FROM GOLDEN AGE TO SILVER SCREEN: FRENCH MUSIC-HALL CINEMA FROM 1930-1950

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines French music-hall cinema from 1930-1950. The term “music-hall cinema” applies to films that contain any or all of the following: music-hall performers, venues, mise en scène, revues, and music-hall songs or repertoire. The cinema industry in France owes a great debt to the music-hall industry, as the first short films near the turn of the century were actually shown as music-hall acts in popular halls. Nonetheless, the ultimate demise of the music hall was in part due to the growing popularity of cinema.

Through close readings of individual films, the dynamics of music-hall films will be related to the relevant historical and cultural notions of the period. The music-hall motif will be examined on its own terms, but also in relation to the context or genre that underlies each particular film. The music-hall motif in films relies overwhelmingly on female performers and relevant feminist film theory of the 1970s will help support the analysis of female performance, exhibition, and relevant questions of spectatorship.

Music-hall cinema is an important motif in French film, and the female performer serves as the prominent foundation in these films. The advent of sound in cinema in France in 1929 opened new doors with regard to

representation of voice, song, music, and spectacle. The music hall was enormously popular in France, but as its glory days diminished in the thirties and forties, music-hall content in French cinema generated nostalgia for by-gone days, and continued a national tradition.

To Steve

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the first scene of Etoiles sans lumière (Blistène 1946) Stella Dora (Mila Parély) watches herself onscreen in her last silent film. She sobs softly as a close-up of her face on screen mesmerizes the spectators. It was a "last" film in more ways than one, since it was also the last silent film ever to be shown in this French theater. The year was 1929, and sound cinema was about to take Paris by storm.

Just after the word "Fin" appears onscreen, the live accompaniment of a piano and violin player falls to silence. The curtain closes, the lights come up, and the theater manager stands before the audience:

> Mesdames et Messieurs, ne partez pas, ne partez pas ! J'ai quelque chose de très important à dire. La direction du cinéma… vous a présenté pour la dernière fois un film muet. A partir de la semaine prochaine…notre établissement vous fera entendre les plus grandes vedettes internationales du film parlant et chantant. Et pour commencer nous vous offrirons Al Jolson dans le célèbre Chanteur de jazz.

Stella Dora is mourning the death of silent cinema for personal reasons. She has been an iconic silent film star, yet she realizes that her brilliant career is

over. She knows that she cannot sing, and therefore will not make the transition from silent to sound cinema.

In 1929, the music hall in Paris had been extremely popular for three decades, and the public longed to see its favorite stars in film, singing familiar ballads as their faces in close-up dwarfed their adoring fans. Music halls like the Alhambra, the Bobino, the Casino de Paris, the Olympia, the Moulin-Rouge, and the Folies Bergère were entering their Golden Age in the twenties, as music halls offered "visions of a wider world that were still at least minimally convincing." Yet music hall also paved the way for the silver screen, as it "had full command of resources that would later go into movies and television" (Rose 94).

Sound cinema also paved the way for authentic theatrical representation on screen, including that of the music hall. Marcel Pagnol (1895-1974), the famous French writer, dramatist, and director, viewed one of the first "films parlants" in 1930 in London. He was fascinated and excited about its possibilities, and he compared theatrical representation to film viewing in Confidences:

> Ces mille personnes ne peuvent pas toutes s'asseoir à la même place par rapport à la scène; les unes siégeront à cinq mètres, d'autres à trente ou quarante mètres; certaines verront les acteurs d'en bas, d'autres d'en haut, les unes seront placées à droite, d'autres à gauche… le cinéma parlant a résolu ce problème; il l'a résolu entièrement et définitivement…Si Charlot a regardé l'objectif, sa photographie regardera bien en face tous ceux qui la verront, qu'ils soit à droite, à gauche, en haut ou en bas… Et voilà le premier miracle de l'appareil de prises de vues. Tout spectateur verra l'image exactement comme l'objectif l'a

> vue, à la même distance et sous le même angle…dans une salle de cinéma, il n'y a pas mille spectateurs, il n'y en a qu'un (Pagnol 204).

Pagnol had seen the advantages of the cinema, and after viewing a sound film, he was even more amazed at the possibilities when compared to live theatrical repertoire. He was extremely eager to discuss his discovery with those in the film industry.

Upon his return to Paris, he approached several film producers, hailing the merits of the new technology. He explained to them that the sound film industry would revolutionize the world of spectacle, and that he wanted to be part of the technological wonder of it all. One producer confided in him in an attempt to curb Pagnol's enthusiasm:

> Vous rendez-vous compte que, si le film parlant devait durer, il nous faudrait tous changer de métier? Nos vedettes ne savent que se taire, nos opérateurs ne parlent pas tous le français, nos meilleurs films nous viennent d'Amérique, de Suède, d'Allemagne. Non, cher ami, non. Le film parlant ne peut pas réussir (Pagnol 209)

Pagnol was stupefied at the producer's negative attitude, and decided to take it upon himself to learn about the film industry and make his own movies. His first film was Marius (1931), a sound film based on the already successful stage version.

Just as theater served as the model for the first silent and sound films, the enormous popularity of the music hall in France provided another possibility for sound film incorporation. This study will treat the incorporation

of the music-hall motif in French cinema from 1930-1950 through close readings of individual films. Readings of these films will be linked to the historical and cultural notions of the period, while drawing upon relevant feminist film criticism from the 1970s.

Femininst film criticism in this study is inspired by the work of Laura Mulvey, whose article “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” proved critical to questions of spectatorship and the representation of women in film in the period of classic film narrative. She posits that the woman is the object of the male gaze and the bearer of the look, and that the male is the active subject of the spectacle who gains pleasure from looking upon the female star. Her now famous idiom describing the woman’s “to-be-looked-at-ness” demonstrates the power of the female character with regard to visual pleasure (Mulvey 425).

The prospect of seeing their favorite music-hall stars immortalized on screen was thrilling, and the French public adored variety theater: “Nearly everyone concerned with filmmaking in France around 1930 was engaged, consciously or not, in reshaping known and popular entertainment forms to the exigencies of the movies” (Dyer, Vincendeau 21). Since cinema and music hall were both popular forms of entertainment in the early twentieth century, they are often treated concurrently in research data, and are sometimes compared with one another in critical and cultural writings of the era.

Before discussing music hall's integration into cinema, a brief history of the music hall will help establish it as an integral part of popular French culture. The music hall was born in London in the nineteenth century, and it developed as a popular form of entertainment for the period from approximately 1890-1939 (Rose 90). The music hall took on its own personality in France, however, and became enormously popular during the Belle Époque period from 1871-1914.

Music hall incorporates a panorama of "variety" performances: from pantomime to acrobats, from eccentrics to magicians, from marionettes to trained seals. Music hall contains elements of the circus, café-concerts, cabarets, burlesque, dance halls, variety theater, night clubs and street performances. René Bizet explains:

> C'est un redoutable exemple de la confusion des arts, dont M. Benjamin Crémieux dit fort bien "qu'elle est la tare principe de notre époque, l'une des conséquences du chaos où nous vivons … que chaque art a ses moyens d'expression et doit emprunter aux autres le moins possible, sous peine de s'abâtardir" (99).

This conundrum is not easily unraveled, and some assumptions must be made: "Music-hall performance is distinguished by its variety; the Edwardian term 'variety theater,' a synonym for the music hall, was devised to emphasize the difference …" (Weiss 84). However, there were many areas of crossover between music hall and theater in the early twentieth century, since theaters were always trying to expand their clientele, and music halls hoped to include more "serious" fare in hopes of climbing higher on the social ladder of the

performing arts. As a result, there were many theaters that included music-hall acts, and many music halls that featured more serious theatrical display. Bizet explains that in spite of the obvious cross-overs, there were still many who felt that the music hall left much to be desired: “Disons, si tu veux bien, que la confusion au Music-hall est pourtant de qualité médiocre et pour un médiocre résultat” (100). Despite the infrequent pejorative comment as to the “variety,” the music hall was treasured, especially for its singers.

The “tour de chant” was a popular part of music-hall repertoire, taking its cue from the earlier “café-concert” era of Montmartre. The “café-concerts” were animated and rowdy entertainment spaces whose roots could be traced back to 1731, when the Café des Aveugles in the basement of the Café Italien at the Palais Royal became popular. These establishments were first located near the city gates of Paris (Conway 2004:29).

