symbolic of teenage angst in the social arena of this party. But before Petr and Pavla can finish their conversation, Čenda, who has made his way across the room to them, interrupts (Figure 3.17):

ČENDA: Hey, you! Hey. Hey, wait. I said ‘ahoj’ to you.

PETR: I also said ahoj.

ČENDA: Yeah sure, but how!

PETR: (to Pavla) This can’t be happening.

ČENDA: Wait, wait, wait, wait, yeah, wait, I’ll tell you the difference.

(Čenda pulls Pavla’s arm.)

PETR: Don’t touch her!

ČENDA: I said ‘ahoj!’ and you said ‘‘hoj.’ Do you hear the difference? Ahoj! ‘hoj. Do you hear it?

PETR: What a nutcase.

ČENDA: (now asking Pavla) Do you hear it? Ahoj! ‘hoj. Do you hear it? Do you hear it?

PAVLA: Stop it.

ČENDA: Ahoj! ‘hoj... ‘hoj...

PETR: There’s no point, let’s leave.

When Čenda is easily distracted by the girl he has a crush on, the fight seemingly ends, and Petr and Pavla go their separate way. In the meantime, the film cuts to further observational footage of the party, leaving the previous interaction unprocessed and sandwiched in between documentation of the wider party. Forman captures the sidelines of the party by showing

people sitting at tables, falling asleep from alcohol, or waiting to dance. ‘What cinéma vérité taught me,’ says Forman, is ‘that it’s not a question of having a main character, a great actor, and the rest is unimportant. Every detail, every face in the crowd is important.’¹⁷² As the ice rink’s atmosphere comes back into focus, the film indicates to the viewer that arguments, like the one between Petr and Čenda, are not entirely out of place in its social framework. In *Konkurs*, the social atmosphere surrounding the auditions in the hallways and in the waiting rooms of the Semafor Theatre was just as important as the actual music. Similarly, here, the dance floor of this party shares the limelight with the sidelines. Čenda and Petr’s interaction is an example of the kinds of behaviours that are being exercised on the sidelines of the party.



Fig 3.17: ‘Do you hear the difference?’

After this interlude, Čenda finds Petr, who is holding two drinks while looking for Pavla, and confronts him again. ‘Do you get it now? Do you get it?’ he asks Petr belligerently. As if demonstrating the problem to him, he shouts the word ‘*ahoj*’ a couple of times in Petr’s ear, making it lose its friendly definition entirely, and orders Petr to repeat after him properly. Petr, who has remained relatively calm thus far, snaps and indulges Čenda. But rather than

¹⁷² Tasha Robinson, ‘Milos Forman: Interview’, *AV Club*, 24 April 2002, <<https://www.avclub.com/milos-forman-1798208216>> [accessed 14 April 2018].

that Petr repeats ‘*ahoj!*’ the way Čenda wants to hear it, he does a caricatural imitation of Čenda, and makes a crazy face as he blurts out ‘*ahoj!*’ a couple of times (Figure 3.18).

Čenda and Petr’s outrageous interaction has a slim narrative context. They were in an argument earlier in the day, and now that they have both changed out of their ill-fitting swimming trunks and are both dressed and presentable, Čenda feels, for misguided reasons, that now is the time to resolve the disrespect he feels he was subjected to by Petr. This context does not fully explain the especially theatrical and heightened quality of this altercation. Reading the scene with a social gaze reveals that the intensity of their interaction is integrated into a social context that is not just defined by the party, but by the wider social climate.



Fig 3.18: ‘*AHOJ!*’

Čenda’s shouting match with Petr fits into a landscape of dysfunctional and yet predictable teenager interactivity, which is captured in small doses by the observational footage of their surroundings. But the source of this dysfunctionality within Čenda’s interaction is very particular. As a place predominantly inhabited by teenagers, the ice rink becomes a social arena in which things that matter to the teenagers are given their full weight: mutual respect in the manner of saying ‘hello’, twist dancing skills, and the great heroism required to ask a girl to dance, warranting Čenda, for instance, to ask Zdeněk to witness it as

it happens, even if that turns out to be nothing. Forman uses the social world of the party to stage how the youth negotiate and handle their social connections with their peers. They are shielded from adult guidance and showcase childlike dependence on each other instead, such as when they panic at the thought of being abandoned and ask each other worrisomely, ‘where are you going?’

Čenda’s intention in his confrontation of Petr is to right a wrong. The interaction described above sees Čenda directly addressing his dissatisfaction with Petr’s social performance for him. There is a social code of behaviour that he feels is being transgressed when one teenager’s ‘*ahoj!*’ to another is not properly matched in response. His comparison of the different tones of his loud and melodic ‘*Ahoj!*’ and Petr’s soft and dull ‘*hoj*’ evidences, for him, an injustice in the way he is being spoken to.

Unfortunately, in trying to demand Petr’s respect, Čenda seems to have engaged in a Goffmanian failure of impression management, or a faux pas. Indeed, the scene derives its comedic sting not just from the physicality of two teenagers yelling at each other, but also from the ironic way in which a greeting is weaponized into an insult in their particular social framework. Rather than depicting this as something ethically unforgivable on Čenda’s or Petr’s behalves, Forman is interested in the social *mise en scène* that guides their interaction, a social *mise en scène* which they themselves may not be aware of. Indeed, the grotesqueness of their body language in the situation is reminiscent of Petr’s grotesqueness in the grocery store, in the sense that it reflects a divorce from their sense of self. The interaction is so counterproductive towards Čenda’s mission to gain respect, that it suggests that he himself is perhaps not the *metteur en scène* of his own social life.

As a character, Čenda seems to find it difficult to find his bearings in the youth culture that he is supposed to belong to. Throughout the scene at the party, Čenda is shown roaming the grounds, constantly in search for the girl he likes, but more symbolically, for a sense of

bonding and belonging. He and Petr may be acquaintances, but, having only just met at the pool, they are certainly not friends, and as a result, Čenda's concern with Petr's manner of behaving towards him seems unjustified. Furthermore, a lack of familiarity with Petr prevents him from understanding the nuances of what Petr's way of greeting his friends would look like. While it upsets Čenda, Petr's diminutive 'hi' in response to Čenda's big greeting does not transgress the social code that is usually applied to big parties, such as this one. Indeed, because of the size and looseness of the party, as evidenced by the observational footage of the social atmosphere, the rules of behaviour tend to be more relaxed. Forman insists on framing Čenda's social performance as particularly misguided and comedically self-sabotaging in this context.

There is also a sad undertone to Čenda's struggle. Čenda attaches too much importance to a stranger's opinion of him, which is a classic trope of teenagehood. Despite his abrasiveness, his concern for being spoken to with the proper friendly tone points to a desire for connection, camaraderie, and recognition. His surrender to his drunken emotional state reflects his struggle to have these kinds of social interactions sober. But Petr's warped imitation of him demonstrates the unfortunate impression he makes on his peers as a result.

Suddenly, right when Čenda and Petr are grotesquely shouting '*ahoj!*' at each other's faces, Čenda recoils and becomes completely tame, as he replaces '*ahoj!*' with '*Dobrý den, pane Mistr*' ('Good day, Mr. Foreman'). Based on where Čenda is looking, it appears that the recipient of his very formal and polite greeting is standing behind Petr, outside of the frame. The film cuts to reveal an older man, a master bricklayer, who happens to be Čenda's apprenticeship leader. 'Very nice, very nice', says the foreman sarcastically, a stern looking man, with palpable disapproval in his voice. Then, turning to Petr, whom he does not know, he snarls, 'if I were your father, I would smack that cigarette out of your mouth!'

The foreman's presence in the film suddenly counterbalances the overwhelming youth of this social arena with a member of the older generation who plays a similar role to Petr's grocery store manager. Although he is outnumbered, and perhaps because of it, he socially imposes himself upon the situation with authoritative sternness, reminding the youth of their inferiority. Once he has disappeared, a somewhat amused Petr rhetorically asks Čenda, 'what's his problem?' puffing extra hard on his cigarette as a way to defy an acknowledgement of the grown-up in the room. Čenda, on the other hand, is terrified. With the foreman suddenly part of his social audience, Čenda's behaviour completely transforms to make place for the social role of the subservient student. When the foreman leaves, Čenda loses control and accuses Petr, 'what did you do to him? I'm his favourite student, what did you do to him?' worried for his social standing in the foreman's eyes, and no longer interested in Petr's validation.

Čenda is like the clown of the film, and his social failures provide a great source of comedy that invites affectionate mockery of teenagehood as a whole. But Čenda is also a tragic figure, and this makes *Černý Petr* more than just a funny film about youth culture. Čenda's social performance reflects an authoritarian attitude towards Petr, Pavla, and even Zdeněk. Through his social performance of both bullyish aggression towards others, and of deference towards his boss, Čenda seems to have been caught under the influence of a bad role model. If his erratic social performance makes him look grotesque, it is because he has also lost a sense of self as a result of following instructions. Petr's failure to socially blend in at work and to adopt his superior's rules of behaviour goes hand in hand with relative social ease with his peers. But Čenda represents a character whose success at work comes hand in hand with social failure with his peers. Thus, in an asymmetric pattern, Forman presents two portraits of the impact of the generational dynamic of authority and control on the youth.

Upon showing the film to the censors for the first time, as filmmakers were obliged to do at the time, Forman remembers them being appalled by the sight of his young characters behaving in clueless, awkward, and tormented ways that suggested they felt out of place. ‘Our young people are not like that, our young people are building socialism, our young people are not misfits!’ Forman recounts them saying, and, ‘this is distorting the image of our new beautiful society!’ he remembers as a criticism.¹⁷³ Rather than polish over teenager behaviour as something ordered, clean, and sensible, Forman’s representation of the youth distantiates itself from the idealized version that was proffered by socialist realism. He presents them specifically in their youthful clumsiness, as vessels for a more authentic representation of an imperfect social reality, and as characters whom an audience can both laugh with and at, precisely because their lack of social skills in the context of that social reality should be, and are, both normal and forgivable.

Conclusion

Taking a Goffmanian approach to reading the moments of sociality in Forman’s *Černý Petr* reveals that the youth Forman portrays struggles to own social performativity, as a mode of expression, for themselves. With a *vérité* aesthetic that is particularly targeted towards observationally capturing the actual moments of teenage sociality, Forman historically anchors his protagonists’ coming-of-age experiences in 1963 Kolín. However, through the second order of authenticity of his *vérité* aesthetic, notably through the occasional use of grotesque behaviours reminiscent of *Adieu Philippine*, that are out of place and that lead the viewer to question the setting that evokes this grotesqueness, and through a use of montage

¹⁷³ Luc Lagier, ‘Miloš Forman, Années 60,’ Cinécinéma, Camera Lucida Productions, France, 2010; online video recording, YouTube, 27 January 2013, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pdJ8vOzs-Gc>> [accessed 24 November 2016]

and framing that mimics a subjective perspective on social reality, Forman depicts these social theatres as combat arenas. They are battlegrounds over which the youth compete with the generation of their parents, their managers, their teachers, and their leaders for the job of social *metteurs en scène* of their own social lives.

Awkwardness is the most common state in which social performance is portrayed in the film. Indeed, the film rarely shows a character neatly handling a social situation, and instead, social performance faux pas become the norm. In the interactions when Forman's cast perform in grotesque and slapstick comedy ways, their performances externalize an internal conflict. The extreme physicality of their performances stand out from the afilmic people around them and become reflective of the phenomenon of their loss of sense of self. For Petr, this loss of sense of self occurs in social frameworks that are dominated by the older generation of his manager, whereas for Čenda, who plays both Petr's nemesis and alter-ego of sorts, his sense of self is most fragile when he is surrounded by his peers, who do not validate or compliment him on his bricklaying skills, as his boss does. In each case, Forman brings into focus the torment of social performance when it exists in a state of friction with a social framework that the character is powerless over. The film evokes the social gaze in a way similar to the way it was evoked by *Adieu Philippine* – by dramatizing the bravery involved in the youth's use of social performance as a means for self-assertion, and in their resistance to the big threat of society's seemingly unstoppable pull to conformism and indifference.

The experience of a fractured social climate is also central to the protagonist of Passer's debut feature film, *Intimní Osvětlení* (1965), which I will examine next. But rather than depicting social reality in the context of larger society, as was the case in *Černý Petr*, Passer turns inwards, into the private home of a family, to dramatize, with great attention to detail, the different ways with which a shared social reality can be interfaced by people who know each other intimately.

3.3. Layers of Intimacy in *Intimní Osvětlení*

If Looks Could Speak

As I mentioned in the introduction and in the theory chapter, *Intimní Osvětlení* marks a shift, in the film corpus, from a more methodological relationship with the genre of *cinéma vérité*, to a more conceptual relationship. Each film studied in this thesis engages with the genre in both methodological and conceptual ways, but the manner in which their *vérité* aesthetic balances and emphasizes them differs. Audiences of *Intimní Osvětlení* tend to believe it was made with *cinéma vérité*-like methods. Even though it was made using non-actors, real locations, and natural light, this film actually exemplifies a looser preoccupation with the genre's methodological principles, and a rapprochement, instead, to the genre's ambition – that of capturing the essence of everydayness.

Bambas (played by Karel Blažek), also known as Kája or Karlík to his family, is the headmaster of a local village music school. The film opens in this school. For the first few shots, Bambas can be seen varyingly tending to administrative or musical duties. In a small classroom, a relatively large amateur orchestra rehearses the first movement of Antonín Dvořák's op. 104, Cello Concerto in B minor, with a lively and witty conductor. In between practice sessions, they discuss the large weekend concert for which they are rehearsing, its ticket sales, the military orchestra that will be joining them, and, most exciting of all, the arrival of the cello soloist from town.

While the music is of a different register and era altogether than the time in which the film is set, it plays an important referential function in *Intimní Osvětlení*. The theme song of *Černý Petr*, 'Život je pes', reflected the Western music of rebelliousness that the

Czechoslovak youth was drawn to. It may seem like the classical music that opens *Intimní Osvětlení* serves the conventionally cinematic function of leading the viewer into the fiction of the film world, a realm removed from historical reality. But in fact, Dvořák composed the piece while he lived in New York City between 1892 and 1895, two years after he composed Symphony No.9, the New World Symphony, in admiration of America. Thus, the choice of the song itself consists in a subtle act of defiance on the part of Passer in the particular historical context of 1965 socialist Czechoslovakia.

At first, genuine musicians can be diegetically heard rehearsing the piece in the classroom, mistakes and all, while the shot is of the conductor. At a certain point, Passer cuts away from the music school without cutting the music, and overlays the direct sound recording of the rehearsal on footage of something entirely different – that of the arrival at the train station of the aforementioned soloist, Peťan (played by Zdeněk Bezušek), and his girlfriend, Štěpa (Věra Křesadlová). Bambas is there to greet them. Shortly after, at a quiet part of the movement, the film cuts to Bambas, Peťan, and Štěpa arriving at a fence, with countryside hills sprawling in the background. Bambas opens the fence to let them into, what we presume to be, his garden. The music gives the sense that they have arrived at a fairytale cottage in a magical land.¹⁷⁴ They all pause for a moment and look at, what we presume to be, Bambas's house. But as they all look at something that is physically behind the camera, it seems as if they are looking right into the world of the viewer, which further gives the film an allegorical slant.

In a sense, Bambas' house truly is a fairytale cottage. While the locations of the house and the village are authentic, as per Passer and Forman's unofficial manifesto, they are also nondescript: the town is real rather than constructed, but the film does not reveal its name or exact location. The unidentifiability and unrecognizability of these real locations give their

¹⁷⁴ The Czechoslovak film industry produced a notable amount of fairytales, many of the classics of which were filmed in the 1950s, and thus, a staple part of film culture.

authenticity a metaphorical quality. The town, the house, and, by extension, the family living within it are symbolic of the idea of the ordinary Czech town, house, and family, which lends an abstractness to the events that unfold in them. By contrast to Forman, Passer's lack of reference to the outside world suggests that he seems to ignore the reality of socialist society. Passer's theory was that films that did not acknowledge the regime at all made censors even angrier than films that depicted politicized life.¹⁷⁵ But, in fact, this abstractness is derived indirectly from socialist society. Indeed, another way in which the house seems fantastical is that, unlike the house might suggest, it was actually very difficult for citizens of socialist Czechoslovakia to own a house for their family alone. Thus, while it is visually authentic, to a certain extent it is anachronistic, and due to the way the film does not make any explicit references to socialist society, the film can almost be seen to present an alternative Czechoslovak universe, were it not for the fact that the house has been in construction for many years and is, thus, not unsymbolically, a perpetual construction site.

Protagonists Bambas and Pet'an have been best friends since school. While this fact is not revealed verbally until much later, the depth of their friendship is apparent from the start. The purpose of Pet'an's visit is to play as soloist in the concert on Sunday, but the film ends right before the concert even takes place. Instead, the main story of the film comprises the reunion between the two friends, and the first introduction of their families to each other, over the course of Saturday and Sunday. *Intimní Osvětlení* was, according to Passer, described to him by the censor who was charged with watching it in order to approve it for distribution, as 'the most boring film ever made'.¹⁷⁶ While the film's narrative structure is decidedly unconventional – not least because the explicit purpose for Pet'an's trip is excluded from the film – it finds the dramatic tensions within a span of time that would traditionally be

¹⁷⁵ Nissar Modi, 'Interview with Ivan Passer', Los Angeles, December 2005; featured as bonus material in *Intimate Lighting (Intimní Osvětlení)*, dir. Ivan Passer (Československý Státní Film, 1965) [Second Run, 2006, DVD]; excerpt available in online video recording, YouTube, 19 March 2014, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fImR0sZQ4Vw>> [accessed 10 April 2015].

¹⁷⁶ Nissar, 'Interview with Ivan Passer'.

described as undramatic. Taking a Goffmanian approach will facilitate an appreciation of these socially expressed tensions with greater precision, and thus make apparent the nuanced micro-stories of the film.

To ensure that his protagonists could authentically play the roles of a music school headmaster and a soloist, Passer cast non-actors who were genuine musicians.¹⁷⁷ Their performance styles therefore have an unprofessional and genuine appearance. Entering the garden grounds, Pet'an immediately tries to be a good guest and a good friend by describing the house he sees for the first time with a compliment, 'Man, Bambas, that's nice'. Bambas responds ambiguously, 'well... that terrace...' (Figure 3.19).



Fig 3.19: Admiring the house

The viewer, just like Pet'an, hears the inflection in Bambas's voice as indicative of his disappointment specifically with how the terrace looks. Reacting to this perceived self-criticism, Pet'an says, 'what are you talking about Bambas, that's what makes it great!' His tone of voice sounds conciliatory, as if practised in the art of turning Bambas's negative-sounding statements into positive ones, which alludes to the history this pair shares. Bambas, however, agrees with Pet'an, and replies, 'yeah I know, that's what I'm saying!' This brief

¹⁷⁷ Ronald Bergan, 'Still Free: An Interview with Ivan Passer', *Film Comment*, 13 July 2016, <<http://www.filmcomment.com/blog/still-free-interview-ivan-passer/>> [accessed 20 August 2016].

moment of small talk situates social performance as a very personal means of communication. Although Pet'an did not interpret Bambas correctly this time, their relationship appears to be close enough for him to at least be confident enough about his interpretation to assume its meaning. Thus, in the brief space of only four lines of small talk dialogue, the characters' personal manners of socially performing for each other manage to allude to the existence of a complex emotional backstory to their relationship.

Seconds later, walking further into the garden, Bambas offers his guests some gooseberries from one of his garden plants, which Štěpa accepts. As Bambas scans the plant for the last gooseberry, the film cuts to Pet'an, who nearly indiscernibly whispers to Štěpa 'Couldn't you wait?' (Figure 3.20). Framed by the camera as a couple, the film does not make clear whether their bickering is noticed by Bambas, and thus, whether the social framework of their interaction is truly private to them, in a manner similar to the way Godard represented social frameworks using framing and montage in the opening scene of *Masculin Féminin*.