Interestingly enough “the types of performances and costumes allowed in the café-concert were quite restricted,” but in 1867, this law was struck down, although originally done to protect the theater industry. Hence, by 1890, the music hall had found its place on the Parisian landscape: “…it was precisely the liberation of the café-concert that encouraged the birth of the music hall by initiating more variety in the kinds of spectacle available” (Conway 2004:33). Increased creativity with regard to mise en scène and imaginative possibilities for costuming gave the music hall the impetus it needed to attract an interested and eager public.

A world of fantasy awaited those who ventured into the realm of music hall in France. For a period of time the music hall and the film industry worked congruently, having elements of "fantasy" in common:

> …bien des constatations faites au cinéma peuvent être contrôlées au Music-hall, parce que tous les deux font voir une autre vie que votre vie. Ils appartiennent à un univers différent de celui qu'on nous montre au théâtre. Ils sont tous les deux beaucoup plus proches parents de la musique. Ils se laissent tous les deux "bien plus aller" (Bizet 180).

When music hall was first incorporated into film, short segments of music-hall "acts" were filmed for later viewing by an audience. This served to perpetuate the spectacle, to immortalize its players, and to show the audiences that the music hall was not resistant to the new technologies. Gustave Fréjaville attests: "C'est donc le music-hall qui doit être considéré comme le berceau du cinéma" (276). Filmed music-hall acts belong to what is called the "cinema of attractions" which:

> … solicits a highly conscious awareness of the film image engaging the viewer's curiosity. The spectator does not get lost in a fictional world and its drama, but remains aware of the act of looking, the excitement of curiosity and its fulfillment (Gunning 825).

This category of cinematic spectacle dates from the first film shorts of the Lumière brothers with the arrival of the train at La Ciotat. The short scene demonstrates metaphorically and realistically the fact that the cinema of attractions rushes forward to meet its viewers (Gunning 825).

This type of cinematic representation also applies to the "chansons filmées" discussed by Kelly Conway, whose study of the French realist singer

was critical to the current study (2004:7). In Chanteuse in the City, she addresses the role that the realist singer played in the representation of Paris. The realist singer thrived in late nineteenth-century Paris in the café-concerts and music halls. She sang of the hardships that were representative of the woman's position in society at the time. With the feminine form of the word for "singer" in French "chanteuse," we are immediately made aware of the fact that these singers were all women: Fréhel, Thérésa, Eugenie Buffet, and Yvette Guilbert, and Damia are examples.

Many of these realist singers went on to appear in music halls and in films, but the film shorts, the "chansons filmées," lacked narration of any type, and were filmed before and after the advent of sound cinema. Most of the "chansons filmées" have been lost and are unavailable for viewing. Eugénie Buffet appeared in the film La joueuse d'orgue directed by Charles Burguet in 1924, and a documentary about Damia was filmed in 1989, one hundred years after her birth. Fréhel appeared in sixteen films from 1931 to 1942, and Pépé le Moko (Duvivier 1937) and Coeur de Lilas (Litvak 1931) are two of her films that will be treated in this study.

The famous music-hall singer, Florelle, performs a realist song in the film Le crime de Monsieur Lange, which will be treated in Chapter Four, although Florelle did not fit the realist singer profile. Florelle was known as a "meneuse de revue" on large music-hall stages in Paris, wearing glitzy costumes and headlining elaborately staged performances. In Crime,

however, she sings a song of everyday life as a common worker while seated at the dinner table, and she sings to an audience of one, Lange. Her classification as a realist singer is therefore questioned, even though she may sing a realist ballad.

Music hall and cinema co-existed for a period of time, and the cinema did not at first seem to be a great threat to the other forms of popular entertainment. In fact, "Paris nearly doubled its number of cinemas from 1928 to 1935 …, a stable bourgeois clientele allowed the boulevard theatres and the remaining music halls to function at full capacity right up to the war" (Dyer, Vincendeau 21). Therefore, for a period of approximately 7-10 years, the existence of music hall and cinema did not pose a problem to either industry.

Many of the popular music halls in France were finally converted into (exclusively) cinema halls throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s:

> In late 1929 the Olympia, Paris's first music hall back in the 1890's, was converted to a cinema. In May 1930 Fréjavillle reported that another great "music-hall de variété" called the Empire, was threatened by the disturbing invasion of the talking cinema, and in 1931 it became one … so did the Moulin Rouge in May 1930 (Rearick 119).

Filmed shorts of music-hall "acts" would soon evolve into longer-length films with narrative structures that told stories, created dramas, and lead to classic resolutions of those dramas at the film's end.

When narrative cinema begins to involve the "unacknowledged voyeur" (Gunning 826), a concept that resists direct engagement with the spectator, the exhibitionist quality of the "cinema of attractions" is combined with

narrative development and an interesting phenomenon occurs. For example, when a female music-hall singer performs a song in a diegetic music-hall setting, narrative time seems to be suspended for a short period. This break in the narrative flow adds to the effect and the affect of the total film experience. In this study, the most significant of these occurrences will be called "spectaculacts." This term will be used to distinguish between the narrative action, and any music-hall "act" that is integrated into the narrative flow. Tom Gunning agrees that these moments of direct performance oddly interrupt the action:

> The cinema of attractions persists in later cinema, even if it rarely dominates the form of the feature film as a whole. It provides the underground current flowing beneath narrative logic and diegetic realism, producing those moments of cinematic *dépaysement* …(826-7).

Laura Mulvey concurs with Gunning that these moments are interruptive, especially where the female performer is involved: "For a moment the sexual impact of the performing woman takes the film into a no man's land outside its own time and space (1975:426). The marriage of the film narrative with music-hall performance lends itself to many interpretations relative to the narrative flow. These interpretations will provide the basis for analysis in this study, keeping in mind that the type of music-hall film is dependent upon the degree of music-hall incorporation in each film.

Music-hall incorporation into films of the period under study and beyond finds its momentum in the cultural and historical notions of popular

entertainment as diversion; yet economic and international pressures soon impacted both music hall and cinema:

> The years from the crash of 1929 to Hitler's takeover in Germany in 1933 brought new threats to France and a special set of difficulties to French show business. The luxurious music halls began to falter, and foreign sound movies made successful forays in France, even before the nation's political and economic fortunes deteriorated. When the national economic decline became more widespread, the music hall and French cinema went into crisis (Rearick 126).

International economic crisis forced the people of 1930s France to face many disquieting events. The Depression loomed worldwide and the threat of war was ever-present. Escapism through entertainment was exploited in every venue. Among these venues were the music hall, the cinema, the theatre, and the circus. Charles Rearick explains: "It is not difficult to understand why producers and audiences took interest in those escapist themes during the decade of the Depression, growing Nazi power in Europe, and nightmares of war" (155).

Despite the threat of war and economic hardship, the cinema industry was able to bounce back, but music hall could not survive the economic blow. The cinema became more popular than music hall because of the new technological advancements in the industry. Therefore, incorporation of music-hall content into film after the advent of sound cinema in 1929 was a natural consequence.

In French music-hall films between the years 1930 and 1950, the music-hall material that is most commonly gleaned from the music-hall venue

is a female singer or a female performer. The use of male music-hall performers in these films is infrequent, but will be discussed as it relates to the female music-hall performer's presence onscreen. Many of the female performers came straight from the music-hall stage: Mistinguett, Josephine Baker, Fréhel, Florelle, Damia, Germaine Lix, Arletty and Edith Piaf are several that will be discussed here.

The films to be treated in this study come from many different film genres. For example, Le dernier des six (Lacombe 1941) and Quai des Orfèvres, (Buss 1947) belong to the crime thriller genre. Le jour se lève and Le crime de Monsieur Lange are poetic realist classics. Pépé le Moko is a poetic realist film also categorized as a colonial film, and Princesse Tam Tam can be considered a colonial film, as well as a musical (O'Brien 207).

Since music hall generally includes music, one might assume that music-hall films are also musicals. Surprisingly, this is not usually the case. In the film Le crime de Monsieur Lange, Florelle sings to Lange in his apartment. This is the only song in the film, except for a celebration scene where the concierge (and friends) sing a Christmas song in a state of inebriation and frivolity. This film cannot be categorizefd as a musical. Le dernier des six contains extensive music-hall numbers, but few involve singing, so any categorization of this film as a musical would also be inaccurate. Suzy Delair, in the role of the outspoken Mila Malou, confirms this fact in the dialogue as

she comments about the film's music-hall spectacle: "C'est pas mal, mais ça manque de chanteuse."

Since most of the salient performances in these music-hall films involve female performers or singers, relevant sources in twentieth century feminist film criticism will help elucidate the importance of these female performers, and will highlight voyeuristic notions relative to spectatorship and the traditional role of the female star in cinema history. This approach takes into consideration certain psychoanalytical principles regarding fetishism established by Sigmund Freud and developed by such authors as Laura Mulvey and Sandra Flitterman-Lewis.

Mulvey explains: "Woman displayed as sexual object is the leitmotif of erotic spectacle; from pin-ups to strip-tease, from Ziegleld to Busby Berkeley, she holds the look, and plays to and signifies male desire" and Flitterman-Lewis, when discussing the poetic realist films of 1930s France, finds that "Always the sexual center, a figure of erotic force, the woman and her function are continually and irrevocably defined in masculine terms" (1996:185). Defining her role in masculine terms also extends to the film directors, almost all male, with the exclusion of Solange Bussi in the thirties and Jacqueline Audry in the 1950's.

No study of French music-hall cinema would be complete without considering sociological factors impacting popular culture in France from roughly 1880-1945. Women in 1930s France typically stayed at home and

bore children while occupying a secondary role to that of their spouses. John W. Martin likens the status of women in the two films Avec le sourire (Tourneur 1936) and Abus de confiance (Decoin 1938) with the position of women in the society of the era: "Their position (women) is basically subservient, vulnerable, and dependent on men" (95), thus one can see how:

> The music hall – with its frequent tours, arduous rehearsals, unpredictable conditions and late-night shows – was a good teacher for a woman searching out independence. It provided one of the few venues at the time where a woman could earn her own living with her body that was not outright prostitution (Bentley 185).

This notion is reflected in Colette's novel La vagabonde (1910) that became a film directed by Solange Bussi in 1931, and will be discussed in Chapter Three.

The twenty-year period from 1930-1950 is by no means representative of *all* the music-hall content films in French cinema history. However, this two-decade sampling does contain the majority of the salient films. There are several films about the famous Moulin Rouge that would certainly contribute to this study, but unfortunately none of the French productions are available for viewing today. There are many other French films that incorporate music-hall themes and content that were released during and outside the study period, and some of these will be used briefly for comparison. In order of release date, they include: La valse renversante (1914), Nana (Renoir 1926), La sirène des tropiques (Nalpas and Etiévant 1927), Moulin Rouge (Hugon 1940), Moulin Rouge (Mirande 1941), Ah! Les belles bacchantes (Loubignac 1954),

French cancan (Renoir 1955), Mitsou (Audry 1956) and Moulin Rouge! (Luhrmann 2001).

The film Les enfants de paradis (Carné 1945) is one of most highly acclaimed French productions in film history. It is also mentioned in this study for comparison, but it will not be addressed directly as a music-hall film. This film is actually categorized as "boulevard theater" by most critics (Forbes 42). Boulevard theatre was popular in the early nineteenth century, but it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what period and type of theater is represented in this film due to several anachronisms in the film's content. Jean-Pierre Jeancolas sees this "décalage" as deliberate:

> The realists of 1939, as embodied by Carné and Prévert, were the architect and builders of a fictional universe, which they synchronized with the times, with real life. But they were better equipped than others to transpose their work into a temporal "elsewhere," when the constraints of the Occupation required them to do so (118).

Since boulevard theater in Paris had vanished long before the music halls became popular, it would not be relevant to include this film, although it presents fascinating content for future studies in boulevard theater performance and Occupation cinema as it was represented in France.

Four chapters follow this brief introduction to music-hall cinema. Each chapter treats a different category of music-hall films, and the themes vary from music-hall cameo performance in film, to colonial films, to films created specifically about music hall, to crime thrillers with music-hall content. In

addition, Chapter Two highlights films by two iconic music-hall stars on the Parisian landscape: Mistinguett and Josephine Baker.

Mistinguett and Baker captivated Paris with their trademark performance styles and their steadfast resilience. Mistinguett's last film, Rigolboche (Jaque 1936), tells the story of a relatively unknown performer's rise to stardom in the music hall. Lina Bourget (Mistinguett) triumphs in the film by becoming the owner of her own music hall, where she performs in grand revue style before awestruck spectators. The "Grande Revue" is a type of music-hall performance involving luxurious costumes, choreographed dancers, elaborate staging and extravagant decor.

Baker is well known for two colonial films, Zouzou (Allégret 1934) and Princesse Tam Tam (Gréville 1935). In both films she plays the part of an exotic music-hall entertainer who finds fame in Paris and performs in "grande revue" style, but she can never completely integrate into the world of her Parisian audience. She is discrimated against for her color, objectified as a sex object, and exoticised as the "Other" in French culture in these colonial films. Stereotypical notions of exotic cultures and their primitivism often result in Baker's exploitation as a black performer in need of instruction in proper behavior and societal etiquette.

One of the most fascinating and mysterious realms of any theatrical venue is its back-stage activity. It can also be rather repugnant. René Bizet explains:

> Il y a tout un réseau souterrain de salles, dans les Music-halls, qui est ce qu'on a trouvé de mieux pour distribuer largement les pneumonies aux figurations harassées. Il y a des boyaux, dans certains autres, où tassent vingt femmes dans de véritables cabines de bain qui sont aussi des étuves (52).

The spectator is seldom privy to the workings and "scandals" behind the stage and in the dressing rooms of the stars, but there are several French films incorporating music hall that allow us to glimpse this forbidden territory. These films include: Chacun sa chance (Steinhoff, Pujol 1930), Paris-Béguin (Génina 1931), La vagabonde (Bussi 1931), Divine (Ophuls 1935), Le bonheur (L'Herbier 1935) and Romance de Paris (Boyer 1941).

Chapter Three will concentrate on the back-stage realm of music-hall cinema, while linking on-stage performance to what is happening back-stage. The performances themselves may sometimes be metaphors for the narration and character relationships in these films. For example, in the film Divine, the young, beautiful, and naive Ludovine, is seduced by a Fakir in an onstage performance while a serpent climbs her body. This performance actually mirrors the situation back-stage on many levels. We will also meet a very young Jean Gabin in Chacun sa chance, and witness the song and performance skills that he developed earlier in his career in the music hall. This film features Gabin in a extensive production number, which mirrors those of Astaire and Rogers on the Hollywood screen.

Chapter Four will treat "music-hall cameo films." The films include: Faubourg Montmartre (Bernard 1931), Coeur de Lilas (Litvak 1932), La

garçonne (Limur 1936), Le crime de Monsieur Lange (Renoir 1936), La grande illusion (Renoir 1937), Pépé le Moko (Duvivier 1937), La bête humaine (Renoir 1938), Le jour se lève (Carné 1939) and Etoiles sans lumière (Blistène 1946). These nine films highlight specific but infrequent music-hall venue scenes. These scenes may also reflect allegorically upon events in the narration.

The film Le jour se lève provides an outstanding example of the relationship between the narrative and the diegetic spectacle. This film, starring Jean Gabin as François, features a rather extensive music-hall scene where, among other acts, feminized dogs perform tricks to the crack of their master Valentin's (Jules Berry) whip. The dogs provide a metaphor for the women in Valentin's life that he dominates through brute force and shrewd deception.

Pépé le Moko is an example of a colonial film from this group. It is staged in the exotic Kasbah, where nostalgia for Paris is evoked through the realist song of Fréhel (1891-1951), a famous but then outdated "chanteuse" of the music-hall era. Pépé (Jean Gabin) actually sings a cheerful song about love in this film, with the backdrop as that of the Kasbah and its close-knit community

La grande illusion represents one of the exceptions to the rule regarding female music-hall performers. In this film, prisoners of war don female costumes (pseudo female singers) and perform a music-hall song and dance act "in drag" before the German officers who hold them captive. There

are no true female music-hall performers in this film, but since the prisoners are disguised as women, the gender dynamics are quite unanticipated. Upon seeing one of their fellow prisoners in drag, the others are awestruck by the startling illusion of a woman in their presence.

La bête humaine is another exception to the rule concerning female performers. Here we find cameo music (dance) hall inclusion in the form of a male singer, Marcel Veyran, performing the song "Chanson de Ninon" on stage at a railroad worker's "bal." This song actually provides the peculiar choice of background music for the murder of Sévérine Roubaud (Simone Simon) at the hand of Jacques Lantier (Jean Gabin). Muriel Joubert explains that: "Les événements s'enchaînent dans un rythme qui s'accélère et un temps qui se contracte, aux sons de la 'chanson de Ninon' qui accentue le caractère dramatique du montage alterné" (Joubert 9). This scene is a one-of-a-kind juxtaposition of murder and levity to the tune of a light-hearted and upbeat love song, and even though the singer is male, his song serves as a backdrop for the climactic scene of the murder of the femme fatale, Sévérine.