Fig 3.20: 'Couldn't you wait'

The fact that Pet'an whispers, presumably because he wants to prevent Bambas from hearing him, creates a kind of secretive social framework around Pet'an and Štěpa. The interactions between Pet'an and Štěpa are not solely framed by their romantic relationship, they are also influenced by the fact that they both play the social role of guest. Having arrived

in the social arena of their hosts' house, the moment shows Pet'an and Štěpa adjusting towards their new roles as guests who are also a couple. Pet'an's attempt at being the social *metteur en scène* of their social performance as a couple is rejected, in this moment, by Štěpa's individual social instincts, as expressed in her 'oh come on, what?' in response to his question. Thus, Pet'an's relationship with Bambas and his relationship with Štěpa are shown to co-exist in separate spheres. While it is not suggested that Štěpa does not hear Pet'an's chat with Bambas, or that Bambas cannot hear Pet'an's whispered chat with Štěpa, their framing classifies them as separate social frameworks, and the co-existence of these social frameworks reflects the parallel social storylines through which this weekend is experienced. It introduces, to the viewer, the threaded quality of Passer's aestheticization of social reality.

These introductory moments succeed in setting a tone of normalcy that draws the social gaze. Comparing his interest in everyday life to an interest one might have in physics, Passer explains how he came to think of the small, seemingly insignificant experiences of life in 'microphysical' terms:

Today's interest in everydayness and banality... is like in physics. Either you deal in macrophysics, you explore the cosmos, or you deal in microphysics, and you handle molecules. In effect they're relative, and the distance between the atom and its core [is] similar to the distance from the Sun to Earth. A person can have big experiences, make important encounters that will change their life. But that doesn't really happen that frequently. Rather, we all mostly have everyday, banal experiences. But these experiences cannot be uninteresting, they're very interesting, since after all these are the experiences that make up human life. So I think, to go back to my earlier point, that the answers provided by the physical study of elementary particles are relevant to questions we may have about the stars.¹⁷⁸

By isolating Pet'an's relationship with Bambas and his relationship with Štěpa in different seemingly private communicative bubbles, Passer, in his own way, makes visible the 'molecules' or 'elementary particles' that make up an everyday life, a realm of investigation that may seem banal but that he argues is as vast and interesting as the 'cosmos'. As Jiří Voráč says of the characters in *Intimní Osvětlení*, 'the author steps into their private micro-world,

¹⁷⁸ Jiří Janoušek, ed. *Tři a půl* (Praha: Orbis, 1965), pp. 110-12.

and in the fragments of banal everyday situations he observes their behaviour and conversations'.¹⁷⁹ Indeed, Passer seems to proceed methodically. In these opening scenes, he devotes time to individual relationships, and captures their Goffmanian register so as to establish a sense of their emotional backstory. He begins this process on the periphery of the film's main setting, by the fence of the house, and systematically moves in closer through the garden towards the nucleus: the home.

In a symbolic pairing of the protagonists' slow advance from the fence, through the garden, towards the house, Passer also slowly draws the viewer into a more microscopic appreciation of the household. He leads the viewer to see the house as a heightened place of sociality by pausing, along the way, with seemingly unremarkable interactions, such as between Bambas and Peťan, Peťan and Štěpa, Bambas and his kids, or Štěpa and the kids. Were it not for the intentionality of the cinematography, the way in which Passer dwells on these seemingly random moments gives the impression that the film is a documentary slice of life. While the interactions thus far technically classify as small talk, by dwelling on small talk Passer forces its transformation from being just small talk, to being the main conversation, and with it, instigates the viewer's social gaze to focus on the drama contained within.

As Bambas, Peťan and Štěpa finally reach the house, they are welcomed in by Bambas's wife Maruš and her mother, Marie, who are standing at the top of the stairs towards the front door. Facing the garden, aprons on, stooping politely, and posing on either side of the stairs, they look like domestic caryatids, guarding the hearth and at the same time welcoming guests in (Figure 3.21). Their clothes contrast obviously with Štěpa's fashionable city style: black leggings and a cardigan, pointy black pumps, and a striking black bob haircut and thick black eyeliner that make her unmissable. While the moment clearly divides the group into the social categories of guests and hosts, this categorization is layered further with a cultural and

179 Jiří Voráč, 'Intimate Lighting', *Illuminace*, 10 (1998), no. 1 (29), pp. 225-7 (p. 225).

socio-economic contrast, which sets the stage for a dynamic between Bambas and Pet'an that derives its friction from their different socio-economic stances in life.



Fig 3.21: Domestic caryatids

The film cuts to inside the house. Lit naturally brightly, the room's white walls and curtains look unremarkable. In its understated domesticity and functionality, the room draws attention to the people within it, instead. The first shot in the living room is a straight-on medium shot of Maruš from the waist up, sitting on the sofa. She picks up her young son, Kája junior, and tells him to calm down and sit nicely. She then swiftly turns her attention to something to the side of the camera with a big smile on her face, and in a completely different, sweet tone of voice, she suddenly says 'help yourself, eat up!', talking to her guests.

In one breath and one shot, Maruš switches her social performance from being a mother to being a host, a switch that is made obvious in her change in tone of voice alone, but that is all the more palpable because it occurs within one static shot that fully reveals the quickness of this microscopic performative transformation. It highlights that the house is home to two different social systems, the familial system in which Maruš and Bambas are parents to their kids, and the hospitable system in which they host their friends. Social performance is represented as having the function of mitigating these two social contexts. The

fact that they co-exist in separate ways is also highlighted by the fact that Maruš is slightly removed from the table. Whereas Bambas, Pet'an, and Štěpa sit at the table, Maruš does not choose to join them and instead sits towards the side, with a foot in each of her social roles.

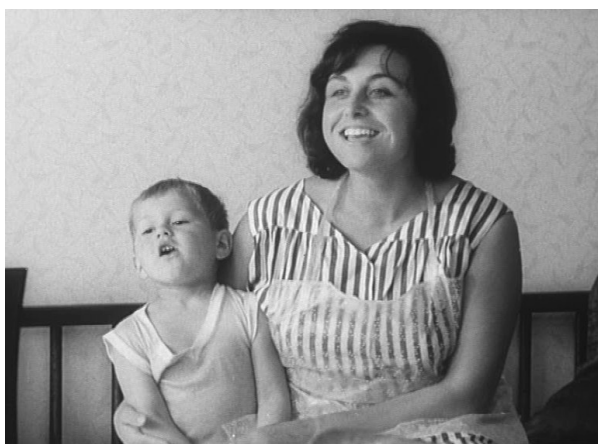


Fig 3.22: Help yourselves!



Fig 3.23: Already eating

In reaction to Maruš's offer, the film cuts to a wider shot of the room, roughly from Maruš's perspective, to reveal Bambas, Pet'an, and Štěpa already eating cake and having tea at the dining table, pretending like they were not just spoken to by her (Figures 3.22 and 3.23). They are the audience of her hostess-like performance. Bambas looks up at Maruš and reacts by offering the guests more of the cake, as if responding to a silent cue from Maruš. Štěpa politely declines, and Pet'an, whose mouth is full, answers 'I still have mine'. Indeed, the offer was more ceremonial than functional, since they could have both helped themselves at any point. In conclusion, Bambas briefly glances back in Maruš's direction. As if following his gaze, the film cuts very briefly to a shot of Maruš, who, looking straight at Bambas, nods her head left to right in mild disappointment at something he did, before cutting away from her again (Figure 3.24).

The shot of Maruš nodding at Bambas is closer than the one of her addressing everyone at the table. Maruš's manner of seeming bigger to us when seen through the eyes of Bambas in this particular shot hints at the place of importance that she occupies to his social experience in this moment – that look was destined only for him. The set of shots and

countershots of Maruš and Bambas communicating with each other using only their insinuating looks, establishes their connection. Their social framework, as the married couple and hosts, was private and exclusive to them. Their tightly framed social performances evidence a private channel of non-verbal communication interpretable only to each other, as emphasized by the close-up camera shot. The intensity of their exchange of glances is emphasized by the fact that no one is talking in this moment. In the background, we hear the sound of Bambas and Maruš's daughter singing, a sound we imagine coming from the garden. The juxtaposition serves to give the moment an afilmic likeness, and suggests the unstagedness of the moment, when Passer's methodology was, in fact, expressly unimprovised. There is palpable awkwardness in the air, reflective of the adjustment families need to go through when they have to accommodate for outsiders.



Fig 3.24: Mildly disappointed Maruš

The film cuts now to a medium close-up shot of Pet'an, from the chest up, stuffing his mouth full of cake, waiting for an invitation to socialize. The shot of him serves to confirm Pet'an's outsider status to the charged exchange of glances that just occurred between Bambas and Maruš. The film cuts back to Bambas, who is now also framed from the chest up in a medium close-up shot, mirroring the frame around Pet'an. Bambas turns his attention to Pet'an

alone and starts a conversation (Figures 3.25 and 3.26). ‘So what do you guys perform?’ ‘What do we perform... Classical music’, replies Pet’an, ‘you know, we’re not in Prague, pal.’ This is the first indication in the film of geography, but it only reveals that none of the characters are from Prague. While Pet’an may, unlike Bambas, live in a city, he attempts to align himself with Bambas by noting how they have in common their not being in Prague. The moment has a conciliatory ring to it again – as if Pet’an is trying to downplay the kind of city he lives in as being inferior to Prague. His social performance is particularly destined for his friend Bambas, as it tries to be sensitive to their private emotional context. The symmetrical framing also codifies this interactivity as theirs exclusively, excluding both Štěpa and Maruš, not with a silent secret language of glances, like the one shared by Maruš and Bambas do, but with a subject matter that is at the foundation of their friendship: music.



Fig 3.25: Time to talk serious music



Fig 3.26: Cake

‘Well’ we hear Maruš suddenly adding to the conversation off-screen, as if answering a question that was never asked, ‘since Kája has been the principal of that school, things are not as bad as they used to be: he doesn’t need to teach kids all the time, whereas grandpa still does, and he comes home really stressed sometimes, doesn’t he, Kája?’ Her interjection is concerned with the topic of employment, and how that impacts their quality of life. While it is unrelated to the topic Bambas and Pet’an were talking about in one sense, in another sense she intuited, probably correctly, that one of Bambas’s motivations for asking Pet’an about what

kind of music his orchestra play, was that he wishes to probe whether Pet'an is happy with the soloist career that Bambas doesn't have. Having sensed the social framework as pertaining to a conversation about the general sense of professional fulfillment, Maruš felt prompted to give a report on Bambas's employment and his related happiness. But, while she gives away relatively intimate details of Bambas's life in the process, neither Bambas nor Pet'an respond to her, indicating that she misinterpreted the social framework. Furthermore, unlike the men who are framed in matching medium close-up shots, she is framed in a larger, medium shot, like she was when she was addressing the whole table. As a result, she appears physically more distant to the viewer than Bambas and Pet'an do, indicating, in the logic of Passer's codified use of framing thus far, her participation in this social interaction to be parenthetical rather than central.

Although his wife asks him for affirmation when she finishes her contribution with 'doesn't he Kája?', Bambas's reaction is, instead, to ignore her completely, and to pick up the conversation where he and Pet'an had left it before by continuing to discuss the Prague philharmonic and the privileged professional life of its musicians. While Bambas has made an assertive choice about which conversation he is more interested in having, Passer does not make that commitment. Rather than sticking to this interaction as the dominant social thread in the moment, Passer cuts, instead, to a close-up shot of Štěpa playing peekaboo with Kája junior across the table, both oblivious to the conversations around them (Figures 3.26 and 3.27). Instead of trying to participate, Štěpa and little Kája interact with each in their unique language of play, making sounds and playful gestures. In fact, Štěpa is often portrayed like one of the children in the film, likely because the social frameworks of the grown-ups do not entertain her as much as those of the kids. By depicting this additional interaction, Passer draws attention to the room as a heterogeneous social space, giving equal weight to each person's attempt at sociality, and to each particle forming the social situation, without

discriminating by age or subject. We do not come to see the social frameworks, and by proxy, the social roles in ranks of hierarchy, but rather as co-existing strands of the social experience of the weekend.



Fig 3.27: Child's play



Fig 3.28: Peekaboo

When the film cuts back to Bambas, and thus, to Bambas and Pet'an's particular social framework, we hear Maruš starting to talk off-screen again, still not quite part of their bubble. She continues her train of thought unhindered, as if she had not been ignored the first time: 'We were also sometimes pretty stressed during the time that we were building the house. You know, how it can get on your nerves and everything...' Her undeterred continuation of the conversation topic she introduced seemingly causes Bambas and Pet'an's social framework to fork into two parallel conversations that do not acknowledge each other. While conventionally narrative film tends to prioritize one conversation topic at any time, Passer allows the viewer to feel present by spending time with each character's way of being social and by conveying the recognizable social experience of being able to decide which conversation topic to follow. There is no narrative context directing conversational flow. This makes the film bear what Peter Hames calls the 'stamp of apparent improvisation', even if Passer explicitly denied using any improvisation at all.¹⁸⁰ Instead, what seems to give the film this appearance, or what

¹⁸⁰ Hames, *New Wave*, p. 113.

can be described as its *cinéma vérité* effect, is that Passer depicts sociality that appears to be orchestrated socially by multiple characters rather than by one film director.

This particular social situation reveals two hosts who compete for their guest's attention, and who pretend that their social framework is the dominant one by ignoring the other. But this time, Pet'an does not give Bambas the opportunity to ignore Maruš again and acknowledges the fork by immediately responding to her. He looks at Bambas, and with a put-on air of incredulity, he asks him directly: 'Bambas, have you been feeling stressed?' and then, turning to Maruš directly, repeats the question, 'has Bambas been feeling stressed?'

Earlier in the film, in the garden out of Maruš's earshot, Bambas had explicitly requested Pet'an not to call him 'Bambas' to his wife, as this is a nickname she is not familiar with. When Maruš finally realizes that Pet'an calls Kája 'Bambas', she lets out a joyful laugh of amusement, the pleasant burst of sound of which spreads around the room and seems to energize the film into a quick succession of shots of everyone's faces, as the sound of her laughter invades every frame, from Bambas forcing himself not to look embarrassed, to Štěpa and Kája still playing peekaboo, and finally, in a revealing shot, to Maruš's mother, the matriarch of the house, whose presence in the living room the film had not made known until now, but who has apparently been standing by, between the kitchen door and the living room, this whole time. Her arms folded, Maruš's mother nods her head in approval as she contemplates the joyful social tableau of her living room (Figure 3.29). Maruš's laughter finally achieved to connect the entire group together like a current of electricity, unifying everyone in the room for a brief moment in the same social framework.

Passer aestheticizes the living room as the site for a network of different parallel interactions that criss-cross over each other, blend together, and co-exist in a kind of waltz: between Štěpa and little Kája enjoying juvenile games, between Pet'an and Bambas discussing their passion, between Maruš, who sits on the edge of this social framework so as to oversee,

to retreat, or to participate, and everyone else; and finally, between grandmother Marie and the tableau of her children, grand-child, and her guests enjoying themselves, which she spectates without performing, like a wise social gazer.



Fig 3.29: Marie, the matriarch, socially gazing at the social tableau of her living room

Instead of capturing spontaneity directly, like Forman and Rozier do, and like Godard pretends to do, Passer approaches the phenomenon of spontaneity methodically, examining it in a more studious manner. He presents it not quite like a chaotic event, but rather, as the simultaneous co-existence of non-chaotic, deliberate social micro-events. Passer's *vérité* aesthetic therefore effects authenticity with the second order of authenticity by mimicking the way large social situations demand a participant to split his or her social gaze. He spends time with each element of a moment of sociality that would, in scriptless and improvised films, be captured as one large social scrum. Through the codifying visual means of cinematography, framing, and montage, Passer authentically captures the multiplicity of the social frameworks that are at work within what seems to be, on the surface of the scene, just one single conversation.

Narratively, the scene seems to just convey the inevitably awkward, first social interaction of the weekend. It is mostly motionless, people are sitting and talking, and the

camera responds with static shots. But as a result, glances and small talk are heightened and gain in expressive meaning. Taking a Goffmanian approach reveals that the characters' social performances are framed differently depending on the kind of relationship they have with the person they are interacting with, even within one shared moment of sociality. This, in turn, makes it possible for the viewer to discern the different degrees of intimacy certain characters share, and the hierarchy of those different levels of intimacy in that moment tells a pertinent micro-story.

For instance, while Bambas ignores Maruš, his wife, in this conversation, Passer's depiction of their unspoken connection suggests that Bambas would probably normally respond positively to Maruš's unique and loving behaviour and her invitation to socialize. Pet'an's presence changes something about that familiar ritual and makes Bambas reject her sociality. His tactical ignoring of his wife shows that Bambas wants to interact with Pet'an alone, and to switch into the social role of his friend without also having to be husband.

Bambas has several social roles in this film that are accentuated by the various nicknames he has. The fact that Bambas is referred to by different names – Bambas by Pet'an, Kája by his wife, and Karlík by his step-parents – under one roof, encapsulates the fractured nature of his social existence. His request for Pet'an not to use the nickname in front of his wife demonstrates his struggle with his different social roles. It suggests that he does not wish her to know about the past version of himself, and raises the suspicion that there may not be room for the social role he played in Pet'an's life in the current social framework of his present relationship with his wife. Mazierska has argued that this is because there is a romantic dimension to his relationship with Pet'an.¹⁸¹ While this may be the case, it could also be that, in marrying Maruš, Bambas did not necessarily give up his sexuality, but rather, that he more generally prioritizes his newfound role as father and husband in his interactions with her, over his past antics with his partner in crime, Pet'an. His request of Pet'an not to identify

¹⁸¹ Mazierska, pp. 198-9.

him as the man that Pet'an sees him as is a proactive social *mise en scène* decision that reveals he considers the house to be a stage for him as Kája or Karlík, not as Bambas. In a certain sense, the purpose of this reunion will include the slow but gradual return of Bambas.

‘To me, you will always be an artist’

Bambas’ return as a social facet of the character occurs in the penultimate scene of the film. While most of the film sees the characters coming together in various group formations, this is one of the few scenes in which Bambas and Pet'an obtain privacy. The scene derives its climactic power from the fact that it shows the two main characters, whose relationship is the subject of the film, finally together alone. Now that they are far away not just from society, cities, and concert audiences, but also from their very own family members and loved ones, Bambas and Pet'an can be who they are specifically to each other, without having to mask, camouflage, or somehow edit and suppress their social performance of friendship, as they have done thus far.

Mazierska’s theory that the men had a romantic past is based partly on the title of the film, which is actually put to practice in this scene. The title suggests that their relationship is of a kind that needs to occur away from people’s prying eyes, and only in the most covert, secretive, social settings, because it would have been unwelcome in the particularly puritanical culture of socialist society.¹⁸² Indeed, their meet-up occurs late at night, and as Mazierska notes, they decline the invitations to romance and the sexual advances of their respective girlfriend or wife in order to do so, to the women’s great chagrin.

At the end of the first day, then, Pet'an decides to go downstairs while Štěpa goes to bed, assuming he will find Bambas up late. When he arrives downstairs in his pyjamas, he

¹⁸² Mazierska, pp. 198-9.

finds the ground floor's social *mise en scène* transformed. Formerly a space for family activity, it is now Bambas's late-night den with the lights dimmed and classical music playing from the radio (Figure 3.30). Every other scene in the film thus far has taken place in bright daylight. Only now, shot without added lighting effects, using the available lights around, is the film's title given expression, and does the family home become the proper social stage for what has, all along, been the main story of the film: their reunion.

On a Goffmanian level, the dimmed lights allow them to relax their social masks, and to get more comfortable: the absence of spotlights leads to a de-emphasis on polite host-and-guest-like behaviour, and opens up the way for a kind of stripped down interactivity in which each man can be less concerned with social performative expectations, and more sincere. Indeed, intimate lighting, Passer seems to say, is dimmed lighting – a sensual kind of lighting that saves a person from having to wear a social mask even for their friends. Instead, it gives that person the freedom to relax their theatricality, and to turn their focus to listening, thinking, and enjoying each other's presence.



Fig 3.30: Intimate lighting



Fig 3.31: What do you want?

Before heading downstairs, Pet'an was very explicit to Štěpa in explaining why he had 'rushed' their lovemaking to be able to come downstairs to seize the opportunity to catch up with Bambas alone. When Bambas emerges from the kitchen door and sees Pet'an downstairs in his pyjamas, and asks him, 'how come you're not sleeping?', Pet'an refrains from giving

him the same answer, as if describing it as ‘catching up’ would not do justice to his true intentions, letting the unspoken reason hang in the air to be answered by the film instead (Figure 3.31). The mystery of their connection heightens the intimacy of the moment.