Chapter Five will concentrate on three music-hall films from the crime thriller genre in French cinema. These include: Le dernier des six (Lacombe 1941), L'assassin habite au 21 (Clouzot 1942) and Quai des Orfèvres (Clouzot 1947). The earliest of these three, Le dernier des six, is particularly interesting in that it uses special cinematic effects during the grand revue performance to, for example, place a dancer in a champagne glass, shoot the glass out from

under her and make her disappear. These special effects, only made possible through the magic of cinematography, are of course very different from the live music-hall performances on stage before an audience.

Le dernier des six and L'assassin habite au 21 feature the famous duo of Mila Malou (Suzy Delair) and Inspector Wens (Pierre Fresnay), who are both on the trail of the murderers. Mila plays an aspiring music-hall singer in both films, and the cool demeanor of her lover, Wens, balances her often-comical disposition. Likewise, the dark and shadowy setting of much of the film is counterbalanced by the lightness and spectacle of the music-hall performances.

The attraction of French music-hall cinema warrants careful reflection**.** As we will see in this study**,** the women in music-hall films may range from wealthy stars with iconic societal status to prostitutes who struggle to make ends meet. Black music-hall performers like Baker are often objectified through stereotypical notions of racial inequality, combined with primitivist and exoticist mindsets in early twentieth-century France. Stars like Mila Malou provide amusing repartee and evidence of resourcefulness and courage that was not always typical of female representation in classic French cinema.

Over the past few years, audiences around the world have been re-introduced to the world of Parisian music hall. The recent resurgence of interest in the nostalgia and atmosphere of the music-hall period is the result of the American release in 2001 of Baz Luhrmann's Moulin Rouge!

Luhrmann's now famous rendition draws upon well known Moulin Rouge realia and geography, such as the enormous stucco elephant and the symbol of the brilliantly lighted "moulin" at the entrance to the theater. This film's inventive staging of non-traditional and often fragmented cinematic montage, combined with its resplendent use of musical anachronisms, can be said to typify the "variety". Variety is certainly the rule as we begin this study of music hall cinema of the 1930s and 1940s in France.

René Bizet compared the music hall and the cinema in 1927 in L'Époque du Music-Hall, and he believed strongly that both forms of entertainment would serve to liberate the public from archaic notions of the limited importance of both venues:

> Le Music-Hall et le cinéma ont détruit bien des préjugés … Je ne suis pas à ce point prophète que je puisse prédire ce que sera la Revue dans vingt ans, ni le film. Mais je suis sûr qu'ils ont et qu'ils auront brisé de longues chaînes que retenaient prisonnière l'intelligence du public et qu'ils auront donné le goût de cette liberté. C'est un grand résultat (Bizet 109).

The marriage of music hall and cinema creates a fascinating and Intriguing bond. Nowhere in the history of French cinema is there a comparable mix of diegetic spectacle and dynamic content.

CHAPTER 2

FROM STAGE TO SCREEN: MISTINGUETT AND JOSEPHINE

Mistinguett and Josephine Baker were both icons of French music hall whose careers overlapped. We look at them together in this study because of their enormous popularity, and because their films highlight the world of music hall that they both loved so dearly. Many historical documents pair Mistinguett and Baker together in the descriptions of popular culture in France in the early twentieth century. Mistinguett and Baker both went on to star in films with music hall as their primary motif. They were known for their versatility as stage performers as they sang and danced their way to stardom. Mistinguett's career spans over fifty years from the early 1900's to 1955, and Baker would reign upon that stage for fifty years, as well. (Papich 59).

In 1906 Mistinguett sang a nonsensical melody "La petite Tonkinoise," the story of a beautiful, exotic maiden named Tonkiki. That same year in St. Louis, Missouri, Freda McDonald (Josephine Baker) was born. Her father, Eddie Carson, was a musician who abandoned his family before Josephine was one year old. Baker began performing at the age of thirteen, and was

appearing at the Broadway nightclub, the Plantation, in 1924. In 1930, the young African-American singer and dancer sang the same song in Paris that Mistinguett had sung the year Josephine was born. In the original version for a *male* singer, created in 1906 by Georges Villard and Vincent Scotto, the lyrics begin:

> Elle est vive, elle est charmante
> C'est comme un p'tit oiseau qui chante (paroles 1).

The adaptation of the lyrics for a female singer changes the "Elle" to "Je" and as they sing, Mistinguett and Josephine each take on the personality of the exotic maiden who dreams of her homeland far, far away.

Baker exemplifies the exotic maiden in this song much better than Mistinguett could have ever hoped to do. Although she was American by birth, Josephine gave French culture the personification of the exotic, the mysterious and all things *Other* than French. Rearick comments: "She was a modern yet also a primitive, an exotic flourishing in a European hot house, competing well even with 'Miss'" (81). Exoticism was not a convincing costume for Mistinguett to wear, however. She came from the streets of Paris, and the people there knew and loved her as one of their own. Rearick continues: "In the day of the postwar Music Hall, Mistinguett personified the bustling, cosmopolitan Paris that exuberantly lived the present" (75) and "Even though she often celebrated the chic Paris and performed exclusively in music halls that epitomized luxury … , she also sang about the lives of the 'little people' of the streets and the faubourgs of Paris" (73)

How did Mistinguett acquire her unusual name? She often rode the train to Paris for voice and violin lessons when she was a teenager. Local schoolboys in the train nicknamed her "Miss Helyett," for the title role in an operetta of the period. One day en route she met Saint-Marcel, a revue-writer from Paris, and he sang her nickname to the tune of his recently released song "La Vertinguette." He sang:

> C'est la Tin-tin-guette
> C'est la Miss Helyett
> C'est la Miss-tin-tin
> C'est la Miss Tinguette…

Saint-Marcel suddenly realized that this would be the perfect name for her if she ever went on stage. And that is exactly what she began to call herself (Castle 133).

Josephine Baker traveled to Paris in 1925, hoping to find a culture that accepted her and her color, which is not what she found in her own country. She felt that there was no sense having a Statue of Liberty as a symbol, if the "liberty" was not for everyone to share (Baker 1949:42). Her arrival in Paris meant stiff competition for Mistinguett on the Paris music-hall scene. Mistinguett was recording her famous "Ça! C'est Paris" in 1925 when Baker arrived. Paris is a blond woman in this song, and the dark-skinned Baker embodied the antithesis of the city's image. Her success would be just as great as Mistinguett's, however, since the Paris audience was primed for an exotic beauty. For her extremely successful debut, *La Revue nègre* at the Folies Bergère, she wore "twenty bananas on a string, with a few more around

each ankle and each wrist … It cost less than five francs in all, and it became the sensation of Paris" (Papich 55).

The artist Paul Colin celebrates this costume in a famous poster, and this image helped propel Baker to stardom. This famous image of Baker, and the trademark dance moves associated with it, is used in the film Les triplettes de Belleville (Sylvain Chomet 2003), an animated film about three bygone music-hall stars, "les triplettes," who help a young Tour de France contestant win the race. Near the beginning of the film, nostalgia for the music hall is evoked and an animated caricature of Baker is shown dancing to a fast-paced tune. This citation of Baker in a recent film is evidence of her enduring image in French culture.

Josephine Baker made only six French films in her career. In 1927 she starred in her first film La sirène des tropiques (Nalpas, Etiévant), and in 1934 and 1935 respectively, her two most famous French films were released: Zouzou (Allégret) and Princesse Tam Tam (Gréville). All three of these films specifically treat the music hall. Zouzou and Princesse Tam Tam both evidence the exotic nature of Baker's stage and screen image, in addition to her embodiment of the Other, which will be discussed further on in this chapter.

Baker also made two films entitled Moulin Rouge. André Hugon directed the first in 1940, and Yves Mirande directed the second in 1941. These are unfortunately not available today, but her role in both Moulin Rouge

films was that of Princess Tam Tam. This is an interesting fact since in her earlier film, Princesse Tam Tam, she is called Alwina, not Tam Tam. In her last French film, Fausse alerte (Jacques de Baroncelli 1945), Baker is Zazou Clairon, a cabaret owner who plays matchmaker for two young lovers, Claire Ancelot (Micheline Presle) and Bernard Dalban (Georges Marchal).

Mistinguett, on the other hand, made 47 films between 1908 and 1936. Two very short dance numbers were also filmed: La valse chaloupée (1909), a swaying or rolling waltz, and La valse renversante (1914) that she danced with Maurice Chevalier. Both short dance clips are prized today as very rare footage. Mistinguett and Max Dearly performed "la valse chaloupée" at the Moulin Rouge in 1909 (Rearick 107). A clip from this film short is available for viewing at the Inathèque in Paris, and demonstrates the apache style of dancing so popular in the era. It became a standard on the music-hall stage (Rearick 107). The Apache represented a bohemian character, often a pimp, who brutally mistreats his lover. The woman is often portrayed as a prostitute, and the Apache literally drags and torments her throughout the dance (eijkhuot 1). Mistinguett's slender body is tossed about like a rag doll in this intriguing short film.