The undefinability of Pet’an’s wishes for this midnight interaction is not unsymbolically segued into his hunger, as Bambas offers him food. Going through the cabinet of stored food, Bambas and Pet’an gleefully discover a bottle of Maruš’s homemade liquor. Equipped, they settle into their seats around the hearth-like radio: Bambas sinks into a blissful trance, eating food, drinking, and listening to soothing classical music, and Pet’an lights up a cigarette sitting on the sofa across from him (Figure 3.32). They remain silent for a short while, basking in the pleasure of food, tobacco, and drink. It is the first time in the film that two characters in each other’s presence allow silent non-interaction to sit comfortably between them as their form of interactivity. This silence is significant: it represents the familiarity between the characters, and the unspoken bond between them. But the nostalgic tone of the music in the background gives this silence a tinge of sadness too, hinting at the lost past several years of their relationship.



Fig 3.32: Nightcap or ice-breaker?

The alcohol serves as an ice-breaker, and as it kicks in, the morosity of the atmosphere is alleviated. Bambas breaks the silence by observing ‘this is mine, man’, referring to that very moment: the basic pleasures of sitting, listening to music, drinking alcohol, eating food, and, above all, enjoying this dimly lit den in solitariness. Swelled up by the music playing from the radio – the final movement of the Dvořák Cello Concerto that they will be performing the next day, conducted in this 1952 recording by Václav Talich who had been banned by the government from giving public performances until 1954, and thus, another subtle act of subversion on the part of Passer hidden within the threads of the film – Bambas is keen to delve into his passion for music. Bambas specifically wants to discuss a composer he has rediscovered, Vojtěch Jírovec. But, to his chagrin, Pet’an swiftly passes by Jírovec to enquire about something personal he has discovered about Bambas that the film had not shown: ‘How did you get into fishing?’ ‘You would never understand’ replies Bambas, sensing the mockery. ‘I know everything about this house, I even know when granddad uses the bathroom... But by the water, it’s an adventure. You never know what’ll come’.

What is normally a solitary moment, Bambas can now share with someone else. Indeed, while there is usually nobody there to see him in this dim lighting, Pet’an’s presence gives Bambas the opportunity to socially perform this solitary aspect of his life. In this setting, Bambas is more comfortable about giving voice to his most private thoughts. By talking about his own family in their absence, Bambas is embodying his social role as Bambas, rather than just as husband, son-in-law, father, or even host.

Occasionally, as the best friends talk further about music, fishing, snoring, and hunting, and whilst they get more and more inebriated, their conversation becomes unfollowable. Their allusions to inside jokes or to topics that the viewer is an outsider to, as, we suspect, are their relatives, serve to peel back the historical layers of their respective social roles in each other’s lives. Their use of language aids them in rediscovering their interactivity. By virtue of not

understanding everything the men tell each other specifically, the viewer gains, instead, an abstract impression of the depth of their relationship.

But alcohol and music also inject their evening with a sense of emotional turmoil, and before long, the sense of lost time resurfaces as a source of pain and regret in their relationship. When Pet'an discovers that they have finished the bottle of liquor, he exclaims in celebration 'that's it, we're wasted!' But the empty bottle of liquor gains in symbolic meaning for Bambas, who angrily tells Pet'an 'Stop babbling!' suddenly changing the tone of the conversation (Figure 3.33). 'Do you have a house?' he continues, rhetorically, 'You don't. Do you have a car? You don't. Are you married? You're not... So you're not wasted!' What sounded like it started as a reprimanding of his friend, turns into a confession (Figure 3.34).



Fig 3.33: Suddenly angry



Fig 3.34: Compassionate

The ambiguity of Bambas's reaction echoes that moment, earlier in the film, when Bambas's tone insinuated dissatisfaction with the terrace, only to reveal that he was actually quite happy with it. Similarly, while Bambas's reaction here seems hostile towards Pet'an at first, his hostility is not directed towards Pet'an but towards himself, and his reaction consists in a form of catharsis. At this level of intimacy, everything outside of Pet'an and Bambas's bubble is abstracted. His house, the car, and his family are addressed from within their social framework as conventional symbols of happiness, and when he brings them up, he alludes to them as problems rather than blessings. Therefore, the nature of the social framework of this

private late-night drinking session is thus, that it gives Bambas the possibility to distance himself momentarily from his everyday life. While Kája and Karlík are social roles that are solidly anchored in the everyday life he has made for himself, Bambas is a social role that allows him to step outside of it. In a sense, then, the film portrays both everyday life, and the intrinsic and contradictory desire one can feel to escape it.

Out of nowhere, seemingly, Pet'an resolves the conversation with 'Bambas, to me, you will always be an artist'. Without Bambas saying so explicitly, Pet'an has understood that Bambas's attempt to compare their lives in material terms is rooted in his fear that he has somehow neglected his calling as an artist. While the logic of Pet'an's reaction may seem nebulous to the viewer without narrative context, in the social context, Pet'an has been depicted as a social being who would know the words of the spell that can alleviate his friend's discontent. The nightcap gains in metaphorical meaning as a medicine. As soon as he hears these words, Bambas begins singing and grabs his violin. Although having a nightcap connotes unclimacticness, in a sense, the moment consists in the climax of the film, because of the revindication it carries out of Bambas.

Although the scene does not necessarily come across as significant on a narrative level, it is the most poignant scene of the film in its manner of handling human relationships. This evening scene clarifies why the two are so close in a way that was kept obscured during the day. While the film almost seems to shield the characters' deepest levels of intimacy even from the viewers, with inside jokes and anecdotes that are not for the viewer to grasp, what the film does show, is the social performative transformation that occurs when they are together alone. This moment of drunken heart-to-heart allows them to become recognizable to each other again. By socially performing the roles they occupy within the unique social framework of their friendship, they breathe life into their former selves – into the Bambas and

Pet'an who originally forged this friendship, years ago, and whom only they are able to unlock and resuscitate from each other.

In a film world where each character's relationship to another character is codified formally through a combination of framing, montage, and overt changes in the characters' social performative tones, Passer depicts the climax of the film – two friends mending their temporary estrangement into rekindlement – by aestheticizing their intimacy with specific use of personal language that implies their history and abstracts their present. This leaves intimacy to be something that is exactly that, intimate, and therefore specific only to them, but abstractly recognizable to a social gaze.

Conclusion

In *Intimní Osvětlení*, Passer represents the experience of social life through the opposition between large groups and intimate pairings, and between habit and novelty. The film situates social performance as expressive of specific kinds of connections and bonds between people in ritualized ways, as well as in genuine ways. When Bambas and his guests and his family come together, Passer aestheticizes social reality in its threaded format, using framing and montage to visualize and codify the various channels of communication that constitute what looks, on the surface, like one big group interaction. Although the characters themselves may hierarchize and prioritize certain channels of communication over others, Passer himself gives them equal weight, acknowledging each of them, negating none, not even awkward silences. He captures the self-directed nature of big social situations by casting each interlocutor as a potential social *metteur en scène* of the shared social tableau.

The channels of communication also reveal the habit and predictability that are familiar properties of the social environments of households. The injection of a new guest, who is simultaneously an old friend, stirs this up by forcing the protagonist, Bambas, to break from the structure of his everydayness, and to engage in a social framework with him that brings out a social performance that reflects a side to him that his household life does not typically summon. While the tea and cake scene shows social reality to be clearly organized, the transformative nightcap scene shows it to be shrouded in mystery. In the latter, Passer metaphorizes social performance as an unforgeable signature: a mark of a friend still being the same person as he once was, a means for a friend to feel uniquely spoken to, and the key to profound, rather than pragmatic, human connections.

3.4. Conclusion

Černý Petr and *Intimní Osvětlení*, in different ways, succeed in capturing something about the impact of oppression on social life, imposed by different bodies of influence on the social spaces in which protagonists present themselves. They reflect on the friction between the characters' sense of self and their social frameworks. In these films, our social gaze is particularly drawn not to what, but to who makes characters behave certain ways, be they figures of authority in a generational dynamic, or in a family dynamic.

Taking a Goffmanian approach to these films draws the attention of the social gaze to different aspects of social life. In *Černý Petr*, similarly to *Adieu Philippine*, Forman's *vérité* aesthetic focuses on performativity, and specifically, on the use of unnatural, grotesque performance styles, notably slapstick comedy, to comment on meta-performativity: the less natural the performance, the more divorced from a sense of self the character is. Captured observationally according to the first order of authenticity, these performativities clash with the afilmic behaviours of, for example, the grocery shoppers and twist party revelers in the scenes, and thus, with the human faces of historical reality, which feature in the background like reminders of normalcy. In *Intimní Osvětlení*, while performativity is natural, it is not qualified in contrast to the large afilmic social frameworks of crowds of strangers in the background, but rather, considered for the way it is intended for a specific person's social gaze. Through a focus on the second order of authenticity, Passer aestheticizes performativity as destined for someone in particular, the social framework of which he codifies with static, non-observational cinematography and framing. Passer reflects both on the act of social gazing and on the intimate bond that is created by sincere forms of sociality. In a way, whereas Forman reflects on the peer-pressure of the collective, Passer reflects on the building

blocks of the collective, and looks, rather, at the potential for individual relationships to sway a person's social being.

Both films adhere to the filmmakers' unofficial manifesto, a relatively inexpensive way to capture people doing normal things. And, in their hands, it becomes a powerful way to inject into filmmaking a kind of truthfulness about contemporary reality that was both immediately recognizable to an audience, and completely alternative to the socialist image proffered by socialist realism. Both filmmakers have sharp insights into the darkness present in social reality, and depict their sensitivity to the struggles for control, influence, and selfness in 1960s Czechoslovak social reality. Both ruminate on the importance for truth of self as integral to people's existences as social beings, and to human nature in general. These similarities are the result of different methodologies.

The first three films examined in this thesis were made with a filmmaking approach that borrowed directly from the methodological principles of *cinéma vérité*. Notably, their *vérité* aesthetics comprised observational cinematography, spontaneous, improvised performativity, and a tendency to let the afilmic world enter the frame. In these films, social performance was portrayed as an unrehearsable entity, inseparable from the surroundings that produced it. Passer's filmmaking approach, however, is more conventional in that it materializes a script, which is something he has in common with Rohmer. Here, social performance is portrayed as a learned, strategic, and cerebral act that is considered more closely in its abstract dimension, independently from setting, but authentic to the subjective experience of sociality. *Intimní Osvětlení* begins the transition in the film corpus, alluded to in the theory chapter, from slightly more amateurist, rough around the edges, *vérité* aesthetics, towards a more polished, cohesive, and premeditated kind of *vérité* aesthetics. Moving away from a representation of youth culture, *Intimní Osvětlení* has also begun this thesis's

exploration into the fine-grain mechanics of what happens, performatively, when a small gathering of socially self-aware adults gets together.

To examine this further, the following chapter goes back to France a couple of years later, to focus on two films of Rohmer's *Contes moraux* (Moral Tales) series, in which various groups of grown-up characters are shown using social performativity as a means to communicate, amongst other things, their privileged social status and their tasteful sense of *savoir-vivre*.

4

***Savoir-vivre in Éric Rohmer's Contes
moraux: La Collectionneuse (1967)
and Ma nuit chez Maud (1969)***

My films, you say, are literary: the things I say could be said in a novel. Yes, but what do I *say*? My characters' discourse is not necessarily my film's discourse... What I say, I do not say with words. I do not say it with images either, with all due respect to the partisans of pure cinema, who would speak with images as a deaf-mute does with his hands. After all, I do not say, I show. I show people who move and speak.

- Éric Rohmer.¹⁸³

4.1. Introduction

This final chapter is devoted to the analysis of two of Éric Rohmer's *Contes moraux* (Moral Tales) – *La Collectionneuse* (*The Collector*) (1967) and *Ma nuit chez Maud* (*My Night at Maud's*) (1969) – for the particular way in which Rohmer aestheticizes sociality. The *Contes moraux* was Rohmer's first cycle, or series, of films and would consist of two short films and four feature-length films made between 1962 and 1972, thus overlapping with the late French New Wave. *La Collectionneuse* and *Ma nuit chez Maud* were both completed to some degree with the financial and artistic help of important *nouvelle vague* production companies, producers, actors, and avant-garde artists, and in the infectious *nouvelle vague* state of mind

¹⁸³ Éric Rohmer, 'Letter to a Critic: Concerning my *Contes Moraux* (*Moral Tales*)', in *The Taste for Beauty*, trans. by Carol Volk (Cambridge; New York; Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 80-4 (p. 80).

which prioritized original narrative structures and a depiction of recognizable ordinary humanity.¹⁸⁴

While the representation of social performance in the previous two chapters was often paired with the struggle for authority of self, in this chapter, social performance is caught specifically in the dynamics of social status and class. Indeed, in these films, the characters can be described as self-aware, self-involved, or aspiring members of the middle class who have learned to use a social performative language that evokes a middle class lifestyle. They see any occasion for interactivity as an opportunity to express their status, whether legitimate or conned, via relatively sophisticated and premeditated levels of social performativity.

To discuss the underlying processes of this premeditation, it is useful to draw from Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of taste as related to social status, from his seminal work, *La Distinction: critique sociale du jugement* (1979), and to incorporate it into Goffman's description of the theatricality of social reality.

Bourdieuian Social Performance

Éric Rohmer, pseudonym for Maurice Schérer, embarked on his *Contes moraux* in 1962 with *La Boulangère de Monceau* (*The Bakery Girl of Monceau*) (1963). Filmed as a 16 mm, amateur short film of twenty-four minutes, *La Boulangère de Monceau* tells the tale of a young law student, played by Barbet Schroeder, who was Rohmer's business partner and co-founder of his production company, *Les Films du Losange*. A local of the Batignolles-Monceau area of the 17th *arrondissement* of Paris, with its large avenues and cafés, the student regularly crosses paths with an attractive young blonde woman, Sylvie (played by Michèle

¹⁸⁴ *La Collectionneuse* was produced by Georges de Beauregard, who produced *À Bout de Souffle* (1960) and *Adieu Philippine* (1962), and *Ma nuit chez Maud* was co-produced by François Truffaut.

Girardon), with whom he becomes enamoured (Figure 4.1). While his friend encourages him to go talk to her, the protagonist feels that *‘elle était sûrement pas fille à se laisser aborder comme ça dans la rue’*. He is cautious about how to make the first move without somehow transgressing certain rules of etiquette that would immediately disqualify him as a suitor.



Fig 4.1: Sylvie's *‘regard furtif’*

One day, however, she stops appearing in the street. After three days, he decides to take long walks every evening around the area in the hopes of finding her. On one of these walks, he discovers a small bakery where he makes the acquaintance of one of the bakery salesgirls. Coming to buy patisseries every day, the student and the bakery girl develop a flirtatious rapport. In his narration, he claims that *‘elle n’entre pas dans mes catégories’*, and is annoyed not that she should find him attractive, but that she thinks she can attract him back. Still, he decides to persuade her to go on a date with him on Saturday. But on Saturday, having searched for three weeks, he finally bumps into Sylvie just outside the bakery: she had a sprained ankle that prevented her from leaving her home. He decides to forget about the bakery girl and to go out for dinner with Sylvie that night instead. Without showing the bakery girl again, who, we presume, was not informed about the cancellation of her date, the film ends with a card announcing the protagonist's marriage to Sylvie, six months later.

The protagonist calls this choice ‘moral’. He describes Sylvie as ‘his truth’ and the bakery girl ‘an error’, and explains that continuing to see the bakery girl now that he has found Sylvie would be a sin. But this choice is tinged with classism. Sylvie represents a higher class than the bakery girl. She is employed at an art gallery and resides in an apartment right in the Batignolles-Monceau area, whereas the bakery girl only has the prospect of becoming a salesgirl somewhere else. They also have a different use of language: Sylvie has elegant turns of the phrase that reflect her higher level of education, whereas Rohmer makes a point of the bakery girl’s lack of vocabulary by showing that she does not know the meaning of the word ‘*romanesque*’, not dissimilarly from the way Godard would later frame Elsa Leroy, Miss 19, to reveal she does not know the meaning of the word ‘*réactionnaire*’.



Fig 4.2: the young bakery girl, cornered

The protagonist’s manner of socially behaving towards them differs. Whereas he was cautious about how to approach Sylvie, nervous about accosting her directly for fear of lacking tact, he was not nervous at all to accost the bakery salesgirl in the street, even beckoning her to hide in a little dark alleyway with him so he could talk to her about going on a date, caressing her neck and holding her hand, which he would never have dared to do with Sylvie (Figure 4.2). The hierarchy between them appealed to his social gaze differently.

Indeed, if Rohmer's characters' social gazes are voyeuristic, they are so in class-specific ways, modulated to gauge which class a person comes from as soon as they notice them.

Taste, and especially, the implication of hierarchy in the subject of taste, plays an important part in Rohmer's aestheticization of social reality. This hierarchized conception of social reality will turn out to be a consistent trait of his filmography. The first two *Contes moraux*, including *La Boulangère de Monceau*, show characters making very dogmatic decisions about who they should or should not be attracted to, based on social status. The final four *Contes moraux*, including *La Collectionneuse* and *Ma nuit chez Maud*, raise similar questions of human relationships, attraction, and love, but treat their entanglement with class-conscious taste less coarsely, presenting the problem with more nuance, complexity, and tentativeness.

To slightly broaden the model of social reality with which we have thus far examined social performance in the first four films in this thesis, by recognizing the significance of taste in both the act of social performance, as well as in the social gaze we might take on the films' representations of social performance, it is useful to briefly consider Bourdieu's discussion of taste as a reflection of social status, and the implications this may have on our interpretations.

Inspired by Goffman, whom he called the '*découvreur de l'infiniment petit*', Bourdieu was interested in considering how social beings subjectively experienced objective social reality.¹⁸⁵ One of the ways to relate to social reality is to like or dislike certain things in it, like art and culture. Through an elaborate study of statistics and ethnographic data, Bourdieu establishes that people's tastes in art are not natural expressions, but rather that there is a systematic correlation between people's tastes and their levels of education, of income, and their social class. To quantify what this connection to education, income, and social class may mean to people's tastes, Bourdieu distinguishes between academic, economic, and cultural

185 Pierre Bourdieu, 'La Mort du Sociologue Erving Goffman. Le découvreur de l'infiniment petit.' *Le Monde*, 4 December 1982.

capital. *La Distinction* is dedicated specifically to the examination of the tastes of the middle class of 1960s France, which is the wider social position that the characters in Rohmer's films generally occupy.

Being of the middle class, in Bourdieu's terms, means having less cultural, academic, and economic capital than the upper class, and more than the working class. What this implies, in the 1960s, is that people of the upper classes appreciate different arts – more 'legitimate' arts – because they have had privileged access to education from both family and school that taught them the appreciation of certain high, or 'noble', forms of art, like opera. This distinguishes them from 'the masses', or from 'common people', and as Bourdieu argues, the very 'relationship of distinction' that characterizes the differences between people is just an effect of taste. In other words, taste becomes, for the higher, more 'noble' classes, a means to socially distinguish themselves from those who have tastes that are 'ordinary' and 'naive'.¹⁸⁶ The middle class are caught up in similar competitive dynamics, and those of the upper middle class distinguish themselves from the lower middle class, who try to distance themselves from the lower class and its subsections.

The middle class differentiate themselves via the symbolic implications of their tastes. 'Economic power is first and foremost a power to keep economic necessity at arm's length', writes Bourdieu.¹⁸⁷ Drawing from Max Weber's insistence on the symbolic systems that social life is made up of, Bourdieu explains that, since the middle class, or the *bourgeoisie*, are not actually able to spend all of their time and resources on gratuitous luxury, they organize their social lives to distinguish between 'what is paid for and what is free' through the opposition of 'work' and 'home', or 'work' and 'holidays', or 'business' and 'sentiment', and ultimately 'economic necessity' and 'artistic freedom'. To express their access to this compartmentalized freedom, Bourdieu explains that 'material or symbolic consumption of works of art

¹⁸⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. by Richard Nice, new intro. by Tony Bennett (London; New York: Routledge Classics, 2010; originally publ. in 1979), pp. 23-4.

¹⁸⁷ Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 48.

constitutes one of the supreme manifestations of *ease*’ – achieved via a successful display of relative freedom from economic necessity. Thus, as ‘distance from necessity grows, life-style increasingly becomes the product of what Weber calls a “stylization of life”’, or as I will call it in this chapter, *savoir-vivre*.¹⁸⁸ Finally, proposing a concept that denotes the way in which the ‘structured practices’ of lifestyle impact people’s manner of interpreting their social reality, Bourdieu uses the term ‘habitus’, defined as the ‘internalized form of class condition and of the conditioning it entails’.¹⁸⁹

When social status becomes tinged with the need to display the sophistication of one’s tastes in order to make one’s relative ease and freedom from usual economic necessity conspicuous, this will impact the function of social performance. Indeed, social performance is one channel of communication that can clarify to other people’s social gazes whether the social performer has access to ease, based on which they can extrapolate that person’s social status.

Regardless of their tastes, the majority of the characters we have examined in the thesis thus far had the commonality of being in a position of relative necessity with regards to the consumption of ordinary goods. Michel’s family in *Adieu Philippine* was distressed to find out he could not contribute to the grocery purse, Paul in *Masculin Féminin* considers himself a fighter for the workers’ cause and his best friend lives in a car, and Petr and Bambas in *Černý Petr* and *Intimní Osvětlení* lived in socialist societies where the middle class had been suppressed, although the circumstance of home ownership in *Intimní Osvětlení* is both controversial because it was rare, and places Bambas and his family in a more privileged social category than most. This chapter presents a clear opportunity to examine representations of the social performativity of two subtly different sets of characters from comparable *bourgeois* ‘habitus’ that both tend to conspicuously make their *savoir-vivre*

188 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 48.

189 Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 95.

known, and relate to their middle class positions with different but comparable levels of ease. Therefore, I will employ a Goffmanian-Bourdieuian approach to examine their particular forms of sociality.

The protagonists of *La Collectionneuse* and of *Ma nuit chez Maud*, as of the other two feature length *Contes moraux*, *Le Genou de Claire* (1970) and *L'Amour l'après-midi* (1972), have the commonality of being white men in their late twenties and early thirties, from well-educated, artistic or otherwise intellectual backgrounds. Rohmer's own position in the middle class and connections with the art world and academia allow him to offer insight into the exclusive niches of the people he was interested in portraying.

Specifically, Rohmer's own erudite and literary background gives him an acute sensitivity to the specific ways in which his characters would socialize.¹⁹⁰ His screenwriting makes precise use of language, rhythm, and dialogic styles and tactics that seem accurately representative of their social niches. Indeed, his characters and his films are notoriously verbose and talkative. As Pascal Bonitzer notes of the *Contes moraux* heroes, '*ils ont plus de défense, et plus de savoir-vivre, ou de savoir-parler*' than the common character.¹⁹¹ In the *Contes moraux*, even the protagonists' inner thoughts are expressed through narration, since they are also the films' narrators. As a result, his style has often been described as literary.

In Rohmer's defence, Alain Bergala defines 'literary cinema', a negative descriptor in his view, as the kind of cinema where 'ideas come before the reality of bodies and of the film shoot'.¹⁹² On the contrary, says Bergala, what interests Rohmer is the intangible quality created by 'bodies that talk'.¹⁹³ The use of language draws attention to the face, to the actor, and to their manner of occupying their social role as an interlocutor in sociality with others.

190 Before becoming a film director, Rohmer had spent two decades in the academic, educational, literary, and journalistic circuits, notably as Latin teacher, author, and editor of *Cahiers du Cinéma*. For a detailed biography see Antoine de Baecque and Noël Herpe, *Éric Rohmer: Biographie* (Paris: Editions Stock, 2014).

191 Pascal Bonitzer, *Éric Rohmer* (Paris: Editions de l'Etoile/Cahiers du cinema, 1999), p. 61.

192 Jean Cléder, ed., *Éric Rohmer : Évidence et ambiguïté du cinéma* (Lormont: Editions le Bord de l'eau, 2007), p. 96.

193 Cléder, pp. 96-7.

Indeed, his films first and foremost ‘show people who move and speak’, rather than merely serving as vessels for his written dialogue.¹⁹⁴ Rohmer’s interest, then, is in the specific kind of physical reality that a specific kind of class-conscious talkativeness unlocks in his characters, and his *vérité* aesthetic is specifically geared towards capturing that.

Rohmer’s *vérité* aesthetic, while not based on the transparent, immediate, and unmediated qualities of observational cinematography, can be described in terms of a self-proclaimed ‘ontological realist agenda’ that prioritizes the characters’ being ‘grounded [...] in the phenomenal reality that surrounds them’.¹⁹⁵ Indeed, as Martin argued, ‘Rohmer, as a filmmaker [...] would [...] prove to be among cinema’s keenest observers of social *mise en scène*!’¹⁹⁶ As already mentioned, Rohmer’s *vérité* aesthetic differs from that of Rozier, Godard, and Forman, in that it does not employ improvisation, and, in some ways, it differs also from that of Passer with *Ma nuit chez Maud*, an important section of which was shot in a small studio rather than in a real location. Everything is elaborately scripted, and in some cases visually designed.

However, Rohmer’s cinematographer Nestor Almendros and he were interested in using as much natural light as possible, and in *La Collectionneuse*, set in the balmy French riviera, this often involved beautiful magic hour, which matters in this context, since *La Collectionneuse* is the only film examined in the thesis that was shot on colour film. Rohmer’s aesthetic is also naturalistic, then, in the sense that it was interested in the beauty of the real world, and this also applied to the real beauty of his cast. Schilling says of Rohmer’s cinema, that ‘if a face projects beauty, that beauty is one of the world, not of the image’.¹⁹⁷ Thus, through unimprovised, scripted, and premeditated interactions, Rohmer’s *mise en scène*

194 Rohmer, p. 80.

195 Derek Schilling, *Éric Rohmer* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 124-5.

196 Martin, pp. 130-1.

197 Schilling, *Éric Rohmer*, p. 96.

is calibrated nonetheless for showing characters as social beings in a way that appeals to one's social gaze similarly to the way it would in real life.

Before I delve into the films and analyze their particular representations of the social performances of *savoir-vivre*, it is useful to elaborate on some of the serial properties of the *Contes moraux* that *La Collectionneuse* and *Ma nuit chez Maud* have in common. The *Contes moraux* as a series shares one constant premise repeated in each of the six tales: '*un homme est à la recherche d'une femme, il en rencontre une autre, qui le distrait, et puis il revient à la première*'.¹⁹⁸ The series can thus be seen as Rohmer's study of six different outcomes to a vaguely similar romantic and sexual problem, the first one of which we have already touched upon earlier in *La Boulangère de Monceau*.

La Collectionneuse, technically the fourth *Conte moral*, but filmed third, is about three young jet-setters on summer holiday in a friend's villa on the coast near the glamorous town of Saint-Tropez, who struggle with each other's company, romantically as well as socially, and turn a vacation into a stressful affair. *Ma nuit chez Maud*, the fourth filmed *Conte moral*, is about a slightly older protagonist and set of characters who live and work in Clermont-Ferrand, and who navigate their particularly claustrophobic middle class environment to make love connections.

The manner in which the problem is resolved in each film bears the mark of the times. As Michel Serceau posits, 'each of Rohmer's films always has something of the period in which it was filmed [...] it reflects the particularities of its mores and spirit'.¹⁹⁹ This is explicitly the case in the *Contes moraux*, of which Rohmer has said that 'moral' is not meant as a measure of 'morality', but is used instead in its literary sense: '*le moraliste est celui qui*

198 Frédéric Bonnaud, 'Éric Rohmer - Printemps éternel', *Les Inrockuptibles*, 23 September 1998, <<http://www.lesinrocks.com/1998/09/23/cinema/actualite-cinema/Éric-rohmer-printemps-eternel-11230680/>> [accessed 30 March 2016].

199 Michel Serceau, *Éric Rohmer: Les jeux de l'amour, du hasard et du discours* (Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2000), p. 12.

autrefois étudiait les mœurs ou les caractères'.²⁰⁰ *La Collectionneuse* and *Ma nuit chez Maud* show just how much Rohmer was a student of 'manners', 'types', and states of mind, and especially of his characters' changing '*conduites amoureuses*' over the course of the 1960s, a span of time that encased particularly drastic change when it comes to the landscape of sexual behaviour, and that is therefore ripe for historical documentation.²⁰¹ Indeed, in each film, the time's 'mores and spirit' are partly expressed via social performance.²⁰²

Finally, at the centre of each of the films is a protagonist-narrator who experiences various love triangles not just with two women, but with a male rival. As simultaneous narrators – narration being one of the more classical cinematic devices that Rohmer uses in the series, and more so in *La Collectionneuse* than in *Ma nuit chez Maud* – the protagonists offer feedback on their own social experiences, giving a kind of running commentary on their social gaze. This opens another channel in the context of this thesis for us to appreciate the aestheticization of sociality.

200 Robert Elbhar, 'Éric Rohmer parle de ses *Contes moraux*', *Séquences: la revue de cinéma*, 1973, no.71, pp. 11-15 (p. 13).

201 Serceau, p. 14.

202 Serceau, p. 12.

4.2. The Art of Being: *La Collectionneuse*

Tu me fais beaucoup penser à l'élégance des gens de la fin du 18ème siècle, qui étaient extrêmement soucieux de leur apparence; de l'effet qu'ils produisaient sur les autres. Cet effet c'était déjà une création, c'était déjà le commencement de la révolution. La distance établie par l'élégance par rapport aux gens non-élégants est capitale, parce qu'elle établit une sorte de vide autour de la personne.

- Alain Jouffroy (as himself) to Daniel in *La Collectionneuse*, 'Deuxième Prologue: Daniel'

La laideur c'est une insulte pour les autres. On est responsable de son physique. Par exemple, le nez bouge ou vieillit selon la façon dont on pense, dont on parle. D'ailleurs quand je parle de beauté, je ne parle pas de beauté immobile. Les mouvements, l'expression, la démarche; tout ça, ça compte, non?

- Young woman (Annik Morice) to Adrien and his girlfriend in *La Collectionneuse*, 'Troisième Prologue: Adrien'

'Les gens les plus naturels'

Just after the three prologues of the film – one for each of the protagonists, Haydée (played by Haydée Politoff), Daniel (Daniel Pomereulle), and finally Adrien (Patrick Bauchau) – the film opens with a shot of a car driving down a dirt path towards a beautiful old manor surrounded by a large garden that spills over the stairs and the foundations of the manor itself. The villa, as Adrien has referred to it to his girlfriend in his prologue, located between Saint-Tropez and Ramatuelle on the Southern French riviera, was lent to him for the summer by his friend Rodolphe, but his girlfriend has declined to join him and is going to spend July in London instead. As the car approaches the villa in an expository wide shot of the main setting of the

film, Adrien's voice can be heard commencing narration: '*Dès mon arrivée, Daniel m'avait annoncé la mauvaise nouvelle: une fille logeait ici, invitée par Rodolphe, et troublerait notre repos.*' Then, the driver of the car, Adrien, introduced in his prologue as an aspiring art gallerist, steps out of his jeep, and looks up at Daniel, introduced in his prologue as a painter, who is standing on the balcony on the first floor of the villa to welcome him. They greet each other with an insider salute and a saying – they both swing their arms at each other and exclaim '*bourgeois!*' – thus immediately setting the class-conscious tone of Rohmer's aestheticization of social reality (Figure 4.3).



Fig 4.3: Adrien, by the car, and Daniel, on the balcony, arms stretched in their '*bourgeois!*' salute.

The following shot jumps seemingly to the middle of a conversation, on the balcony, and sees Adrien framed in a medium-to-mid shot (Figure 4.4). '*Maité?*' he asks in verification: '*Haydée*' corrects Daniel. '*Je ne vois pas, d'ailleurs je confonds toutes ces filles dans une même indifférence*', says Adrien contemptuously to Daniel's chuckling delight, who is now revealed in the shot as the camera has zoomed out to frame the particular-looking pair from a mid-to-wide camera-to-subject distance (Figure 4.5). Then Adrien enquires '*C'est quel genre?*' Daniel responds: '*bécassine, tête ronde, poil ras, charmante.*' Daniel explains she sometimes brings guys home. Then, Adrien states, '*c'est typique de Rodolphe d'égouter ce*

genre là. Il se fait toujours accrocher par les gens les plus naturels’, and in conclusion, *‘d’ailleurs, s’ils nous emmerdent, on les foutra tous à la porte, et elle avec.’* The scene is not shy in its narrative purpose – it establishes Adrien and Daniel as conceited and entitled young men, who believe in their superior right to this villa and who will approach the presence of the third, surprise guest with initial hostility. They also share the commonality of discussing girls, not just Haydée, with a certain kind of contempt. Adrien, in particular, seems to believe he is too attractive for his own good, an important personality trait for this protagonist in the film.



Fig 4.4: ‘*Maité?*’



Fig 4.5: ‘*je confonds toutes ces mêmes filles...*’

As narrator, Adrien announced ahead of time what the scene was going to be about, and the scene, in that sense, complements the narration. Although Daniel does tell Adrien about the third guest staying in the house in a derogatory way, there is more to the scene that the narrative does not contextualize. It is worth examining the moment of sociality more closely with a Goffmanian-Bourdieuian approach to gauge the particular social dynamics Rohmer’s *vérité* aesthetics bring to light, and that evoke a social gaze.

The prologues had introduced the characters in their own habitat. Daniel and Adrien were shown caught up in conversations with people about art, style, love, and beauty. In contrast, Haydée was shown alone, mute, and physical, a French babe in a bikini, like Aphrodite on the shores of the French riviera, for the male gaze to devour. This scene is the first time in the film we see protagonists converse with each other, and thus, the first central

interaction. Their socio-economic situations, fragmented between ‘work’ and ‘freedom from economic necessity’, have already been hinted at through references about their professions, financial ordeals, and reliance on employment in the prologues, and are now completed by the visual evidence of their stylish vacation. Yet, the full picture of their social status, and thus, of the dynamics framing their social performance, is not completely clear.

One of the details to strike the social gaze is that the men are dressed in very complementary alternative styles – something Rohmer had a hand in designing. Adrien is wearing a short-sleeved shirt buttoned up to the top, very tight jeans, with a pocket watch hanging from his waist as if manifesting from an old world. Daniel is styled by colour. From his belt, his shirt, his sunglasses, to his ring, the painter with the artistic ‘*élégance*’ that the art critic and author, Alain Jouffroy, commented on in his prologue, has chosen to fashion himself in cerulean blue (Figure 4.6). Both have a haircut that Leigh has described as ‘a conservative compromise between long (rebellious) and short (conventional)’, which perfectly sums up their style – subtly eccentric, but not too much.²⁰³



Fig 4.6: Blue

²⁰³ Leigh, pp. 24-8.

Daniel is lounging back and has his foot kicked up on the table which is covered with evocative props – a tea pot, alcoholic beverages, packs of cigarettes, a lighter, a sunglasses case, and a book – all very banal objects that nevertheless, together, and in their dissonance with the elegance of the villa, paint a Bourdieusian picture of their bohemian lifestyle (Figure 4.5).

One of the effects of the preparatory line of narration is to draw the viewer's social gaze in a very specific, comparative, and confirmative way. In a sense, the scene puts our social gaze in opposition to Adrien's. While he focuses on the '*mauvaise nouvelle*' of the girl's presence, to the viewer, the scene reveals something he did not narrate, which is the particularity of their social framework. This conversation frames Adrien and Daniel as a pair with a habit of socializing. Beyond the matching uniforms, their camaraderie is further expressed by Adrien's use of the pronouns '*nous*' and '*on*' when he talks about how they will handle unwelcome distractions. It presents them as a duo, a team, friends, partners united in their agreement on their superior right to this villa.

Adrien and Daniel's body language accentuates their sense of entitlement. Their theatrically comfortable body languages are made visible thanks to Rohmer's consistent use of mid-shots. Characters are often framed centrally, frontally, with lenses that mimic the "normal" ocular perspective' and at a distance that frames their shoulders at the very least, most often from a medium camera-to-subject distance, which leaves the actor 'room for manoeuvre, making gestures of the hands, shoulders, and hips fully legible while limiting the need to reframe on action with each new movement'.²⁰⁴ Close-ups, extreme close-ups, and wide shots, all of which have the effect of rendering the human face and body different from how we see them in reality, are nearly totally absent from Rohmer's visual syntax. Shots are always calibrated thus, that 'the human body (...). remains the measure of all things'.²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Schilling, *Éric Rohmer*, pp. 96-7.

²⁰⁵ Schilling, *Éric Rohmer*, p. 96.

Daniel, whose sense of physical comfort in the house shows he has slid into his social role as manor-resident with ease, has some unflattering words to describe Haydée, and Adrien accentuates his contempt with some demeaning metaphors and a dramatic gesture of the head, cockily throwing his mane backwards to reaffirm his point. Their social performances are very literate, physically and verbally, in the syntax of superiority, and one gets the sense that they strengthen and boost each other's confidence. Indeed, they are performing their entitledness for each other, to each other's approval and delight. In a way, their friendship is rooted in a mutual, matching performance.

The fact that Adrien asks Daniel '*quel genre*' Haydée is, rather than who she is, reveals an important Bourdieusian aspect of his experience of social reality: he sees people as social types. Indeed, he says of Rodolphe that there is a '*genre*' of person that always hooks him, and the demeaning adjective Adrien can think of to describe them is '*naturel*'. The idea that being natural is negative goes hand in hand with the ideology that one's social being must be carefully crafted, stylized, and aestheticized. His perspective on people reveals his interest in the appearance of compatibility, superiority, type, and, with that, contempt for the opposite. It reflects, based on Adrien and Daniel's social positions as young, well-educated professionals in the art world, a social gaze that goes through a Bourdieusian filter of class.

How does Adrien and Daniel's villainesque banter come across in a manner that engages the social gaze to see them as plausible, relatable social beings, rather than as evil stereotypes? Even though the character he played was fictional, Patrick Bauchau, the actor playing Adrien, felt personally mocked upon seeing his likeness on screen in *La Collectionneuse*.²⁰⁶ This raises the question of how Rohmer makes his characters' mildly obnoxious sense of superiority authentic as a human feature.

²⁰⁶ Schilling, *Éric Rohmer*, p. 127.

Rohmer has himself described *La Collectionneuse* as the closest he ever came to *cinéma vérité*.²⁰⁷ Colin Crisp even argues that the film's 'instant popularity' was due to its being 'formally the least neat, the least "finished", and apparently the most open to "random" intrusions from "real life"', which lends the film a 'documentary spontaneity and authenticity' and 'a modish contemporaneity about the central characters'.²⁰⁸ The quality of 'randomness' may in part have been the result of the borderline amateurism of the production, since it was made with a very small budget.²⁰⁹ Yet, regardless of the impression of 'randomness' the film may give off, Rohmer's *vérité* aesthetic overall shirks some of the core technicalities of *cinéma vérité*, and especially the fundamental concept of the release of the filmmaker's control.

The film was entirely scripted with particular people in mind, and was most often shot in private or unpopulated locations. With the exception only of a part in the film where Adrien goes to Saint-Tropez to watch Kracauerian crowds walking its streets, and to document the vacationers in their colourful and flashy 1966 fashions, most shots in the film underwent careful cinematographic composition. Rather than being recorded directly, dialogue was post-synchronized to achieve a unity of tone.²¹⁰ Events do not have the appearance of randomly unfolding for a camera to witness. On the contrary, Rohmer's financial limitations meant that he could only afford enough 35 mm colour film to shoot one take of each shot, and this eliminated the option of improvisation, replacing it instead with thorough rehearsals and an economy of *mise en scène*.²¹¹

207 André Labarthe and Harry Fischbach, 'Cine TVO: Parlons Cinéma avec Éric Rohmer', *Parlons Cinéma*, TV Ontario, 1977; online video recording, YouTube, 25 July 2016, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAC2Bd87bjM>> [accessed 30 July 2016].

208 Colin G. Crisp, *Éric Rohmer: Realist and Moralist* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 43.

209 Rui Nogueira and Carlos Clarens, 'Éric Rohmer: Choice and Chance', *Sight and Sound*, 40 (Summer 1971), no. 3, pp. 118-23 (pp. 199-20). To keep production costs low, Rohmer worked with non-actors and a very small team of technicians, most of whom were not paid salaries at the time of participating, agreeing instead on a profit-sharing income after production.