From 1917 to 1935 Mistinguett made only one other film, L'île d'amour (Dagmar 1928). The last release of a French film starring Mistinguett was Rigolboche (Christian-Jacque 1936), a semi-autobiographic tale that is the only French "film sonore" of her career (Pénet 756). Therefore, even though

Mistinguett appeared in 27 silent films, she resisted participating in sound cinema, as she hoped to remain faithful to traditional live performance music hall. Dudley Andrew finds that Mistinguett may have seen her role in the film Rigolboche as "a last-ditch tactic in a war that her side was clearly losing," and he goes on to say that she might very well have hoped to "… rise from this film to seize the spectators in the cinema through her alluring performance and hope to draw them to defect to live entertainment thereafter" (1992:22). Dyer and Vincendeau concur. They believe that by starring in a film about music hall, she was hoping to bring the spectators back to the live music-hall venue in its waning years, and this coincides with the fact that "For her sound film première Mistinguett demanded a script in which cinema is made to show off the particular possibilities of music-hall" (19). However, as Josephine Baker was gaining much popularity in Paris and threatening Mistinguett's premier star position, she may have consented to make Rigolboche as a result of her jealously for Baker, who had already found success with Zouzou and Princesse Tam Tam (Conway 2004:76).

It is obvious that Baker's two most famous music-hall films are named for her characters in them. Rigolboche is also titled after its main protagonist. In the ABU Bibliothèque nationale online dictionary of eccentricities, the word "Rigolboche" is defined as: "amusant, drôle --- diminutive de rigollot" and the verb "rigolbocher" means: "Cancaner à la façon de Rigolboche" (Larchey 1). It

can also refer to a female performer who “clowns around” before an audience, usually singing silly ditties and telling jokes.

Mistinguett was not the first singer to embrace this pseudonym. The woman referred to as Rigolboche in the definition above was Marquerite Rigolboche, a dancer and contortionist in the mid-1800s in France. She went on in 1861 to publish her “Intéressantes mémoires de cette danseuse qui fut sous le second empire un personnage incontournable du monde des théâtres et des spectacles parisiens, en y dansant notamment le célèbre cancan” (SARL 1). The music-hall star, Thérésa, who starred at the Eldorado and the Alcasar café-concerts in the 1860’s, was also called “La Rigolboche de la chansonnette” when “Un soir de Noël, elle interprète à la blague une bluette populaire : ‘Fleur des Alpes’” (Nagram 1)

It was not easy for Mistinguett to play the role of the “débutante de Paris” in Rigolboche, since she was 61 at the time. But as Pénet remarks: “Elle en paraît dix de moins” (692). This may be true, but it is still quite difficult to find her believable as a young girl. She does look remarkably young, but even though she is a bundle of energy and wit, her sixty-one years have begun to show on her face, and this is even more apparent in the close-up shots.

The setting for the beginning of Rigolboche is Dakar, and we first see Lina Bourget (Mistinguett) from the back in a medium long shot as she sits at a table with a young man. It is not until she stands and turns toward the camera

that we see her face in close-up. It is an extremely staged shot, obviously meant to cameo the already famous star in one of her trademark head poses with her face turned slightly to the right. It is as if she is very aware of the camera's presence.

Lina is a dance-hall hostess in Dakar, and dreams of one day returning to Paris to star in a music hall. Kelly Conway describes the plot of Rigolboche as "a rather delirious potpourri of noir, melodrama, French boulevard theater, and the backstage musical" (2004:76). One might add that the potpourri creates quite a whirlwind of events whose connection to one another seems rather fragmented. There is certainly no time for character development since the main goal of the film seems to be showcasing Mistinguett performing song and dance on screen, as she does in the music hall. The plot line of Rigolboche is secondary to the filmed music-hall performances in the film.

Through a series of amusing and ridiculous events, Lina believes she has killed a man in Dakar and escapes to Paris. She then visits her young son, who does not even know she is his mother. Critics often cite this scene as the most touching in the film, since Lina sings her son a lullaby, "Au fond de tes yeux," while sitting at his bedside. We barely see the child for more than a few seconds, however, as the camera favors Lina in each carefully posed shot. She is singing to her son, but we see her alone in most of the medium or close-up shots. At times she even looks off into the distance while singing, instead of looking at her son, or even in the direction of her son in bed. When

Lina hugs him as she prepares to leave, his face and body hide none of her face. Her face represents the selling point of the whole film. It is apparent that intimacy and believability were sacrificed in this scene for Mistinguett's benefit.

Through a series of events involving "mistaken identity, ruses in the casino, and bribery attempts," as well as a very generous Count, Lina becomes the owner of her own music hall, the Théâtre Rigolboche (Conway 2004:76). Dyer and Vincendeau explain: "…the film tells its rags-to-riches tale on more than one level, building a myth … of the music-hall itself" (17). The name of the theater rolls across the screen in lights several times with the special effect meant to preface numerous rehearsal scenes at the hall before the final opening night performance, sure to be a success. Mistinguett is quite at home during the rehearsals as the new owner of the theater, despite the fact that she was a mere waitress and dancer in Dakar. These rehearsal scenes highlight numerous kick line acts, young boys tap dancing, jazz dancers, and Loïe Fuller dancers.

The Loïe Fuller troupe, named after their creator, presented a series of music-hall dance acts that were both unique and spellbinding. The Lumière brothers filmed Fuller's famous dance, The Serpentine, in 1896. Ms. Fuller used yards of specially treated silk fabrics that were made into billowy costumes for her female performers. The dances consisted of twirling, improvisational movements meant to highlight the flow, color, depth and

shadows of the fabric. Often the costumes appear to engulf the dancers with silk, but the effect is particularly beautiful to watch. Ms. Fuller used her own innovative stage lighting techniques to emphasize the colors of the treated silk, and these techniques were later adapted for use in the cinema. Loïe Fuller dancers also appear in Ah! Les belles bacchantes (Loubignac 1954), and Fuller directed her own film, Le lys de la vie in 1920, which also featured René Clair.

As we gaze at the beautiful costumes of the dancers, Monsieur Bobby is constantly gazing at Lina. The male gaze is quite prevalent throughout the film, but one scene is particularly interesting. A man is gazing at Lina through binoculars, and we see the dark outline of the two round lenses and her face in close-up from his point of view. She is unaware of the voyeur, and yet she seems to pose for his benefit. The halo of the two lenses provides a perfect circular frame to feature her face, and reminds one of the close-up poster created for the film. There are dozens of close-ups of Mistinguett in this film, and nearly all of them show her in a head shot with the camera slightly on the left. She often has her right hand at her chin, and her eyes sparkle as she smiles widely for these shots.

The believability in the world of the film has been sacrificed for Mistinguett's "to-be-looked-at-ness." It reminds one of seeing movie stars who suddenly notice the paparazzi approaching, and quickly arrange themselves to their best side, while for just an instant putting on their most flattering smile.

The film resembles a series of music-hall poster images, where each poster's crowning glory is Mistinguett. The action between the "posters" is disjointed, at best.

At the beginning of the grand finale of the film, we see for the first time a single row of 25 boys and 25 girls in brilliant costumes with their backs to Mistinguett, who seems to be floating on a long, curved stairway. This "spectaculact" is reminiscent of a quote from Edouard Beaudu who wrote extensively about the music hall: "A cette époque, La Miss, parmi les paillettes et les fanfreluches avec ses cheveux de blonde, envoyait à la foule des refrains gouailleurs" (203). Mistinguett's large toothy smile was her trademark, along with her legs and her raucous voice:

> La Miss ! Le music-hall de revues lui doit beaucoup. On a blagué sa voix, ses jambes, ses dents, mais ce que l'on ne peut prendre à la blague c'est la volonté, le travail de cette femme qui réussit à imposer de grands spectacles de revues et à conquérir le monde par ses goualantes, son bagout et son sens prodigieux de la scène (Beaudu 206).

For the final number Mistinguett sings "Je suis de Paris," and performs a short ballet in a long, flowing skirt with a handsome, young dancer. Her dancing and singing ability are not remarkable. Paul Derval comments in general that "Elle n'était ni parfaitement belle, ni très bonne chanteuse, ni très bonne danseuse, …" (Nagram 3), but the dramatic movement of her skirt as the dancer spins her around the floor adds a fabulous costume effect to the performance, and echoes that of the Fuller dancers seen earlier.