210 Crisp, p. 51.

211 Nogueira and Clarens, pp. 199-20.

And yet, when Rohmer qualifies his methodology in terms of *cinéma vérité*, he is specifically speaking about his characters. *La Collectionneuse* was actually a milestone for Rohmer in the way that he experimented working together with his actors to create characters, an approach he would return to in some of his future work. He met Bauchau, Pomereulle, and Politoff through various channels originating from his producing partner, Barbet Schroeder's friend group. They served as inspiration for the lives of the characters, as well as the overall way of being of the characters. Rohmer would say about his characterization process on the release of *La Collectionneuse* that 'he would never make out someone to be a painter who wasn't one, nor would he have his actors read books they wouldn't read themselves', which is reminiscent, in a way, of Passer's decision to use real musicians who were non-actors, rather than actors to pretend to be musicians.²¹² Indeed, 'professional knowledge, expressions, hobbies, habits and gestures, and ways of reacting to a given situation or dilemma' are amongst the properties Rohmer borrowed from his actors to create his characters, many of which are part of a person's social performative actions.²¹³ So, his actors, especially Haydée and Daniel, essentially 'played themselves', with Daniel and Haydée even lending their names to their characters.

Reciprocally, as Jean Cléder summarizes, '*tout acteur rohmerien doit être convaincu de l'auto-analyse de son personnage*'.²¹⁴ In other words, Rohmer also makes these characters authentic to the actors playing them. To achieve this, Rohmer captured the actors' own social ways of communicating. Rohmer co-wrote the dialogue of the film with his cast, again more with Haydée and Daniel than with Patrick, for which they are officially credited. Rohmer recorded afilmic conversations with them on a tape-recorder in interviews that he held with them in the Losange production offices about the topics of the film. He has stated that his

²¹² Schilling, *Éric Rohmer*, p. 123.

²¹³ Schilling, *Éric Rohmer*, p. 122.

²¹⁴ Cléder, p. 81.

experience working at the *Cahiers du Cinéma*, where he interviewed directors at length and transcribed and edited them for print, is what ‘taught me how to speak’.²¹⁵

Herein lies perhaps Rohmer’s biggest skill as a screenwriter; to capture the distilled verbal qualities of the way his chosen actors and non-actors normally and afilmically talked, and to verbalize some of their personality, so that when they said rehearsed, profilmic dialogue as characters, it sounded like it came out of their mouths as comfortably as if they had thought of it in the moment. Indeed, the film is suggestive of improvisation. As Violaine Caminade de Schuyter says, using the actors in this documentary way – at least with regards to their afilmic way of talking – contests the traditional notion of ‘character’: ‘*l’acteur participe donc au sujet de portrait.*’²¹⁶

To further ‘particularise’ his actors’ ‘*dramatis personae*’, Rohmer did not just portray Daniel, Haydée, and Patrick individually, but he also captured how they belonged to a specific social niche.²¹⁷ Schroeder’s friend group, from which Rohmer plucked his cast, included artists, dandies, and socialites who were either members of, or connected to a notoriously cool avant-garde art collective called Zanzibar, counting Philippe Garrel, Jackie Raynal, and Pierre Clémenti among some of its notable members, that was notorious for its dandyist lifestyle, which is personified in the film by Adrien and Daniel.²¹⁸ Leigh describes *La Collectionneuse* as the portrait of a specific ‘era and sensibility’: ‘Rohmer is as interested in what the dandies of ‘68 are saying as he is interested in how these young people talk, behave and interact with each other’.²¹⁹ His cast was plucked from a group of people who operated on the fringes of 1960s society in a philosophical, artistic, cultural, social, and sexual sense. As a result, their afilmically connected social backgrounds endowed their social performances with real, pre-

215 Labarthe and Fischbach, *Parlons Cinéma*.

216 Violaine Caminade de Schuyter, *Éric Rohmer, Corps et Âme: l'intégrité trouvée* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2011), pp. 74-5.

217 Schilling, *Éric Rohmer*, p. 123.

218 For more on the Zanzibar collective, see Sally Shafto, *Zanzibar: Les Films Zanzibar et les Dandys de Mai 1968/The Zanzibar Films and the Dandies of May 1968* (Paris: Editions Paris Experimental, 2007).

219 Leigh, p. 31.

existing, shared forms of sociality that were, just like *titi* Parisian slang in *Adieu Philippine*, grounded in the afilmic historical world. This gives these actors an authentic sense of connection and community.

Just like Rozier's relationship with his *titi* Parisians, Godard's clout with youngsters, and Forman's friendship with the founders of the Semafor Theatre, gave them access to the exclusive social environments they infiltrated to film, Rohmer dabbles in the fashion of claiming to reveal these young adults to an unknowing audience as well, as the film's defiant marketing document tag line – '*cette génération que vous croyez connaître*' – suggests.²²⁰ But rather than just depicting the generation, he shows the specific way in which they experience privilege. If the Bourdieusian habitus of Rohmer's *Contes moraux* can be characterized by being 'a closed one, restricted to a privileged social set with more than enough time on its hands to expatiate on topics like commitment, seduction, and contentment', then this is especially the case for the modish 'social set' of *La Collectionneuse*.²²¹ Adrien and Daniel's ways of 'talking, behaving, and interacting' with each other, in this opening scene of the film, reflect the normalcy with which they conceive of their modish social lives.²²² But, with the hindsight of half a century, a viewer's social gaze also appreciates this moment of sociality for certain revealing aspects of their social niche, which Adrien does not address about himself in his narration.

The way narration is used as a cinematic device in the film contributes to this dynamic. Indeed, Adrien's narration is offered in hindsight, and therefore, it states a conclusive summary of what the scene itself reveals before it happens. As Serceau phrases it, the voice-over narration '*conjugue au passé un récit que l'image décline au présent*'.²²³ But as Schilling notes, 'the truth of each take [...] lies neither in its telling by the protagonist-narrator, nor in

220 Original marketing documents available in the office archives of Les Films du Losange [accessed May 2016].

221 Schilling, *Éric Rohmer*, pp. 129-30.

222 Leigh, p. 31.

223 Serceau, p. 38.

the “objective” succession of diegetic events and sounds, but in the dialogic interaction of the two.²²⁴ It is within the match, or mismatch, between the narration and the scene, that the viewer can gauge underlying micro-stories that may not be made obvious by the narrator or by the dialogue alone.

As a result, the interplay between announcing what a scene will show, followed by the actual scene, also gives the narration a diaristic and confessional function. It offers the viewer an insight into Adrien’s personal manner of experiencing his social surroundings. The film is designed to make the viewer compare the socially interpretable properties of Adrien’s film world against Adrien’s interpretations of them. Through the dissonance of his lack of self-awareness about the aesthetic of superiority that his and Daniel’s performed privilege exudes, the viewer is made aware of the social role Adrien is used to embodying, and thus, of his habitual perspective on social reality.

Finally, the scene establishes the importance of Daniel to Adrien, whom he will later describe as ‘*mon maître*’ even though they are the same age, and who is, indeed, the more quintessential dandy of the two. Because they are plucked from a similar niche, Adrien trusts Daniel, and Adrien seems to aspire to Daniel’s level of social performativity. This is how Daniel influences Adrien’s opinion on Haydée. Adrien will learn about Haydée – the second woman – through Daniel’s gossip about her, and form his opinion based on the prejudices that this ignites. Indeed, Daniel becomes Adrien’s Girardian mediator, awakening a conflicted sexual interest in Adrien for Haydée with his own, sexually attracted descriptive assessment of her.²²⁵ Girard explains the dynamic by which a protagonist adopts another character’s love interest in terms of the tradition of ‘mimetic’ desire in romanticism.²²⁶ The series’ premise of the protagonist’s gradual submission to his own conflicted attraction for the second woman is partly put in motion, then, by the important influence sociality can have on people. Adrien

²²⁴ Schilling, *Éric Rohmer*, pp. 139-40.

²²⁵ René Girard, *Mensonge Romantique et vérité romanesque* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 2000), pp. 15-31.

²²⁶ Girard, pp. 15-31.

decides to get wrapped up in the notion that Haydée is both problematic and desirable because of the trust he places in his Girardian mediator and rival, Daniel, based on the fact that he deems his social performance as a dandy to express the appropriate, compatible, and desirable Bourdieusian tastes. Indeed, Adrien's 'mimesis' of Daniel applies not just to Daniel's love interest, but also to love behaviour, and behaviour as a whole. Rohmer's *vérité* aesthetic, then, portrays Adrien and Daniel as social beings embedded in real social worlds, and draws a social gaze on the real Bourdieusian social dynamics of their interpretation of social reality.

The Farce of Employment

It will take three or four days before Adrien will actually meet the third resident of the villa. In the meantime, he establishes his desire to achieve '*le rien absolu*', sharing this wish in his narration, and discussing the concept of '*rien*' philosophically with Daniel. Looking at the sea for the first time of the season, he says he would like his 'gaze' on the water to be 'empty', free of 'artistic curiosity' (Figure 4.7). This can be interpreted in reverse as well: his desire to be alone, and his annoyance with the thought of having someone else there, besides Daniel, stems from his desire not to be gazed at in the same way that his regular Parisian life forces him to be socially gazed at as a dandy. Indeed, his work, as a dandy, consists of looking extraordinary and of attracting the social gazes of people. His work peaks when that of most people stops – at parties, during the weekend, and at luxurious vacation resorts on the beach or in the mountains.

One of the particularities of *La Collectionneuse* that it shares with *Adieu Philippine* is its summer vacation setting, which has a lot to bear on the social climate of the film.²²⁷

²²⁷ Rohmer would make several other 'vacation films': *Le Genou de Claire* (1970), *Pauline à la plage* (1983), *Le Rayon Vert* (1986), and *Conte d'été* (1996).

Rohmer's descriptions of the narrative arc of his *Contes moraux* as a 'digression', and of the vacation setting in *La Collectionneuse*, specifically, as a 'sentimental holiday', complement each other.²²⁸ The films are about 'time wasted' and about how the protagonist chooses to handle the distractions and potential temptations that arise to fill this time.²²⁹ At the same time, his boredom incites a kind of re-creation of self and a 'revision' of his 'social life and relationships'.²³⁰



Fig 4.7: '*J'aimais que le regard que je portais sur elle fut le plus vide possible.*'

This revision of self is executed most literally in a scene that contains one of the only interactions in the film between the villa-residents and an outsider to the villa. Indeed, most of the film takes place insularly at the villa, between the three of them. But sometimes, guests from outside will incite the necessity for a kind of social performance that is not vacation-like. The scene starts, three or four days after Adrien's arrival, when Haydée finally emerges from her night-oriented routine, accompanied by the young man she brought home the night before, Charlie. Just as Daniel introduces Adrien to Haydée, Adrien's narration warns the viewer that Haydée had at this point already recognized him from somewhere. Indeed, in Adrien's

228 Crisp, pp. 32-3.

229 Crisp, pp. 32-3.

230 Leigh, p. 27.

prologue, at another one of Rodolphe's villas, Adrien accidentally walked into a room where a couple was making love. By telling Adrien she recognizes him from Rodolphe's other villa, she reveals to him that that was her, without being explicit about it in the moment, and thus, without letting the others present (Daniel and Charlie) know about the circumstances of their first encounter. Charlie, who must sense their unspoken rapport, interrupts their chit-chat to introduce himself to Adrien.

The film then cuts to a mid-shot of Charlie facing Adrien at the lunch table. Again, Rohmer enters their moment of sociality while they are mid-conversation:

CHARLIE: *...Non mais, si je vous dis ça, c'est que je m'y connais quand même un peu: mon père est dans les bateaux. C'est lui qui a inventé le premier yacht en matières plastiques.*

ADRIEN: *Ah ouai.*

CHARLIE: *Et... vous qu'est-ce que vous faites?*

ADRIEN: *Comment?*

CHARLIE: *Bah dans la vie quoi.*

ADRIEN: *Je suis médecin.*

CHARLIE: *En médecine générale?*

ADRIEN: *Non, je suis spécialiste de la vue. D'ailleurs, ce qui me frappe chez vous, c'est que vous supportez mal la lumière du jour.*

CHARLIE: *Vous parlez sérieusement?*

ADRIEN: *C'est une première impression, mais mes premières impressions sont toujours justes.*

The four of them are having lunch, but Charlie and Adrien are the only ones talking. At the end of the conversation, which continues for only a few more lines of dialogue, Daniel and Haydée burst out laughing, while the joke is on an oblivious Charlie. The moment is short, and, with Charlie's disappearance from the plot for the rest of the film, it is most telling for the way it portrays the social dynamics of the protagonists' social lives.

Charlie's body language at the start of this conversation is confident and arrogant. Just as Charlie finishes bragging about his father's credentials, and just before Charlie is about to ask Adrien what *he* does in life, the camera zooms in on Charlie alone, framing him from the chest up. This zoom is telling as it seems to mark both a shift away from the small talk and the

beginning of a new, more intense, and intentional social framework (Figures 4.8 and 4.9).

The new social framework starts when Charlie exposes his cards by openly engaging Adrien in a game of social status comparison. Charlie awkwardly segues from listing his successful father's credentials and implied economic capital to asking Adrien about his credentials. It suggests that he seems to have conflated his father's accomplishments as his own, explicitly comfortable in his position as heir of his father's social status, perhaps feeling threatened by Adrien's obvious connection with Haydée earlier.



Fig 4.8: *'mon père... a inventé le premier yacht en matières plastiques.'*



Fig 4.9: *'Et... vous qu'est-ce que vous faites?'*

The likely reason Charlie calls out Adrien and coaxes him into a game of status comparison is to invoke a Bourdieusian conception of social compatibility, and to impress Haydée with the authority of his family's level of influence, and thus, with his superior desirability as a mate over Adrien. His ease in interjecting his father's success story in casual conversation might even indicate that this is something that often works on people. Not unsymbolically, Charlie is played by Dennis Berry, the son of famous American film director John Berry who had self-exiled to France as a result of the Hollywood blacklist in the 1950s. Indeed, his entitled air, fitting for his fictional role as the son of a famous yacht designer, looks well worn, and illustrates the casting techniques Rohmer used to cast appropriate non-actors that I mentioned earlier.

Adrien's off-screen reaction to Charlie's enquiry, '*Comment?*' conveys his genuine incredulity at the question he was just asked. His manner of saying '*comment?*' is nearly neutral, but we know Adrien as an intelligent, well-spoken character, and thus, we presume that his question is most likely rhetorical. His reaction suggests that he sees Charlie's question as being of extremely poor taste. He treats the question like a gaffe of impression management, a transgression of appropriate social conduct, a Goffmanian faux pas. The shot is still on Charlie as he makes clear what he meant, adding only '*dans la vie quoi...*', a response that either misses or ignores the palpable expression of dismissal from his interlocutor at his question. While the shot is on Charlie, it is in fact Adrien's social performance that the viewer is now interested in seeing, since the proverbial ball, so to speak, is now in his court, in the context of this social framework.

In response to this overt conversation starter, the film cuts to Adrien, and rather than being shook, any sense of surprise in Adrien's voice has evaporated to make place for a self-assured, elaborate, convincing social performance (Figure 4.10). The shot includes himself, Daniel next to him enjoying a peach, and Haydée's back and turned face, but not Charlie. Charlie's exclusion from this shot is both symbolic of his obliviousness and suggestive of the fact that the trio have formed their camp in this interaction.

Adrien, who has narrated earlier in the film that he came to take his vacation here to seek simplicity and to avoid people, does not take Charlie's bait. He fools Charlie into thinking he is an eye doctor, and then sets on a course to convince Charlie that he foolishly bought the wrong sunglasses, scaring him into accepting a fake diagnosis of his 'sensitive' eyes. Adrien performs his imagined social role as a doctor with measured calm and control, never letting on that he is pretending. The social performative gestures he uses include leaning on the table with his arms folded, or back into his chair with an air of knowledgeability and authority. He comfortably fakes the social role of the experienced eye doctor, stating

counterfactual theories and technical terms to back up his opinion, adding more for as long as Charlie buys it.

In effect, to take control of this crude and manipulative social game, Adrien demonstrates his social status by deciding to prank Charlie on his own question. Charlie's initiation of this social game, one that was intended to manipulate his interlocutors into divulging their economic capital, and thus, their rank, is shut down by Adrien with comedy and play, which demonstrate his superior mastery of these social games of comparison and petty class rivalry. While Adrien is lying about his profession, his manner of handling the social interaction reveals his status with more authority than any earnest answer to the question 'what do you do?' could. In true dandyist fashion, he manages to impress and to shine, not as a result of his profession, but due to his easy brazenness, his shameless creativity, and a self-aware literacy in the theatrical language of sociality.



Fig 4.10: Adrien settles into his fictive role as doctor



Fig 4.11: Daniel and Hayd  e burst out laughing

Indeed, Adrien's Goffmanian skills in reading and manipulating social situations allow him to hack the social status comparison game that Charlie puts in front of him. Adrien does so by making a mockery of the notion of employment, and of the kind of conversations that would ensue from genuine and earnest status comparison interactions, especially of Charlie's tacky instigatory role in it. By turning the conversation into a farce of itself, he neutralizes the

threat of the exposure of his ambiguous economic capital. Simultaneously, he transforms the social framework into one that essentially rewards the kookiness of his dandyist behaviour. By flexing his *savoir-vivre*, he evidences his cultural capital. Thus, he skillfully changed the Goffmanian social framework of a situation that was meant to trap him and expose him as inferior according to the Bourdieusian metric of economic capital, so as to reward him in the Bourdieusian metric of cultural capital, which simultaneously torpedoed Charlie's attempt at coming out on top.

Using social performance to change the nature of this social game is made especially rewarding and effective by the specific people who formed Adrien's audience in this interaction. Over the course of Adrien's prank, Daniel, who knows just as well as the viewer that Adrien is about as far as one can get from being a doctor, and Haydée, who we presume knows as well, are both devouring juicy peaches that symbolize the appetizing spectacle of Adrien's roasting of Charlie. The joke is clear to Daniel and Haydée from the beginning, who grin at each other as they eat their peaches but try to hide their amusement. Charlie alone is left to be the fool. At one point, Adrien criticizes Charlie's sunglasses and tells him he should have gotten tinted sunglasses, either blue like Daniel's, or magenta. When Charlie asks Adrien what '*magenta*' is, a moment that frames his ignorance of the vocabulary of art in a socially dismissive manner reminiscent of the vocabulary failures of the bakery salesgirl in *La Boulangère de Monceau* and of Miss 19 in Godard's *Masculin Féminin*, Daniel and Haydée can no longer contain themselves and laugh out loud at Charlie's expense. Adrien remains stoic and victorious to the side, ending the scene, and with it, Charlie's chances (Figure 4.11).

Daniel and Haydée could have easily put an end to Adrien's theatre by telling Charlie he was making everything up, but they enjoyed the way the spectacle of Adrien's social performance made such an impression on the gullible young Charlie, and crushed Charlie's attempt at taking control of the social situation. By playing with Charlie, Adrien presents

himself to Haydée as someone out of the ordinary who transcends economic concerns.

Charlie's economic capital did not give him the social literacy skills needed to see through the farce, as he fails to notice that he is being ridiculed. In the end, then, they are all just as interested in the crude display of hierarchical domination as Charlie openly admits to be.

Adrien is not so different from Charlie, it is just that he has better social literacy skills and that his methods of socially performing what he believes to be his superiority are more nuanced, deceptive, and sophisticated, all of which are, admittedly, requirements to gain the title of dandy.

But Charlie's curiosity is understandable. Who could Adrien possibly be, for his friends to lend him big, beautiful vacation villas near fashionable Saint-Tropez for the entire month of July? The mystique of his aura and his vague finances are elements of the outlying elitist self-presentation that he cultivates. In a sense, social performance is the only accessible aspect of Adrien as a social being. It is so elaborate and skillfully crafted that it shrouds his private life in secrecy. But as a dandy with limited financial means, Adrien is in fact very sensitive about his lack of finances and averse to the conversation of jobs, something that will become more apparent later in the film. The elaborateness of Adrien's social performance distracts from the fact that the social performance is also an expression of defensiveness. Choosing the profession of doctor as his cover reflects that he sees the conversation as a threat, because of the undeniable upper *bourgeoisie* respectability of medical professions. In that sense, Charlie's instincts to probe him about what he does for a living were spot on.

Framing plays a pivotal role in giving expression to the social *mise en scène* of this interaction, and in drawing the viewer's social gaze in to its specific dynamics. The frame is wide enough in its medium camera-to-subject distance to leave room for the characters' upper bodies and the movements that make up their social performance. But the framing also visually mimics the manner in which social interactions can split groups into factions, which

in this case involves three people on one side and the fourth isolated, oblivious as the butt of the joke. By the same token, the framing accentuates the significance of silent participation in an interaction – Daniel and Haydée may not verbally perform, but as silent, non-verbal participants, they are nevertheless included in the frame because they fulfill the social role of audience members who are in the know, to complete the prank. Rohmer's use of the zoom on Charlie at the start of the scene also mimics an important dynamic in the conversation by crystallizing the exact moment when the stakes of the social interaction suddenly increased, and when the social framework became more deliberately and explicitly confrontational.

Rohmer's *vérité* aesthetic invokes our social gaze by placing the viewer in the position of being in on it. Almendros' camera work guides the viewer's social gaze in such a way that they consider the intricate Goffmanian-Bourdiesian dramatic fluctuations and currents impacting an otherwise seemingly banal and meaningless conversation under the surface. The *vérité* aesthetic works by revealing the theatricality involved in the façade of arrogance, and by bringing to light the fragile and constructed nature of what may, to some, appear like an impermeable wall of confidence.

While the conversation does not add much to the film's story, it does offer a very specific representation of the ruthless, yet playful way in which Adrien and Daniel's social niche handles confrontation. Indeed, it dramatizes the manner in which these young dandies mask what is socially at stake for them by distracting their interlocutors with a show that scores them points as cultured rather than wealthy individuals.

Still, as if to emphasize the real-life impact of such social mishaps, the meandering plot of the film shows that there are decisive consequences to what seemed like an otherwise insignificant social interaction. Indeed, Charlie's fate is partly determined during that lunch. The next morning, on grounds that he woke up Adrien during the night, and in a socially dramatic move that is reminiscent of future reality TV shows of the housemate elimination

subgenre, Daniel and Adrien exert their majority power by kicking Charlie out: '*mon vieux, vous êtes prié de vider les lieux*' because '*la raison est aux plus forts*'. But the viewer gets the impression that Charlie's attempt at pulling a social status comparison game the day before played a bigger role in ejecting him from the house than his late-night shenanigans. Haydée stands in the doorway, and when Charlie invites her to come to his house instead, she decides to stay, choosing Adrien and Daniel's side.

Thus, as a consequence, at least partly, of Adrien's eye doctor comedy, the film establishes his and Daniel's successful claim to power over the vacation house as their social domain, as well as over Haydée by discouraging the invitation of any further male guests. Adrien and Daniel celebrate her 'docility' as they can now start developing their social framework in a private love triangle bubble, without a fourth wheel, thanks, in large part, to Adrien's Goffmanian prowess.

Singing For One's Supper

Rohmer's fascination with his characters' specific ways of behaving makes him gravitate to situations that are antagonistic because they reveal what the characters are like when challenged to defend themselves from subtle social attacks. Indeed, cloaked invitations to prove one's social status are frequent in their social set, and they unfold according to a class-specific social *mise en scène* that is both familiar and fascinating. But unlike Godard, who himself takes on the role of supplying confrontation from outside the social circle he depicts in *Masculin Féminin*, Rohmer dramatizes the conflict inherent to the predicament of being a dandy – starting early on in the holiday with Charlie, and peaking, bombastically, in the penultimate scene of the film, with Sam.

Sam (played by Eugene Archer) is an actual art ‘collector’ who collects Chinese antiques, and who is supposed to finance Adrien’s first art gallery. Although Adrien’s dandyist behaviour implies the fashioning of an apathetic attitude towards financial income, he is acutely aware of his need for financial resources – ‘*cette année une seule affaire m’intéressait, celle de ma galerie de peinture*’. Sam’s arrival in the film represents the beginning of Adrien’s switch from a vacational to a professional mode of Goffmanian self-presentation. Adrien has spent his entire vacation avoiding social games such as the one Charlie injected into his vacation early on, but now he is obliged to participate in a particularly important social exchange with Sam, whom he has to charm for his funding.

The day before Sam arrives at the house, Adrien announces to Daniel, and thus to the viewer, the arrival of a new character. Quite literally, Sam’s reputation precedes him. The following morning, the first shot of the day is of a big, robust, dark blue expensive car parked in front of the villa, which contrasts comedically with the flimsy roofless jeep Adrien drives, and symbolizes Sam’s dominant wealth (Figure 4.12). In the villa, we meet Sam with Adrien and the Chinese vase he has for him.²³¹ Sam is a slightly balding, slightly older man in his late thirties, with a deep, gravelly, authoritative voice, and a strong American accent in his French.



Fig 4.12: Sam as his car

²³¹ The original short story Rohmer wrote that the film was a loose adaptation of, was entitled ‘The Broken Vase’.

Haydée catches Sam's eye, and Adrien, who notices, decides to involve her in his business deal, by asking her to do him the favour of spending some undefined leisurely time with Sam alone. Haydée understands what she is getting involved in, and agrees for her own reasons.

Having gone to Sam's villa with Haydée and left her there for the night as planned, Adrien is wracked with jealousy by the time he comes back the next evening to pick her up, still secretly hoping that he can seduce her for himself, even though she has rejected him several times over the course of the holiday. Upon his arrival, Sam and Haydée greet him, intentionally posing by the swimming pool of Sam's villa, with a beautiful and iconic view of the Southern French riviera in the background that, again, serves to symbolize Sam's superior economic capital (Figure 4.13).



Fig 4.13: Iconic riviera views

In his narration, Adrien shares how his social gaze interprets the moment: *‘Pour m’accueillir, Sam et Haydée avaient mis au point une comédie tout à fait propre à me dérider, et où je vis surtout le fruit d’une complicité qui m’agaça.’* Their playful complicity, and the gnawing question of whether they slept together, will irritate him all evening. The *‘comédie’* serves to remind Adrien that Sam knows the role he plays in Adrien's dandyist life – Sam could potentially help him fulfil his dream.

The film cuts to the living room. Haydée sits on the couch doing a cross-word puzzle, and Adrien and Sam, drunk and tired, sit opposite each other in armchairs, talking. Adrien's narration continues to explain his interpretation of the evening's social framework, consisting of Sam berating him on '*ce qu'il jugeait mes points faibles*', and explains Sam's intentions in terms of Haydée: '*il comptait m'humilier devant la fille.*' As soon as Adrien starts talking, it becomes clear that Rohmer has brought us to this interaction mid-conversation, as he typically does. Adrien is somewhat nervously playing with his pack of cigarettes, and looks as though the night was long and difficult. Without seeing what led to this part of the conversation, Adrien's body language reflects the real length and tumultuous trajectory social interactions can take before they get to the point – which Rohmer brings us to now. Alluding to a previous part of the conversation that the viewer was not privy to but is given an impression of, Adrien says (Figure 4.14):

ADRIEN: Oui, ne rien faire et penser en ne faisant rien c'est éreintant. C'est vrai, le travail c'est plus facile. On suit une pente. Il y a une paresse du travail. Le travail est une fuite en avant. Une espèce de bonne conscience qu'on s'achète.
 SAM: Évidemment, vous êtes l'être le moins paresseux que je connaisse.
 ADRIEN: Il y a plus de dix ans que j'ai pas pris de vacances.
 SAM: Oui, biensûr, vos vacances sont permanentes.
 ADRIEN: Non. Enfin, oui et non. Pas tout à fait.
 SAM: Ce qui m'amuse le plus chez vous, c'est que vous voulez toujours vous justifier.
 ADRIEN: Non, contrairement à ce que vous pensez, j'ai pas du tout mauvaise conscience.
 SAM: Vous êtes un menteur. Vous avez mauvaise conscience de n'avoir pas d'argent!

The conversation continues for a while in this tone on the topics of employment, leisure, and Adrien's position in society, in a shot/countershot type of dialogic format. At a certain point, Adrien adds, '*sincèrement, je crois que je sers mieux la cause de l'humanité en paresseant qu'en travaillant. C'est vrai: il faut avoir le courage de ne pas travailler.*' And later on, he says, '*j'ai toujours regretté de n'être pas riche, mais si j'étais riche, ce que vous appelez mon dandysme serait de la facilité, ça manquerait totalement d'héroïsme. Hors, je ne conçois pas un dandy sans héroïsme*', which seems to bring their long debate to a close.



Fig 4.14: Tired from battle

The narration earlier in the film had prepared the viewer for the purpose of this interaction to be about Sam's potential intention of financing Adrien's gallery. However, the film never explains whether Sam does or does not finance his gallery. Instead, we are merely presented a conversation that sounds more like a war of words than like a practical agreement upon a deal. While Haydée's presence contributes to the competitive nature of this interaction, a Goffmanian-Bourdieuian approach to this seemingly never-ending argument reveals that there is a more profound micro-story that explains what it is that they are trying to resolve through the interaction.



Fig 4.15: Watching verbal tennis, from Sam...



Fig 4.16: ... to Adrien.

Firstly, the lay-out of the living room clearly delineates the audience from the

performers. Although Haydée barely participates in the interaction, Rohmer includes shots of her, alone, turning her head left or right to follow what is going on in the intense showdown between Sam, to her left, and Adrien, to her right, as if watching a game of verbal tennis (Figures 4.15 and 4.16). Haydée's manner of socially gazing at this spectacle draws the viewer's social gaze.

The spectacle primarily consists of Sam's shooting holes in Adrien's defense of his dandyist lifestyle. The initial shots of Adrien and Sam in this conversation are of the usual mid-shot frame that shows their upper bodies in their surroundings. But the frame size changes to a tighter medium close-up the moment when Sam calls out Adrien for lying and for having no money. Gradually, over the course of their debate, the frame will even magnify to a near close-up (Figures 4.17 and 4.18). Just as it did in the conversation with Charlie, this magnification of the frame represents an intensification of the social framework's confrontational nature.



Fig 4.17: Sam brings up money



Fig 4.18: '*avoir le courage de ne pas travailler*'

Sam's mention of money increases the social stakes of the interaction. Bringing up money makes the interaction more specific. It isolates the object that Sam wants to challenge Adrien on. It is also a show of social performative brazenness on the part of Sam, to name the elephant in the room. And yet, although talking about money is more specific than the euphemism of employment that Adrien was discussing before, Sam does not bring it up in the

specific context of the art gallery. Instead, he considers the circumstance of not having money in a more Bourdieusian way, as a facet of Adrien's position in society, and as a social state of being.

Indeed, therein lies Sam's issue with Adrien: he sees dandyism as an arrogant attitude towards the rest of society, and thus, to him. Adrien and Daniel have adopted the lifestyle because they were drawn to what Bonitzer calls its '*grande allure*'.²³² To them, it is more than just a fun, autonomous, detached position from society. Daring to live life in dependence of one's own ability to demonstrate ease and *savoir-vivre*, when one has no stable source of income, is something Adrien deems to be an act of 'heroism'. Explaining the effects of Adrien's outlying socio-economic position, Schuyter writes that being a dandy gives him a 'fictive, rebellious and mythical identity' that allows him to compensate for his lack of value as a 'marginal, unadapted' figure in a 'society of labour'.²³³ But Sam sees them as social 'parasites'. The reason Adrien's defence matters in this conversation is because Sam's willingness to fund his project depends at least partly on his acceptance of Adrien's *modus vivendi*. Indeed, in this context, money is a form of validation and legitimization of his dandyist lifestyle.

In that sense, Adrien's job as a dandy, rather than being 'nothing', is to socially perform one's lifestyle thus that it demonstrates its own moral worth. Within the Zanzibar collective that Rohmer was inspired by and cast at least one of his actors from, dandyism served as a measure of one's freedom of spirit. Sylvina Boissonnas, the heiress who funded the Zanzibar members' experimental film projects, looked for dandyism amongst her protégés as a means to identify those who she deemed to be deserving of her money.²³⁴ The more committed they were to their dandyist lifestyle, the more she felt inclined to support them. Just as dandies socially performed their dandyism for Boissonnas as part of their nebulous economic

²³² Bonitzer, p. 44.

²³³ Schuyter, p. 182.

²³⁴ Shafto, p. 21.

agreement, Adrien finds himself in the position of having to socially perform his dandyism in exchange for Sam's financial support, like a patron to his dandyist performance art.

During the conversation, he explains that his role models in this matter are the Tarahumara Native Americans. He describes them to Sam as proud beggars who would come to towns and knock on people's doors. When the doors would open, they would stand sideways to show their profile, '*avec un air de mépris souverain*' rather than look straight at the people they were begging from. Holding this position, they would wait for the residents to either give them money or nothing, and they would then leave without thanking them either way. Their form of begging consisted of trading the social performance of the strength of their pride for a donation of money. Just like them, Adrien has made it his profession to trade in this socially performed pride for his 'heroic' dandyism: '*moi, quand je mendie*' he states proudly, '*c'est de profil*' as he turns his head in profile (Figure 4.19).



Fig 4.19: '*Profil d'aigle*'

In this crucial moment, Adrien is doing the very thing that he is explaining as he is explaining it: begging. He even turns his head sideways, mimicking the social performance, striking the pose with what Sam later describes as '*un profil d'aigle*'. His face reads the expression of '*mépris souverain*' that he so admires in the Tarahumaras, while he is in that

very same moment trying to convince Sam to give him money in exchange.

Sam's manner of playing the social role of the patron is also dramatic. His constant provocations and incessant reprises demonstrate that he is truly making Adrien sing for his supper. Sam wants Adrien to demonstrate his non-financial worth in a show of the notorious dandyist charm that he is paying for. His deep, slow, and predatory manner of talking shows him viciously enjoying the spectacle. Although Adrien thought he was using Haydée to soften Sam, Sam is now using Haydée against him as witness and fellow judge of his performance. Earlier in the film, Sam had described Adrien as Machiavellian, but this interaction casts Sam as more of a Machiavellian than Adrien.

In the process of this scene, then, Rohmer demonstrates to the viewer the tortuous manner in which someone like Adrien makes a living in this social environment: through social performative contortion. The scene depicts Sam's money as pitted against Adrien's social performativity, and therefore puts Adrien's livelihood as a dandyist to the test more than Charlie, or any other character could. In a sense, then, his dealings with Sam supply the answer to the question Charlie indirectly asked Adrien – how do you make a living? While the scene does not specifically allude to the wider context of 1966 France, it does reflect the abstract workings of their specific and exclusive social niche. Although it is alternative, fringe, and unusual, the social framework Sam and Adrien fashion for themselves in this scene allows them to operate as the Machiavellian social *metteurs en scène* that they are, in order to conduct their kind of business – that of the art of social performance.

Conclusion

In *La Collectionneuse*, the camera is very rarely pointed at afilmic reality. And yet, Rohmer

captures social situations that have the appearance of being potentially afilmic. Rohmer's *vérité* aesthetic captures social reality as a sceptical place in which social performance is the only means through which one can know a person, but where social performance is also, simultaneously, a highly crafted mask meant to deflect the possibility of truly knowing them. Indeed, with a cinematography that frames the characters in their social performative whole, and with a script that possesses dialogue that consists of recycled afilmic conversations that were recorded and written down, the viewer's social gaze is constantly called upon to engage with the characters' airs and pretenses, and to decipher them just like the other characters try to.

Rohmer then adds depth to the film's dynamic of the social gaze, by giving the viewer an artificial, and in this thesis, unprecedented kind of access to the social experiences of the protagonist, in the form of Adrien's narration. This allows the viewer to consider Adrien both from a performative state of confidence, and from an introspective place of vulnerability. Thus, Rohmer represents what are the easily mockable social behaviours of this particular slice of the middle class and its aspiring members as something more complex than merely frivolous. Rather, he reveals their social behaviours to be involved in a recognizably delicate system of expression that is integrated into a Goffmanian-Bourdiesian model of social reality.

Savoir-vivre, then, is demonstrated by social performances that manage to look genuine – so as to convince one's social audience of one's social status – whilst also deflecting any deeper, fact-based, unwanted investigation of one's social status that this may elicit. The shielding effect of social performance is further examined in the following film, *Ma nuit chez Maud*.

4.3. Performed Intellectualism in *Ma nuit chez Maud*

Postcodes: The Social Performance

For Rohmer's fourth *Conte Moral*, Rohmer brings us from the hot French riviera to the wintry, hilly landscape surrounding the medium-sized university city of Clermont-Ferrand in the centre of France, around Christmas of 1968.²³⁵ Overlooking the hills from the balcony of a chalet in the opening shot is a thirty-four year old man, played by the famous French actor, Jean-Louis Trintignant. The protagonist, who remains nameless, and whom I shall refer to as Jean-Louis for the sake of this discussion, lives alone. He walks out to his car and drives to town to attend church, where he catches a glimpse, for the first time, of the woman that he sets his mind on marrying, Françoise (played by Marie-Christine Barrault) – the first woman in this serial premise. This is followed by an evening spent solving complex math problems at home.

The next morning, Jean-Louis is woken up by his alarm. As he switches on the radio, it greets him by saying '*six heures trente!*' The film cuts to a street: it is still dark out and he and many others park their cars and walk towards the gate of a large building, which we find out soon after is the Michelin tyre manufacturing factory where Jean-Louis is an engineer. The film then cuts to a crowded canteen around lunch-time. Jean-Louis sits in the centre of the foreground of this shot, surrounded by five lunch partners, and facing the rest of the occupied canteen tables sprawling in the background (Figure 4.20).

In classical Rohmerian fashion, the film enters the lunch interaction of Jean-Louis and his colleagues mid-conversation. As the shot magnifies to become a mid-shot of Jean-Louis and his neighbour at the table, we hear the voice of the man sitting in front of him (whom I

²³⁵ Rohmer was familiar with the city, having studied classics in Clermont-Ferrand in the early 1940s.

will refer to as Man 1) finishing a story about driving through a turn at 160 kmh where the speed limit was sixty. Jean-Louis just nods, but his younger neighbour (Man 2) reacts with some enthusiasm, and decides to steer the conversation into a different direction:

MAN 2: Au fait, vous habitez où?

MAN 1: Sur les côtes de Chanturgue, enfin, dites ‘côtes de Clermont’. Et j’ai eu la chance de trouver un coin pour faire bâtir une petite maison, dans les vignes au-dessus de Chanturgue. Et dans quel coin vous logez?

MAN 2: On est presque voisins parce que j’habite sur le ... Sud de.... non, pardon, Nord-Ouest de... Chanturgue. C’est pas une villa évidemment, c’est un petit appartement, mais on a la chance d’être au calme, parce que jusqu’à présent on habitait en ville et c’était intenable. Et vous? Où est-ce que vous habitez?

JEAN-LOUIS: J’habite à Ceyrat.

MAN 2: À Ceyrat? Vous trouvez pas que c’est un peu trop loin?

JEAN-LOUIS: Non, c’est pas loin.

MAN 3: Non, c’est bien, Ceyrat.

MAN 1: Vous risquez d’avoir beaucoup de verglas.

JEAN-LOUIS: Non, jusqu’à maintenant j’en ai pas eu depuis que je suis là, mais je ne suis pas chez moi je suis chez un collègue qui est en déplacement.



Fig 4.20: Jean-Louis in the work canteen

The conversation is brief, seemingly informative about undramatic details from the protagonist's life, such as his place of residence, and the temporary state of his stay in Clermont-Ferrand. Although Jean-Louis will have one other, even briefer conversation with

other colleagues later in the film, none of his colleagues will reappear as characters, which gives the scene the added impression of being relatively insignificant. Still, the moment invites a Goffmanian-Bourdieuian reading because of the authentic way it captures the everydayness of the setting.

Firstly, it is set in an afilmic public location, reminiscent of the *vérité* aesthetics of Rozier, Godard, and Forman, who set their scenes in afilmic populated places. Indeed, Jean-Louis's arrival at work and his lunch only make up a very small part of the film, but they are some of the most indicative moments in the film of the times in which it was made, December 1968. The majority of the film takes place inside the studio-built, artificial apartment of a woman named Maud (played by Françoise Fabian) – the second woman of the serial premise – who will distract Jean-Louis from the first woman, Françoise. The film will also take place on the streets of Clermont-Ferrand, at church, in shops, and cafés. But unlike these locations, the canteen stages the protagonist in a place filled with actual, genuine, afilmic employees having lunch and chatting to each other, the direct sound recordings of which are audible in the background of this scene.