Near the end of the film, after the grand revue, we see the delighted and energized audience in medium to long shots. They applaud loudly and continuously send “bravos” to the star. Nearly all the men in the theater audience are in tuxedos, and the women are very well dressed and accessorized. The audience’s gaze is collective, yet during the revue we do not see the reaction of the audience at all. Not one moment of Mistinguett’s act is interrupted to show audience viewpoint or approval. The focus of the scene is her entire performance from start to finish, and any shots of the diegetic audience during the act would have detracted from her screen presence.

The film ends with Lina smiling widely and her eyes sparklle as she sees her own poster with her name “Rigolboche” displayed across the canvas. She has turned down a proposal of marriage from the Count, as she wants to dedicate herself completely to her music hall. We hear finale music as she rides by car to the Arc de Triomphe on a bustling Parisian day. The high-angle long shot of the arch with the car approaching establishes the final image of Mistinguett’s bond with the city of Paris. Charles Rearick concurs that Mistinguett (and Chevalier) “… served as collective representation, defining Frenchness for many” (Rearick viii). Despite her imperfections of performance: “Elle réunit dans le même rythme la scène et la salle” (Bizet 144). Chevalier and Mistinguett were lovers for a period of time, and Mistinguett was devastated when their relationship broke off in the early

twenties. Chevalier was another French music-hall icon, but he left for Hollywood in 1928, where he went on to make over 30 successful films.

Had Mistinguett realized that the "golden age of the music hall" had come to an end (Castle 197), and that she had no choice but to make this film? After all:

> … she could hardly avoid certain facts: just a year earlier she concluded her sumptuous return to the Folies-Bergère in a revue that was hailed as remarkable, given her age, but no longer magical. She had also watched the conversion of one music-hall after another into a movie palace. And in a telling reversal of the usual pattern, her newest partner, Fernandel, had gained his fame on the screen before moving to the Folies-Bergère. Even her greatest rival for popularity, Josephine Baker, was expanding her name and her wealth through the cinema with Zouzou (1934) and Princesse Tam Tam (1935) (Andrew 1992:22).

Mistinguett's decision to make Rigolboche may have involved many factors, but the film succeeded in capturing her essence for eternity, and in linking her extensive and extraordinary music-hall career to modern cinematic representation. Baker, as we will now see, was able to do the same.

When Baker came to France in 1924, she was nearly penniless. Edouard Beaudu describes her upon her arrival:

> Je l'ai vue débarquer à Paris gamine, avec un petit chapeau à cerises sur le côté du crane, se laissant mener, parmi une troupe de fantaisistes, par Douglas, un danseur noir de talent, qui devait créer une étourdissante revue nègre et lancer ainsi une nouvelle vedette, aux sons des premiers jazz.…" (214).

She had been dancing in the U.S. with the group "The Chocolate Dandies" for one year. When they traveled to Paris, they auditioned at the Théâtre des Champs Elysées, which had just recently become a music hall.

Fernand Léger was a good friend of the director of the theater, André Daven. He convinced Daven that he should present a revue with only black performers. He had just seen the "Exposition d'art nègre au Musée des Arts Décoratifs," and was very impressed (Labiausse 1).

The group was hired and began performing immediately. One day, Henri Varna of the Folies Bergère decided to check out the act at the Théâtre, even though a friend counseled him against it, qas he had found the noise of the tap shoes horrendous. Baker stood on the end in the rehearsal of a tap dance. She appeared thin, but she had something the others did not. The way she moved was unique. When it appeared that the tap dancing was not impressing Varna, Baker took off her tap shoes and began doing the hula, just as she was taught back in the U.S., but with her own unmistakable and innovative style. Varna was impressed by "the little one on the end of the line" (Papich 52).

He approached her and asked her to come for an audition the next day, but Baker had never heard of the Folies Bergère, so she was not aware of what an opportunity this was. Varna's instincts were correct, and Baker soon began rehearsing for La revue nègre. Constance Edwards explains that, "Paris was ready for something exciting and new, untamed and carefree" and Josephine Baker embodied "primitivism" (Edwards 26-7). Baker had arrived in Paris at a time when anything associated with black culture was in vogue

including primitive art, jazz and African dance. Baker had never even been to Africa, but that did not matter in the Paris of the 1920s. (Schroeder 49).

It was Josephine Baker, the young American laundress from St. Louis, who "was the first star of the Paris music-hall to dance, sing, *and* appear nude" (Edwards 25). Throughout her entire career, Mistinguett never appeared nude in any of her acts. Baker did not, however, take off her clothes without a fight. Phyllis Rose explains:

> Josephine Baker at first refused to dance bare-breasted in the "Danse Sauvage," threatening to leave the show and go home. She was not a striptease dancer, and as an American, she was unaccustomed to the French acceptance of female nudity above the waist… Yet, once she got used to the idea it took her a long time to put her clothes back on (Rose 6).

Baker's performance at the Folies Bergère was pivotal. Varna had invited the famous people of Paris, and they were all talking of Baker the next day:

> Playing the role of Fatou, an African native, she slid down a painted tree and, leaping to the stage … she danced her way into theatrical history. Her banana-clad performance fascinated everyone, and critics exhausted their vocabulary trying to define her hypnotic appeal: She was the Black Pearl, the Creole Goddess, "the panther with the golden claws" (Schroeder 49).

Baker made her first film, <u>La sirène de tropiques</u>, in 1927, two years after her début at the Folies Bergère. The director, Mario Nalpas, had as his assistant the young Louis Buñuel. Footage of this obscure film will become available for viewing in June 2005. The film features a Cinderella story about an innocent girl from the tropics who goes to Paris "where she dances and is transformed into an elegant woman by beautiful clothes" (Rose 120). The film

was not received well by the public, and Baker commented later that she was humiliated and depressed by her own overacting and exaggerated movements in the film. The stereotypical metaphors in this film relating to the superiority of the white race and its money are quite apparent, and at one point in the narration, Baker actually falls into a flour bin and turns white.

But Baker did not give up with the first film's failure. She applies white powder again to her chocolate brown face (as a child playing with make-up) in her next film. Zouzou is yet another Cinderella story. In this film, Baker stars as the bi-racial "sister" of Jean (Gabin) who dances and sings her way to the grand revue. This film and the period it represents "raised questions of national identity in an era of growing xenophobia" (Ezra 115). Zouzou is from Martinique, which was a French colony at the time, and the colonization of Africa and the Caribbean awakened the curiosity, as well as the apprehension of the white French for this stranger in its society.

Exploitation of the colonials as the Other was a societal mindset: "In the seventeenth century, the black woman emerged in French travelogues where she was frequently described in terms of her unbridled sexuality, insatiable lust, and lax (or nonexistent) morals" (Kalinak 319-20), and also "The Colonial Exhibits in the Exposition Universelle of 1889 had inspired myths of exotic fascination, sexual paradises, and primitive utopias (Brooks 331). For example, Paul Gaughin's painting, Te Nave Nave Fenua (Delightful Land 1891), featured a nude Tahitian maiden, and paintings such as this also

sparked interest in the colonial Other. Tahiti became "'l'Ile de Cythère,' the new abode of Venus" (Brooks 331). The Exposition Coloniale Internationale in Paris in 1931, forty years later, only reinforced this expanding attitude:

> L'inauguration se déroule en présence de milliers de figurants : danseuses annamites, familles d'artisans africains dans un village reconstitué, cavaliers arabes, ... Chaque jour des spectacles différents et plus exotiques les uns que les autres accueillent les visiteurs (jusqu'à 300.000 par jour). Le succès populaire et l'attrait du public pour les exhibitions exotiques rassurent les promoteurs de la colonisation (Crise 1)

Therefore, the stage was set for colonial cinema, and Zouzou arrived just in time.

In the very first scene of Zouzou, the camera pans right in a high angle long shot and we see a moving carousel full of patrons. We hear traditional organ music, as the carousel turns quickly full of eager customers. The camera continues to pan right to reveal a small outdoor stage with five female dancers performing side by side at the front of the stage, as a clown and a midget join them to their left. The camera then takes us behind the stage in the next shot and we see on the side of one of the circus trailers the words "Cirque Romarin." The circus was short-lived in France. It began to die out with the advent of the Barnum Circus in the United States. Small French circus troupes could not compete with the enormous wealth and resources of Barnum, but many circus acts evolved over time and were adapted for the music hall. Music hall eventually included many animal acts that had been peculiar to the circus, as well as clowns and contortionists.