The scene also draws the social gaze because of the attention to verbal and visual detail with which this seemingly innocuous instance of professional small talk is depicted. His lunchtime conversation partners, uncredited performers in the film, are likely non-actors, if not also genuine afilmic employees of the Michelin factory. An important distinction between *Ma nuit chez Maud* and *La Collectionneuse*, however, is that, while Rohmer involved his actors in the creation of his 1966 dandy characters, the script of *Ma nuit chez Maud* was already fully written before Rohmer chose his cast. It took longer to produce precisely because Rohmer needed a bigger budget to afford the professional actors he required to convincingly perform the kind of dialogue he envisioned the protagonists of this social set as using. The way in which Trintignant, who is such a recognizable star, interplays with the

anonymous men playing his colleagues, helps to make him stand out. Within the diegesis, this contrast differentiates Jean-Louis from his colleagues in a nuanced social way, hinting at different social statuses.

When the scene begins, Man 1, who looks like the senior of the group, is finishing his anecdote about his speed-busting car ride. The theme of his anecdote is appropriate since they all work as engineers for a tyre manufacturer, which illustrates that these are people who have had the privilege of making hobbies their professions and qualifies this social reality as one of a privileged class. There is also a certain boastful undertone to his story about speed and a disregard for rules that foreshadows the competitive spirit of this social interaction.

The moment when one of the slightly younger men, Man 2, politely asks Man 1 about his place of residence is reminiscent of the moment when Charlie – the yacht designer’s son in *La Collectionneuse* – asks Adrien what he does for a living, in the sense that both conversation starters indirectly enquire as to another person’s economic capital. In this particular social status comparison game, postcodes are euphemistic symbols for rank.

Happy to answer, Man 1 proudly tells them the place, giving not just its geographic location – *côtes de Chanturgue* –, near the vineyards, but also the affectionate manner in which it is referred to colloquially by the happy few who live there, ‘*enfin, dites ‘côtes de Clermont’*’. While Man 2 had only enquired as to the location of his residence, Man 1 even tells him about its type and size, thus indirectly sharing more details that give away the approximate worth of his real estate and, by proxy, his status. He refers to his land as a ‘*coin*’, making it sound cute in a belittling kind of way, as if land ownership is not a big deal to him.

Although he tries to come across as self-controlled, his social performance reveals a palpable sense of enjoyment and excitement in telling the story about his residence as a kind of achievement – performative hints that he is actively trying to contain and mask. Right before he is about to reveal the stinger – the fact that he not only lives in a house, but that he

also had it built on land that he bought – he pauses briefly but noticeably. Over what almost seems like a stutter, his mouth makes a cramped shape in order to start saying ‘*un coin pour faire bâtir une petite maison*’, as if he is physically overwhelmed by the task to stay cool about something that gives him so much pride (Figure 4.21). Indeed, he tries to socially perform his class with the necessary Bourdieusian ‘ease’ to pull it off, which is antithetical to how much joy it brings him. Unlike Adrien in response to Charlie, Man 1 is happy to engage in a game of social status comparison, likely because he believes he is likely to come out dominant in the category of real estate. Indeed, in responding this way, he has set the bar very high for everyone else.



Fig 4.21: ‘.... *un coin pour faire bâtir une petite maison*’ - Man 1

While Man 1 is still finishing the elaborate description of his privileged living conditions, the film cuts ahead to a shot of Man 2, in a medium close-up shot of him alone, listening. Man 1 can be heard wrapping up his account and then asking Man 2 to answer the same question. By showing Man 2 reacting to Man 1, Rohmer draws attention to the instigator of this social situation, as he hears exactly what he wanted to know. Thus far, the micro-story Rohmer has presented consists in going from showing us the impressor, so to

speak, to showing us the impressed, in a very direct, uncomplicated, straightforward causal relation, that Man 1's attempt at forced modesty does little to camouflage.

Man 2's response to Man 1 starts with a kind of conciliatory attempt at bonding, saying '*on est presque voisins*'. After stuttering and mistaking his South and North, he mumbles somewhat timidly that '*c'est pas une villa évidemment, c'est un petit appartement*' as if apologizing for his self-assessed inferiority to Man 1, before adding that '*on a la chance d'être au calme*'. The use of '*on*' refers to the presence of a second person, presumably his wife. Marital status is important in this game, and draws attention away from the aforementioned confessed smallness of his residence. Having established the comparable material smallness of his economic capital, he is keen to emphasize that in his eyes it consists of an upgrade from his previous situation, as it provides '*le calme*', a word he emphasizes, and the lack of which made his previous place of residence '*intenable*', which he also emphasizes.

The justification of his move away from the city to this area feels clumsily conspicuous. The main message, it seems from the two buzzwords that he emphasizes in his rapidly formulated response, is that he improved his position overall, and thus, that he is on his way up in his social trajectory. He needs to be explicit about this improvement as he does not have the flair or the *savoir-vivre* to socially perform his ease suggestively. As another indication of his lack of ease, just after he finishes his response, he turns urgently to Jean-Louis and asks '*...et vous? Où est-ce que vous habitez?*' He barely takes a breath between finishing his own story and asking Jean-Louis for his. It is as if he throws the ball into his court out of keenness to shift attention away from him, and to continue to find out about everyone else's material circumstances instead. Again, the film cuts ahead to a shot of Jean-Louis while Man 2 is still talking. When it is Jean-Louis's turn to talk, however, he tries not to take the bait, in a manner reminiscent of Adrien's deflection of Charlie's question. Instead of

elaborately justifying himself, like the two previous men did, he politely but briefly says:

‘J’habite à Ceyrat’.

As if starved for more information, and perhaps miffed that Jean-Louis did not follow his and Man 1’s example in oversharing details about their economic capital, Man 2 overreacts to this information. Although the information Jean-Louis volunteers about his residential circumstances is minimal, it is enough for Man 2 to find fault. His face breaks into a relieved grin when he says *‘vous trouvez pas que c’est un peu trop loin?’* in a confused expression of pleasure and amusement, presumably raising the issue of distance to refer to the well-known criterion for good real estate – the length of the commute (Figure 4.22). His mild but potent glee seems to originate from the relief of having found someone at the table whose place of residence can easily be criticized, and from the fact that he no longer, as far as he can tell, inhabit the lowest echelon of this lunch table in the category of real estate.



Fig 4.22: Man 2, gleefully critical of Jean-Louis’s distant address

Now a third man, Man 3, sitting diagonally across from Jean-Louis, concurs with Jean-Louis in saying that Ceyrat is very nice. But then Man 1 chimes back in to contribute to the criticism by listing another practical problem with this location: *‘vous risquez d’avoir beaucoup de verglas’*, which Jean-Louis denies with a mildly palpable sense of ennui (Figure

4.23). In the end, Jean-Louis deflects the topic entirely by saying that the place he lives in is not actually his, but that of a colleague, implying that it is not a direct reflection of his social status. This comment seemingly unintentionally, but skillfully achieves putting him in yet a different category from the men who have thus far listed their residential information. Indeed, by throwing in a complication that does not allow for straightforward comparisons, he removes himself from the status-comparison game, and thus neutralizes it. In the process, he presents himself with more genuine ease than they do, showing off a greater sense of *savoir-vivre* that is unquantifiable compared to real estate.



Fig 4.23: Jean-Louis, unenthused

Trintignant's inherent aura of sophistication and class help in creating the sense that he transcends the petty concerns of his rookie colleague as to his colleagues' economic capitals. His vague and ambiguous reply to Man 2 about his residential situation also raises questions about his life: why is he living in someone else's house while the owner is temporarily away? The question will not quite be answered by the film, but blanks will be filled in as to his actual background and history. Indeed, the film casts him as a traveler, someone who has lived in Vancouver and in Valparaíso, and who has lead an interesting life. At the same time, his ability to deflect the conversation demonstrates that he is also familiar with the social tricks

that his colleagues engage in to discuss their rank. Thus, Jean-Louis is presented as a kind of character who has an ambiguous relationship to the social status he more or less shares with his colleagues.

It is notable that the only facet of Jean-Louis's professional life that the film depicts is during break times: rare moments of sociality that break up the working day. None of the characters are ever shown at work working – their work life is referenced in terms of the socializing opportunities it presents. Rohmer was interested in the ordinarily undramatic: 'what we do in everyday life where we operate within small perimeters, where we meet people, where we talk'.²³⁶ Indeed, this scene offers a portrait of the kinds of people Jean-Louis comes into everyday contact with, who represent his daily talking partners, and who form an important part of his daily social environment.

Taking a Goffmanian-Bourdieuian approach to this moment of sociality helps to sense the particular flavour of this professional social niche's way of socializing. By making real estate the topic of conversation, the scene anchors the typical Clermontais's forms of sociality in their middle class competitiveness. Their self-conscious Bourdieusian concern with social status and the insecurity with which this is part of their social existence are palpable through their slightly awkward social performances. Indeed, their lack of ease is illustrated especially by the forced modesty, the mumbling, and the inappropriate glee at hearing about another man's long commute. Rohmer uses the location, the rhythm of his montage, and the characters' specific uses of language in the dialogue to acutely bring to the foreground a precise kind of social environment.

Thus, the scene serves as Rohmer's introduction to the social reality of the film, and gives an expository taste of the kind of community that Jean-Louis is new to but which the other characters of the film have lived in for years. As an example of a certain kind of social experience in this community, the scene allows the viewer to contextualize the other moments

²³⁶ Cléder, p. 97.

of sociality that the film will present. Coming so early in the film, the scene also serves to introduce Jean-Louis's cagey attitude to enquiries about his private life, and his manner of wanting to be seen as an outsider as well as a normal person. Thus, this scene succeeds in setting the peripheral social stage of the film, referring to a real professional social environment to suggest that the characters in the film are social beings who are authentic in a class-specific way.

‘C’est une tenue pour un professeur?’

One evening later on in the week, after another work day, Jean-Louis enters the *Café Suffren*, where he fortuitously bumps into an old high school classmate of his – Vidal (played by Antoine Vitez), now a Marxist philosophy professor. Vidal will introduce him to Maud, a ‘remarkable’ woman, who *‘ne se sent pas à l’aise dans son milieu’* – a feeling of unbelonging and loneliness that they all seem to share. Maud, the attractive, divorced, *libre-penseur* pediatrician and mother, and Vidal, her friend and occasional lover, represent a subtly different social niche to that of the suburban Michelin tyre factory engineers. Maud and Vidal are portrayed as less materialistic and pragmatic, and more philosophical and libertine in their everyday lives.

If Rohmer is known for a ‘literary’ and ‘verbose’ kind of cinema, he reaches the pinnacle of complex verbosity with *Ma nuit chez Maud*, the majority of which consists of what can be described as a single long conversation, spread out and fragmented over the course of an intimate dinner party during the titular evening and night. The dinner party is hosted at Maud’s city apartment the night after Christmas Midnight Mass, and her guests are

Vidal and Jean-Louis, who has agreed to come with Vidal to meet the woman he speaks of so highly.

Upon arriving at her apartment, Jean-Louis and Vidal are welcomed by a symbol of Maud's relative comfort and social class. A foreign maid whom Vidal familiarly greets by her first name, Teresa, takes their coats from them in the dim antechamber visible in the foreground. This part of the apartment serves like a theatre cloakroom, while the living room and dinner table are brightly lit and visible in the background (Figure 4.24). Jean-Louis and Vidal enter the living room, and Jean-Louis takes in his surroundings. At that moment, Maud appears from a white door in a white wall on the left-hand side of the room, as if making an entrance from the wings onto a stage (Figure 4.25).



Fig 4.24: The antechamber and the living room



Fig 4.25: Maud makes her entrance

In fact, the apartment was built on a sound studio stage and represents the only instance, in the film corpus, of the use of a non-real location.²³⁷ However, in the construction of the apartment, Rohmer paid attention to the realistic details, by requesting that the apartment have a low ceiling at the height that apartments would normally have ceilings, which was unusual for film set constructions which usually leave out ceilings.²³⁸ Furthermore, Rohmer insisted on having the lighting look like realistic interior lighting. Rohmer's aim was

²³⁷ Nestor Almendros, *A Man with a Camera* (London: faber and faber, 1985), p. 77.

²³⁸ Schilling, *Éric Rohmer*, p. 97.

to recreate a real decor of the interior of this private space so as to generate a verisimilar physical environment for the actors. While, on the one hand, the studio-built living room looks and feels like a genuine apartment, when the actress Françoise Fabian enters it, she is also, on the other hand, truly walking onto a stage.

As Jean-Louis and Vidal spectate their hostess's entrance, the apartment lends itself easily to the metaphor of the stage. Playing the social role of hostess, Maud wears a neat little black dress, which is neither explicitly formal nor informal, but instead an ambiguous combination of the two. She accessorizes elegantly with black tights and heels, jewellery, dark eye-liner, and a neat pony tail showing her long black hair, with little black curls of hair meticulously pulled out of the grip of her ponytail, just above each ear, resting ornamentally and statuesquely on her cheeks. Indeed, her appearance is the result of meticulous care made to look easy. It somewhat confuses the social framework of this evening – is it of a seductive nature or not, and if so, for whom? In one elegant move she shuts the door behind her, and with it, prevents anyone from catching a glimpse of what can be thought of as the backstage of her apartment.

As she enters the room, Maud sees Jean-Louis, her new guest who is posed to greet her, but instead of acknowledging him, she kisses Vidal first (Figure 4.26). Skipping a formal introduction should not be mistaken for a lack of interest in Jean-Louis's identity on her part. On the contrary, as a result of not rushing introductions, she has a strange ownership of Jean-Louis's possible identity, which allows her to savour the manner in which she will slowly but gradually allow Jean-Louis's social performance to reveal who he wants to be seen as, letting him come to her. Immediately, Maud establishes the self-control of her social performance: she is someone with evident *savoir-vivre*, who understands her audience, and who knows exactly where she directs her attentions, her communication, and her overall social performativity, but is able to mask her pre-calculatedness with a natural ease.



Fig 4.26: Vidal's 'tender' greeting

When Vidal greets her with a big embrace, Maud slightly mocks him for it: '*quelle tendresse!*' During the evening, Vidal will show Maud tender affection, the frequency of which suggests its habitual origin. However, his gestures of intimacy will ricochet off of her uninterested attitude in the presence of Jean-Louis. Expressions of affection that are usually welcome no longer are because it is a different social framework than if they had been together alone, just the two of them. Rohmer informs the viewer of their past through Vidal's own admission the night before, and allows, through this subdued performance of intimate familiarity, their emotional backstory to nonetheless stay tangible and contribute to a certain degree of social tension in the presence of a third person.

Indeed, Jean-Louis's social gaze is reason for Vidal's advances to turn into a social display of their familiarity. Shortly after Vidal's first physical contact with Maud, which she brushes off, Vidal jumps on the bed that Maud is sitting on and starts to play-wrestle with her in reaction to her teasing him (Figure 4.27). They both laugh, but, within the same uninterrupted shot, Maud very quickly says: '*oh, c'est une tenue pour un professeur? Et prof de faculté par-dessus le marché?*' to which Vidal responds, '*bon, soyons sérieux*', and after which they swiftly move on to the topic of Christmas. In saying this, Maud swiftly rejects

Vidal's advances, calling to attention a more appropriate side of him for this particular social setting. And yet, trying to get Vidal off of her, and to behave in a less physical and more 'serious' way is not, convincingly, the only reason she mentions his professional occupation this way.



Fig 4.27: Friendly wrestling

Rather than just reprimanding him and rejecting his physical advances, she is also indirectly complimenting him. Maud chooses a moment to say this that is not explicitly part of a comparative discussion of social status. She just brings up something that everyone present already knows about Vidal's rank, as if inviting them to savour the fact. In a way, mentioning his achieved academic rank (and Rohmer's former professional aspiration) serves to qualify the social niche of the whole group, by their association with Vidal. Maud demonstrates the agility of her Goffmanian social literacy again: she uses a social framework of play to encase a comment that has a more Bourdieusian motivation of social status affirmation, and thus shifts away from her usual social role in his presence, to a social role that is appropriate in front of other people.

The multiplicity of the purposes of her comment also puts into perspective the crudeness of the social status comparison game played by Jean-Louis's colleagues previously.

His colleagues already know about each other's ranks, and ask about real estate as a euphemistic means to gauge their colleagues', or as the case may be, their superiors' economic capitals. In Maud's case, while the mention of Vidal's professional rank is an obvious and conspicuous comment about social status, she somewhat neutralizes its economic meaning by using it as a metaphor for behaviour, suggesting the priority of '*tenue*', or social performance, not just over rank, but also over individual instinct. She desires her guests to bring their economic capital to the party not by being conspicuous about it in a crude way, but by delivering a social performance of *savoir-vivre*.

In a way, then, Maud warns her guests that professional achievement does not alleviate the pressure of the social gaze – she will still be judging her guests' '*tenues*' regardless of their résumés. In fact, she will hold them accountable even more because of their middle classness. This reflects her world view and state of mind. At one point, she admits to toying with the idea of leaving Clermont-Ferrand, and explains that it is not because of the city, but because of the people. '*J'en ai assez de voir les mêmes têtes*', she says. If she is not happy in her environment, this is partly the result of her boredom with the *bourgeois* behaviours of the people around her. Maud transpires in this social interaction as a social being whose keen eye for people's social performances is both a skill and a curse.

Vidal plays a similar yet discretely different kind of role in this introductory phase of the evening, both complimenting and deriding his friends for their social identities. Just as Daniel, who was Adrien's Girardian mediator, friend, and rival, Vidal will also mediate Jean-Louis's relationship to Maud. Vidal knows both of them best, and the social performative functionality of Vidal's mediating position is revealed several times over. Early on, Vidal raises the topic of Jean-Louis's Catholicism. They discuss it for a brief moment. When Maud walks over the the bar to prepare them some drinks, she starts to say '*non seulement moi, je ne suis pas baptisée...*', at which point Vidal interrupts her to tell Jean-Louis: '*tu sais qu'elle*

appartient à une des plus grandes familles de libre-penseurs du centre de la France?’

followed by a comment on how being a *libre-penseur* is its own kind of religion. The manner in which Vidal interrupts Maud, although scripted, feels spontaneous because of the way interruptions are inherently designed to correct someone’s expression as a result of an immediate reaction to what is being said, as it is being said. Rohmer’s premeditated use of such conversational acrobatics draws the social gaze because it authentically captures the rhythm and texture of conversations. What is apparent, is that Vidal can participate in the expression of both their social performances as they get to know each other, by occasionally corroborating or challenging them on how they socially perform themselves. This casts Vidal, too, as someone with a strong sensibility for social performance.

Again, however, Vidal’s correction of Maud, or taking over her line of thought, here, does not only serve the purpose of demonstrating his knowledge of Maud. The comment also clearly has a Bourdieusian purpose. Vidal’s mention of Maud’s family expresses not just her intellectual calibre, but also the pedigree of this social company. Alluding thus to her rank, as she did to his, contributes to clarifying the Bourdieusian framework of the group. In this social framework, the social status comparison game is carried out through a series of compliments that are cloaked as vague criticisms, so as not to sound explicitly boastful. If the characters’ manner of non-competitively discussing status manages to reflect ease, it reflects an ease with their self-aware concern with rank, and thus, a kind of paradoxical ease with their own Bourdieusian insecurity. Indeed, Vidal and Maud represent characters who, as social beings, are comfortable with the act of operating in a realm in which self-aware Bourdieusian social performativity is the norm.

Performed Intellectualism

Soon after introductions, the film jumps ahead in time to the three of them sitting at the dining table, having already finished dinner and enjoying dessert and wine. The film joins the protagonists mid-conversation. The tone of the dinner table conversation has noticeably escalated in argumentativeness, without therefore being disputatious. The conversation is about atheism and Catholicism, about the Clermont-Ferrand native, philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal and his wager, about the institution of marriage, and about the relation between religion, pleasure, and love. The latter is a concern that Jean-Louis especially expresses, since he is the only religious one at the table, and since he has, at the start of the film, fallen in love with the sight of a young, Catholic woman who is, at this point, still anonymous to the viewer. The conversation partially serves to flesh out the narrative of the film by constituting Jean-Louis's first open mention of this mystery woman. The conversation is partly driven, then, by his own, fresh preoccupation with marriage. But the conversation is also specifically modulated for each interlocutor's intellectual interests, which are weaved in seemingly nonchalantly. It is interesting to consider the layered nature of the conversation from a Goffmanian-Bourdiesian point of view.