Behind the trailer, four small boys are snooping around the outside of the office, and when one of them climbs up to peer through a window, he sees the young island maiden, Zouzou, smiling at herself in a hand mirror. The scene then cuts back to the stage where the ringmaster (Pierre Larquey) is about to introduce his "twins" from a Polynesian Island. These "twins" are exceptional, as one of them, Zouzou, is dark-skinned with dark, curly hair, while her brother Jean (Serge Grave) is blond with straight hair. When the twins arrive on stage Jean has a bloody nose, and is scoffing at the group of young boys in the crowd in front of him. He has obviously fought with them to protect his "sister."

From the first scene the films sets up the traditional structure of the male gazing at the female star, even though Zouzou and the young boys are only around nine or ten years old. The camera then frames the group of chorus girls in the center of a medium long shot as they begin a kick-line singing the tune "Cygogne, dans tes voyages, que m'apporteras-tu?" In the next short scene, we see Zouzou applying white powder to her adorable brown face, again smiling and peering into a mirror, but we actually see her face reflected in two mirrors, one in front of her, and the other up and to the left on the wall. Even at her young age, she realizes that she is different than the other white performers in the circus troupe. Just as a child plays with makeup to create a fantasy world, Zouzou applies white powder to her face, hoping to look more like the others in the troupe. The owner of the tent arrives

and quickly chases her out, and the next scene takes us to the sleeping quarters of the twins and their Papa Melé, the circus ringmaster we met earlier in the film.

We sare then transported to the future and soon we are introduced to exotic port of Manila in long shot, where an adult Jean is writing a letter to Zouzou with a young French woman looking on and flirting with him. She begins watching a young native girl in a grass skirt dancing to native music. She is nude above the waist, smiles widely, and her hair and skin color resembles that of Zouzou when she was a child. The young French woman then comments “Ils ont la danse dans le sang!” and one of the stereotypical mindsets about black performers has been affirmed.

The letter that Jean writes provides the next segue, as a close-up of the envelope on the table before Jean is followed by a shot of the same envelope lying under the doorway to Zouzou’s apartment in Toulon. The first shot of the adult Zouzou is a close-up of her feet as she dances to amuse a young girl in her apartment. She then picks up a ukulele and sings the “Chanson de la Cygogne” from earlier in the film. The circus is ever-present in the small apartment as a trapeze bar hangs from the ceiling. Zouzou swings to the delight of her young friend, and breaks through the glass of a long window on the right of the frame. This choice of shot, song, and setting provides clues to her role in the film: she will be an entertainer, dancer and singer. It also links Zouzou’s childhood with her adult life. Papa Melé then enters happily after

watching Zouzou break the window and says “Ah, Comme ça, c’est gagné,” and he holds the letter from Jean in his hand. They quickly find that Jean is soon coming home to the two of them. Zouzou is ecstatic.

When Jean jumps ship to avoid detention at port, he arrives very late at the apartment to the surprise and extreme delight of Zouzou and Papa Melé. As Jean removes his wet clothing, Zouzou notices that he has a tattoo of a naked woman on his forearm. She becomes immediately jealous of the design, and asks Jean who it is. It has become apparent that even though Zouzou and Jean were raised as a brother and sister, Zouzou has more romantic affection for Jean. The painted figure on Jean’s (white-skinned) arm, represents the ideal woman for Jean, and Zouzou’s dark skin, in contrast, is compounded with the suggestion of potential incestuous behavior and becomes Other, as well as taboo.

In the next scene, Zouzou and Jean walk together in Toulon’s marketplace. Jean is showing off his sailor’s uniform and Zouzou is radiant as she holds his arm and smiles widely at him. She takes great pleasure in liberating several birds from their cages. This is the second time we see bird cages in the film. In the long shot of the port of Manila, a vendor is carrying a birdcage and offering it to the visitors on the dock. Caging suggests servitude, voyeurism and objectification, all of which played their part in the colonial discourse. We will see later in the film that the image is repeated during Zouzou’s final performances on stage.

The family soon moves to Paris where Jean becomes an electrician in a music hall, and Zouzou takes a job as a "blanchisseuse." The comic Fernandel, who actually started his career in film and then moved on to music hall, plays his sidekick at the theater (Andrew 1992:22). Zouzou often entertains all the beautiful young girls at the laundry, and in the first scene that takes place in the laundry they watch her imitate the famous music-hall star, Barbara (Illa Meery), as she sings "Pour moi, il n'y a qu'un homme dans Paris." Baker is amusing, animated, wiry and overly dramatic in her imitation, and the song provides a segue to the "folies" where Barbara is rehearsing the same song. The visual and performance contrast between Baker and Barbara is striking. Barbara is platinum blond with skin as white as porcelain. She rehearses with her arms crossed in front of her, and appears bored as she forgets some of the lyrics, pouts, and mechanically repeats the verses. It seems apparent that Baker would be a better music-hall star than Barbara.

The camera then takes us back to the laundry where Baker finishes the last few lyrics of the song to the delight of her young co-workers. They soon realize that it is very late and they must deliver the clean laundry to the music hall. Zouzou volunteers, for a chance to see Jean, and asks her friend Claire Vallée (Yvette Lebon) to come along. Baker exclaims "Tu vas voir comme il est beau!" The connection between the music hall and Zouzou is thus established, and to cement the bond even further, the girls at the laundry are actually cleaning and ironing the clothes of the famous Barbara (They also

handle those of the Moulin Rouge performers). This scene will be repeated in French Cancan (Renoir) in 1955, when Nini (Françoise Arnoul), aspiring to be a music-hall star, sings to her young girlfriends at the laundry where they all work. Jean Gabin also stars in this film, as the theater owner, Henri Danglard.

The first scene in Zouzou in the music hall itself takes us backstage where Jean is standing at the left of the medium long shot. He has an excellent rapport with the young scantily clad music-hall dancers who pass by him quickly asking for cigarettes, food and money as they hurry to the stage. M. Saint-Lévy, (Paulau), the theater's benefactor, enters through the stage door with the director, M. Trompe (Marcel Vallée), who is not happy with Saint-Levy's protégée, Barbara. Saint-Lévy says to him that Barbara is headed for "des astres," and the director, in a play on words barks that they are headed for "désastre" if she performs.

Zouzou and Claire then arrive with the laundry and meet Jean, who invites both of them to the dance hall that evening. Zouzou is anxious for Jean to spend time with her friend Claire, but does not realize that she may be setting herself up for a disappointment. Claire, in fact, is a more petite and innocent version of the blond Barbara, and a match with the tattoo on Jean's forearm.

At the dance hall Jean dances with Claire and sings her a silly tune "Viens Fifine," while Zouzou writes Jean's name on the paper covering their table. He sings:

> De la rue des Halles à la rue d'la Huchette
> On connaît Fifine la reine des bals musette
> Le soir quand elle passe en roulant des mirettes
> Plus d'un gars du quartier lui dit sans s'faire prier
> Viens Fifine viens Fifine
> Au p'tit bal du Sébasto o o o o o o
> Viens Fifine viens Fifine
> La java y a rien d'plus beau o o o o o o …. (Viens Fifine 1)

The film has led us from the stage performance of song, to off-stage song performance several times by this point in the film, and often the off-stage song repeats the on-stage rendition, blurring the boundary between the world of music hall and the "real" world of the film.

When a bully approaches Zouzou at the dance hall and forces her to dance with him, Jean comes to the rescue, just as he did as a child at the circus when the small group of young boys harassed Zouzou off stage. Zouzou is elated at Jean's courage and desire to come to her aid. The three soon leave the dance hall and Zouzou goes home to her apartment. Jean walks Claire home and steals a kiss at the door.

Back at the music hall, Zouzou has made another laundry delivery and is in the dressing room with the dancers. This crowded space, along with its matronly dressing room attendant, mirrors that of the laundry, and the matron at the music hall resembles the owner of the laundry, Madame Vallée (Claire Gérard), who barks orders at the girls. Zouzou is delighted to be with her

friends. She decides to try on an outfit and show Jean how she looks. He is adjusting his spotlight for the upcoming performance, so he asks her to pose in front of him for the adjustment. She catches a glimpse of her own shadow looming behind her, and begins dancing wildly to the orchestra music. Her style is different than that of the white, pale skinned dancers. When Jean raises the curtain, M. Saint-Lévy, M. Trompe, and a revue writer watch her from the audience and are fascinated. When they search for her afterwards, she has disappeared.