At the start of this dinner table scene, Vidal invokes Pascal to discuss what he calls the undeniable contradiction of Christianity, and asks Maud '*t'as quand-même lu Pascal?*' The question conveys his testing her knowledge, more rhetorically than earnestly, and instigates her to reveal what she knows about Pascal so that Vidal can calibrate what he will say next. After giving her summary, she concludes '*ça n'est certainement pas un de mes auteurs*', as if responding to a question of taste (Figure 4.28). Rohmer then cuts to Jean-Louis to let him engage in what seems to be a more earnest kind of defence of his rejection of Pascal. Pascal has a vision of Christianity, says Jean-Louis, that he finds 'very particular'. Furthermore, he

argues, Pascal was not a saint, and he was condemned by the church, insofar as Jansenism was condemned, equating the two. In the meantime, off-screen, Maud and Vidal have started bickering, which interrupts Jean-Louis. After a brief pause, he eventually continues his line of thought and offers a different explanation for his rejection of Pascal, suggesting that while Pascal's asceticism prevented him from noticing how good Chanturgue wine tastes – a local Clermont-Ferrand wine – Jean-Louis would, and does, raising his glass in demonstration.



Fig 4.28: '*pas un de mes auteurs*' - Maud

The conversation has a strange density. There is a vague quality to the logic of their conversation, but its vagueness is not the result of cryptic filmmaking. On the contrary, Rohmer's *vérité* aesthetic is very straightforward and sincere. Starting with the cinematography, Rohmer's return to black and white film after using colour for *La Collectionneuse* served a particular purpose. Almendros explains that in black and white 'faces become more important than the background or the sets', which were deliberately kept monochrome, and thus emphasize the performers.²³⁹ Rohmer's continued use of medium camera-to-subject framing further draws the attention to the actors' body language, inviting a normal, habitual appreciation of the characters, rather than an abstract or symbolic

²³⁹ Almendros, p. 75.

appreciation of their body parts. Furthermore, *Ma nuit chez Maud* represented Rohmer's first use of direct sound recording, which was concerned, specifically, with 'reproducing the human voice truly and purely, in a film which had so much text'.²⁴⁰ Another means by which Rohmer executed a straightforward filmmaking approach, was by imposing immediacy on his cast. Perhaps he inherited the habit from *La Collectionneuse*, since the financial liberty was there in *Ma nuit chez Maud* to film sufficient takes, but Almendros recounts that Rohmer would rarely film more than one take of the same shot because of the stagnating effect this had on the performances.²⁴¹ Moreover, in sharp contrast to the function of narration in *La Collectionneuse*, narration only occurs on two occasions in *Ma nuit chez Maud*, which makes the action that unfolds in the film speak for itself more.

While this sober and lucid aesthetic that emphasizes the faces, bodies, and voices of the actors succeeds in drawing the viewer's attention to their ways of being, it is their use of language that especially invokes the viewer's social gaze in this case. Unlike the script of *La Collectionneuse*, in which Rohmer recycled some of his cast's genuine expressions and turns of the phrase, *Ma nuit chez Maud* was written by him alone. In a 1974 TV interview about his experience working with Rohmer, who was at that point a recognized auteur, Trintignant tells about his surprise at finding out that the script of *Ma nuit chez Maud* had the pause word '*heu*' written into it, and that Rohmer insisted that the '*heu*' be said exactly where he wrote them.²⁴² Trintignant recounts how he at first resisted this idea, fearing it would be far too unspontaneous and practically impossible to execute in a natural way. Rohmer had only made one other feature film before, therefore his own experience had not yet solidified his credibility as a director. After trying it out, however, Trintignant admitted he could not

²⁴⁰ Almendros, p. 80.

²⁴¹ Almendros, p. 79.

²⁴² Olivier Lorsac, 'Jean-Louis Trintignant à propos de la direction d'acteur d'Éric Rohmer', TF1, 25 February 1974; online video recording, Ina, <<http://www.ina.fr/video/I00011434>> [accessed 27 April 2016].

imagine a different way of saying the sentence, crediting Rohmer's well-chosen placement of the '*heu*', and with it, his agility with real, spoken language.

Peppering one's sentences with a '*heu*' can be a Goffmanian performative tool: saying '*heu*' can denote genuine hesitation, where one does not know what to say until the exact articulation of the next part of an idea comes to mind. It can also be a pretence of hesitation, an act that builds into one's social performance the occasional appearance of hesitation so as to come across as less intellectually certain, less threatening, more approachable, humble, and human, and open to debate – qualities that are important in a middle class culture of opinionatedness. Whatever the reasons may be for Rohmer's several intended uses of '*heu*' in the script, the technique and his attachment to the timing of any '*heu*' show that he saw it as a tool to sculpt his characters' social performances in ways that defined them as social beings. Indeed, Rohmer's screenwriting showcases his outstanding grip on a class-conscious kind of use of language.

In his argument against Pascal, Jean-Louis several times uses the word '*heu*', which helps to colour his manner of discussing Pascal in a relatable way. Still, the conversation requires technical theological knowledge not just to understand it, but also, and specifically, to gauge the level of generalization with which the topic is being addressed. Indeed, while the conversation sounds intellectual, Charles Coustille argues that the manner in which they argue about this topic has a non-intellectual quality to it.²⁴³ Quoting Stanley Cavell, Coustille argues that Rohmer's use of 'ordinary language' sometimes gives the impression of constituting an ordinary conversation, and at other times gives the impression of constituting an intellectual one. Specifically, Coustille reminds the reader that what is at stake in this conversation is not necessarily the most refined understanding of Pascal, but rather Maud's approval.²⁴⁴

243 Charles Coustille, "'Où qu'on aille, on est condamné à la province.'" Éric Rohmer et la conversation ordinaire', in *Rohmer en perspectives*, ed. by Sylvie Robic and Laurence Schifano (Nanterre: Presses Universitaires de Paris Ouest, 2013), pp.122-3 (pp. 122-23).

244 Coustille, p. 122.

In a similar vein, in his analysis of a different Rohmer film, *Conte de printemps* (1990), Bonitzer notes the strategic dynamic of some of the conversations, which he describes as: ‘*quand on se parle deux à deux, c’est en fonction d’un troisième qu’il faut séduire.*’²⁴⁵ The same can be said of *Ma nuit chez Maud*. When Jean-Louis gives his verdict on Pascal through an argument with Vidal, Maud says ‘*très bien répondu*’ to Jean-Louis, and when Vidal protests, she tells him ‘*arrête de parler, on entend que toi ici ce soir*’. She takes on the role of jury to Jean-Louis and Vidal’s social performances of their intellectualism. To Maud, what seems to matter is Jean-Louis and Vidal’s participation levels in their social roles as intellectual guests. She compliments or derides them on the quality and quantity of their performance, rather than on the content of the argument, or indeed, the sophistication of their descriptions of Pascal, which both Jean-Louis or Vidal fail to achieve with precision.

Although Vidal and Jean-Louis are both invested in the Pascal debate because it concerns Jean-Louis’s credibility as a Christian, and thus, represents, for Vidal, a point on which he aims to challenge him in front of Maud for her approval, the spectacular manner in which the conversation is carried out gains precedence over its content, and causes the conversation’s sensed vagueness. Describing *Conte de printemps*’s protagonists’ philosophical dialogue as rendered ‘perverse’, Bonitzer notes, ‘*il ne s’agit pas véritablement d’une discussion philosophique, qui n’est saisie que comme prétexte, ou plus exactement comme signe d’autre chose.*’²⁴⁶ Similarly here, the point of this interaction is for them to engage in an act of Goffmanian ‘self-portraiture’, and to seem the ‘most interesting’ compared to the other.²⁴⁷ In this instance, their performance of *savoir-vivre* becomes a substitute for the real possession of knowledge and expertise, earning them the respect and acknowledgement that might otherwise be saved for knowledge *per se*. Where Jean-Louis’s colleagues used their postcodes as currency to communicate their status, Maud, Vidal, and Jean-Louis operate in a

²⁴⁵ Bonitzer, p. 66.

²⁴⁶ Bonitzer, p. 66.

²⁴⁷ Bonitzer, p. 62.

slightly different Bourdieusian habitus in which the currency shared is that of performed intellectualism.

The scene captures the natural way in which intellectual concerns can be freighted by conversations that are actually about something else, as is typical of Rohmer's conversational style. Rohmer's *vérité* aesthetic is non-manipulative, non-deceptive, and straightforward so that it can expose the characters' own manipulateness and social '*comédies*'. Thus, when Maud, at the end of the evening, tells Jean-Louis that she has a spare room for him to take shelter from the snow storm, the viewer only finds out much later, at the end of the night, and at the same time as Jean-Louis, that she lied about having a spare bed as a ploy to keep him with her (Figure 4.29). In the moment of her lie, she is sitting in her bed as the central figure of the frame, unable to escape anyone's social gaze, while Jean-Louis and Vidal stand on either side of her bed looking at her, giving the viewer a direct line of sight. Vidal, we realize later, knows she is lying, and understands the move for what it is – a '*comédie*' to get Jean-Louis to stay because she is romantically interested in him. But as viewers, we find out at the same time as Jean-Louis, witnessing his confusion.



Fig 4.29: Maud's lie camouflaged by normal conversation

Schilling deduces from Rohmer's aesthetic that his prioritization for showing the characters as grounded in the phenomena of their own world serves to even out the playing field amongst characters: 'even those who practice deceit must comply with an unwritten rule of transparency and offer up face and body for exchange.'²⁴⁸ Indeed, Maud's lie is not something that was communicated to us via any other filmic method than the character's own means – her deception exists in her social performance, and is communicated to the viewer in the same manner as it is presented to Jean-Louis and Vidal. Rohmer places the ontological origin with the characters as to what their social performances actually express, allowing social performance to look the same whether it is sincere or not.

This apparent neutrality is what gives *Ma nuit chez Maud* its minimal but not negligible historicizing function. While the film's focus on the characters' games may seem like a cynical portrayal of the middle class, Rohmer is actually interested in capturing something real about the kinds of conversations that are being had in middle class households in the winter of 1968. Indeed, Norman King has argued that Rohmer constructs 'Maud's spectator [...] as intelligent abstentionist who can take discreet pleasure in the charms of bourgeois democracy', and that this sympathy for *bourgeoisie* is part of a reactionary tendency following the protests of May 1968 that 'proposes a world of continuity rather than of radical change'.²⁴⁹ But taking a Goffmanian-Bourdieuian approach reveals that this *bourgeois* charm is a construct of which the *bourgeois* are, themselves, not just aware, but critical.

Thus, at the start of this thesis, we saw that Rozier depicts the ordinariness of his characters in *Adieu Philippine* as an opaque aesthetic entity, and that he appreciates the way they remain authentic to themselves, unspoiled by society. Now, having reached the last case study of the thesis, we find that Rohmer allows his protagonist's ordinariness to become the

²⁴⁸ Schilling, *Éric Rohmer*, p. 100.

²⁴⁹ Norman King, 'Eye for Irony: Éric Rohmer's *Ma nuit chez Maud* (1969)', in *French Film: texts and contexts*, ed. by Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau (London; New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 202-12 (p. 203).

blatant meta-cinematic topic of debate with his peers, contrasted directly to Pascal's anti-ordinariness. Indeed, although they partake in socially performing a *bourgeois* kind of charm, they are also judgmental of it. Unlike the oblivious spontaneity of the heroes of *Adieu Philippine*, Rohmer's characters' self-awareness as middle class social performers makes them mindful, at every step, of the social games they play.

Conclusion

The final film examined in this thesis, *Ma nuit chez Maud*, was made with a *vérité* aesthetic that was the least inspired by the methods of the genre of *cinéma vérité*, but that most emphasized *cinéma vérité*'s manner of treating conversations like meaningful historical representations of contemporary social reality. With a focus on conversations, and specifically, on conversationalists, Rohmer's *vérité* aesthetic is straightforward and non-manipulative, so as to allow for the conversations' meanings to emerge as a result of their own workings.

The conversations' workings have a cut-throat competitive dynamic that is also represented in *La Collectionneuse*, and that integrates a Bourdieusian model of social reality. Indeed, social interactions become the platforms for the expression of social status in more or less cloaked ways. Whereas at work, Jean-Louis's colleagues are overtly concerned with their Bourdieusian metrics, and explicitly compare postcodes as a means to boast about their economic capital, social status is the subject of more refined and indirect expression in Maud and Vidal's social environment. Indeed, in their case, the labels of social status are disclaimed at the start of the conversation, so as to draw attention, instead, to the social performances, or the '*tenues*' with which they will decorate these labels over the course of the night, gaining

pleasure from each other's Goffmanian instincts. Indeed, although Jean-Louis, Vidal, and Maud suffer from Bourdieusian status anxiety just as Jean-Louis's colleagues do, what they display is a greater sense of *savoir-vivre*, which affords them the ability to give their competitiveness an outlet through the social performance of intellectualism. Thus, Rohmer introduces the viewer to a conception of *bourgeoisie* where their defining feature is their proposition of a social *mise en scène* in which the act of socializing is likened not to the mathematical construction and interpretation of spreadsheets, but rather to the subjective experience and delivery of poetry.

4.4. Conclusion

La Collectionneuse and *Ma nuit chez Maud* conclude the investigation of this thesis into the cinematic representation of social performance with forms of sociality that are particularly intricate and thought through. Whereas the first four films examined in this thesis conceived of social performance as something inevitably pragmatic, Rohmer represents the sociality of Bourdieusian ease. While the social performances of the characters in these two films are not unpragmatic, and while they serve a purpose, the purpose of ease that they serve is unique to their middle class position in society. The youth of the characters of *La Collectionneuse* gives their social performances a more hot-headed quality, which is replaced, in *Ma nuit chez Maud*, with a more resigned self-control. What stays the same, however, is that conversations continue to be portrayed as platforms for the expression of a Bourdieusian dynamic of competitiveness.

In both films, depicting these conversations, Rohmer's *vérité* aesthetic is consistently straightforward, inviting the viewer to ponder the meaning contained within the words, faces, bodies, and behaviours of his performers. Indeed, Rohmer is interested in being visually accurate and sincere about his characters, including their flaws. While Rohmer's *vérité* aesthetic is not as methodologically akin to *cinéma vérité* as that of Rozier, Godard, and Forman, and therefore channels the first order of authenticity less, it nonetheless takes a documentary approach towards the characters' use of language in his screenwriting, by virtue of his lifetime of personal experience and study of his middle class peers' ways of thinking, moving, and talking. Indeed, what sets Rohmer apart from filmmakers like Rozier, Godard, and Forman, is that the quality of authenticity he captures is the product not of an

encouragement of the unplannable, but rather of much more ‘meticulous calculations and extensive work’ in the preparatory phase before filming began.²⁵⁰

Through these films, *savoir-vivre* emerges as a heightened quality that is ascribed to social performers who operate within the Bourdieusian model of social reality but who simultaneously deflect its base competitiveness with a performance of ease. If these films’ *vérité* aesthetics, although subtly different, were inspired by the genre of *cinéma vérité*’s ambition to capture the essence of everydayness, then the essence they capture is that of sociality’s purpose not to make do, but to elevate and remove social agents from a feeling of banality, until social performance becomes an art, and the social status comparison game resembles a poetic challenge. Rohmer goes into the social class stereotype, finds the kernel of truth, and expands it on a canvas of everydayness to bring to the foreground the way in which life style serves to recast the banality, ordinariness, repetitiveness, and formulaicness that are part of life as things that one’s way of being can have an impact on.

250 Crisp, p. 51.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I set out to examine the aesthetic presence of social performance in six French and Czechoslovak New Wave films from the 1960s, each made with a more or less *cinéma vérité*-inspired aesthetic aimed at capturing contemporary social life with a certain degree of authenticity: *Adieu Philippine* (1962), *Masculin Féminin* (1966), *Černý Petr* (1963), *Intimní Osvětlení* (1965), *La Collectionneuse* (1967), and *Ma nuit chez Maud* (1969). To engage with the aesthetic result of these filmmakers' varying *vérité* aesthetics and to appreciate the films' social range of meaning in a granular way, I offered a Goffmanian approach.

The findings of this thesis are aesthetic and historical. They concern the cinematic presence of forms of sociality on the one hand, and their *vérité* aesthetic of authenticity on the other hand. In my interpretations of these films, my analysis of their varying moments of authenticity led to a more precise means to gauge what was at stake for the characters in crucial moments of social interactivity that were otherwise dramatically and narratively decontextualized. I mentioned at the end of the theory chapter that the case studies can be seen to form a kind of arc of maturity, from rough to polished, both in terms of the kinds of social performativity they represent, and in terms of the *vérité* aesthetics used to depict them. The first three films' focus on teenagers and young adults, whose Goffmanian life experiences were limited, was paired with a methodology that was more receptive towards their characters' resulting afilmic spontaneity. The latter three films portrayed slightly older characters with a methodology that was less geared towards the unplannable, but interested rather in how their characters' more robust volume of Goffmanian experiences foregrounds the more strategic, learned, and plannable tenets of sociality. In the first three films, the sometimes amateurist discrepancy between the afilmic and the profilmic situates social

performance as an aesthetic entity that becomes symbolic of either a harmonious relationship to reality, or an incongruous one. In the latter three films, the afilmic is downplayed, and instead, the social gaze is drawn to a representation of the compatibility of social performativity with social reality, to reflect, rather, on the way they tend to be in dialogue. What has been described as the *cinéma vérité* feel, style, or effect, then, is not strictly the product of its methodological likeness to *cinéma vérité*, but, more importantly, of its potential to invoke a viewer's social gaze – a sense of recognizability, familiarity, and interpretability of the characters' presence in the films as social beings rather than as narrative bodies.

The film corpus's treatments of social performance reflect on the balance between the individual and the collective, on what an individual can do about his surroundings, and what the surroundings do to an individual. On the one hand, the films ponder aspects of social life that are unique to the historical context in which the films were made, such as the generational conflicts, economic and political regimes, and class-based dynamics that are characteristic of specific time-periods, and that heavily influence the characters' experience of the everyday. On the other hand, the themes of social life that these films address are universal and timeless. It is by representing these intangible forces at work in the human social experience that the films consist of pieces on the modern person coming to terms with his or her everyday reality. In that regard, perhaps this thesis can contribute to a broader historical study of the tendency towards self-reflection and reinvention that was characteristic of the decade.

Historically, there is a cyclical and continuous emergence of cinematic New Wave movements and of novel counter-cultural takes on authenticity in response to what people perceive to be an abundance of unsatisfyingly artificial representations of social reality. These are the movements that would be interesting for future research to examine for the relationship between their aesthetic of authenticity and the manner in which their films

conjure our social gaze, inviting a look at what conventional cinema may never offer up for sight.

For example, in addition to more examples of French and Czechoslovak New Wave films that experimented with *cinéma vérité*, the cinema of Cesare Zavattini, the British New Wave, the work of John Cassavetes, the Iranian New Wave, and later the work of Dogme '95, as well as current cinema, such as Andrea Arnold's *American Honey* (2016), are more or less part of the *cinéma vérité* lineage, and could be examined further for how their *vérité* aesthetics represent social performance. The genre of mumblecore, which emerged in the 2000s and is known for its authentic, often improvised dialogue, and which was inspired by the New Wave as well as by reality TV, also lends itself to this kind of examination that is intended to facilitate an appreciation of the underlying social storytelling involved. The fruits of such projects that take a social gaze on films could perhaps coalesce around a wider study of social performance in twentieth and twenty-first century cinema, as cinema is a medium that lends itself particularly to its portrayal. I hope my proposed Goffmanian approach will offer a new, more thorough and precise way to appreciate and engage with filmic representations of social reality, and to articulate both the banal and the profound real things that cinema is able to express about the act and the art of socially being.

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- Blue Jeans*, dir. Jacques Rozier (Films du Colisée, 1958) [Potemkine, 2008, DVD]
- Černý Petr*, dir. Miloš Forman (Filmové Studio Barrandov, 1963) [Filmexport Home Video, 2005, DVD]
- Chronique d'un été*, dir. Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin (Argos Films, 1961) [British Film Institute, 2013, DVD]
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- Intimní Osvětlení*, dir. Ivan Passer (Československý Státní Film, 1965) [Second Run, 2006, DVD]
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