Her impromptu performance before Jean and the director features curious jerking movements of her body, along with her trademark facial contortions. Rony's description of Baker's typical performance explains vividly what the spectator witnesses:

> She is in constant motion, her body writhing like a snake, or more precisely like a dipping saxophone. Music seems to pour from her body. She grimaces, crosses her eyes, puffs out her checks, wiggles disjointedly, doles a split and finally crawls off the stage stiff-legged, her rump higher than her head, like a young giraffe… (Kalinak 321)

In the next series of events, Papa Melé falls from some scaffolding and dies suddenly, then Zouzou witnesses a murder as she goes to find Jean to tell him of Papa Melé's fate. Jean appears on the scene of the murder just as it is being committed, and he is arrested as the suspect despite Zouzou's arrival to tell the officers that she has seen the real murderer. She realizes that Jean will need money for his defense, so she goes back to the music hall to get a job that pays better than her laundress wages. Since Barbara has just

escaped to Rio with her Brazilian lover, the director hires Zouzou, and her transformation into a star is immediate, as we watch a large poster of Barbara in the director's office change into a similar poster of Zouzou.

The theater is packed on opening night and we view five minutes of chorus boys and girls dancing on an elaborate, giant-sized set complete with a huge, luxurious bed full of dancers, a giant telephone, and a hair comb which a chorus girl plays like a xylophone. The first of these dances, performed with only chorus girls, is an adaptation of a Loïe Fuller motif. The girls wear sumptuous, long, flowing skirts that they manipulate in unison to form beautiful patterns of fluid motion.

When Zouzou first appears, she is inside a large elaborate birdcage on a swing. The swing replicates the trapeze in her apartment in Toulon, and the birdcage is reminiscent of those in Toulon. She sings "Haiti" as she swings slowly back and forth. She wears a costume of white feathers, with two small puffs of feathers at her breasts, a huge halo surrounding her head, and a small, feathered panty exposing her beautiful long legs in very high heels. The singer's nostalgia for her exotic homeland is echoed in the lyrics:

> Ah ! Qui me rendra mon pays, Haiti
> C'est toi mon seul paradis, Haiti
> Ah ! Dieu me rappelle
> Tes forêts si belles
> Tes grands horizons
> Loin de tes rivages
> La plus belle cage
> N'est qu'une prison
> Oui !! Mon désir, mon cri d'amour, Haiti …

She is literally in a “belle cage,” that is, nonetheless, a prison, but at the end of the song, she dives gracefully into the arms of tuxedoed male dancers to take her bow. She has escaped from her cage just as she liberated the birds from theirs earlier in the film.

The performance of this song evokes the opposite theme of another music-hall performance in the film Pépé le Moko (Duvivier 1937), since in Pépé the singer is longing to go *back* to Paris from the exotic Kasbah. The famous music-hall singer, Fréhel, longs to return home and sings ”Où est-il donc?” as she is listening to her own voice singing the same song on an old Victrola. (This colonial film will be discussed further in Chapter Four of this study.)

In the global context of the exotic, destinations are often seen with similar characteristics, but the notion of the unreachable is always significant. In Baker’s song, Haiti stands for any location that is distant, exotic and mysterious. The destination is not as important as what it evokes. In fact, “Haiti” sounds remarkably like “Tahiti” when pronounced in French, and could actually be mistaken for it. Tahiti is, of course, a far cry from Haiti, so the “global exotic” that Baker embodies is transferred to her song.

The next series of on-stage acts do not involve Baker, but are nonetheless remarkable. The stage is gigantic, and with the panning movement of the camera it seems as if it never ends. The technical effects used in this performance involve a gently, sloping waterfall, complete with the

brisk flow of rushing water, and young girls posing on its surface as they move symmetrically in staggered rows along its flow. Balconies and stairways are everywhere, and the giant sized motif is still apparent as we see dancers climb down from an enormous velvet chair.

Zouzou has gone back to her dressing room where she sees in the newspaper a picture of the real murderer. She explains to her attendant that she must go to the police to vindicate Jean, even though she is to go on stage again shortly. Zouzou decides that her love for Jean is more important than the ‘”show going on.” She hurries off and explains everything to the police, and is able to identify the murderer by describing his left hand that is missing a finger. She returns quickly to the theater to perform her final number, “Il n’y a qu’un homme dans Paris,” as she thinks of Jean and how she has just saved him from prison. He is still the only man in Paris for her, in spite of the fact that he has fallen in love with another, and Baker’s final song mirrors her feelings for her “brother.”

The show is a huge success, and Zouzou soon hastens to the jail where Jean will be released. From a distance just before she arrives, she spies Claire waiting at the gate, and Jean coming through the doorway. They are obviously delighted to see each other, and Zouzou is devastated. The dejected Zouzou begins walking down the street alone, and the camera is positioned in front of her in a medium shot. It travels forward with her while we hear rather solemn background music. This stands in direct contrast to the

music-hall numbers we just witnessed. She seems to walk forever in the street, and when she arrives at the front of the music hall, she passes by several, huge posters of herself smiling widely. The name “Zouzou” looms large behind her as she passes by, but she does not stop to acknowledge them. She cannot bear to think of herself as a music-hall star when the love of her life will never truly be hers.

Just after Zouzou passes by the theater, a stagehand appears to place a banner across the large poster announcing the 100th performance of Zouzou, thereby visually signaling the passage of time. We again see Zouzou on stage (The show must go on, after a slight delay) and she is sitting in her beautiful cage, while behind her two lovers gaze into each other’s eyes. She sings the chorus to “Haiti,” but this time she does not leave the cage, and the film ends. The singer’s desire to return to Haiti, and Zouzou’s own desire for Jean become one. She will not return to Haiti, and Zouzou will never have Jean as a lover. The dark-skinned maiden can entertain an adoring public, but she cannot completely enter their world.

The lyrics of the music-hall songs in this film are undoubtedly indicative of the narration. From beginning to end, they play a part in the unveiling of the events in both the music hall and off-stage. Zouzou’s comical song imitation of Barbara in the laundry actually signals the eventual replacement of Barbara by Zouzou. Jean’s silly song in the dance hall, “Viens Fifine,” is a flirtatious invitation from him to the beautiful Claire. Zouzou’s “Il n’y a qu’un homme

dans Paris" directly refers to Jean, and her rendition of Haiti concretizes her exoticism, and her longing for her home that she will never see again. Zouzou's character is exoticized through every medium, even though she has been raised in France in the film. The French public loved Zouzou as they loved Josephine Baker. The film was a huge success.

Baker was "bitten by the acting bug after the success of her film Zouzou" (Edwards 36), so one year later she made Princess Tam Tam (Gréville 1935). This film tells the story of a beautiful, young shepherdess from Tunisia who is brought back to France and is "civilized" and transformed into a fictitious princess by a wealthy novelist and his colleague. Baker plays the shepherdess, Alwina, and Max de Mirecourt (Albert Préjean) and his colleague, Coton (Robert Arnoux) attempt a Pygmalion-like transformation of their newfound protégée.

This film is similar to Zouzou in that a transformation of the female character occurs, but Zouzou, even though she is seen as Other in many ways, has been raised French, and Alwina is Tunisian. Also, the transformation of Alwina is much more pronounced than Zouzou's rise to stardom. Her transformation actually moves from primitivism to polished, high-society conduct for a period of time.

In the opening credits for the film, we see a close-up of Josephine Baker's face, with her head turned slightly to the right. Her name appears under her image and her hair is braided in long, thin braids with hints of

sparkles throughout their lengths. Her makeup is very heavy around her slightly dark, narrowed eyes. She is not smiling, but rather exhibits a mysterious aura, although she ends the frame with a slight smile. Her first appearance here is much more exotic and mysterious than her first appearance in the opening credits of Zouzou. She appears much more cosmopolitan and French in Zouzou, and she capitalizes upon her huge beaming smile to capture her audience immediately. She wears a sequined leotard with small crossed straps that reveals her broad slender shoulders; her hair is short and very wavy and her eyes sparkle with delight.

The rather exotic first impression in Tam Tam is contrasted with the next frame, where we see the character of Max de Mirecourt (note the partitive "de," seen as a sign of royal heritage in French proper names). He is impeccably groomed and wears an elegant tuxedo as he claps fervently. This shot progression suggests that he has perhaps just seen Alwina perform. Therefore, from the outset, Alwina is spectacle, and Mirecourt provides the gaze. The first two shots of the film have also set up the extreme contrast between the outward appearances and cultural backgrounds of Alwina and Mirecourt.

When the title of the film appears across the screen in the very next shot, we see a black native man in medium shot, nude from the waist up, as he beats on a bongo drum while moving to the rhythm. He appears to be singing in his native language. We cannot hear his voice, however, as we

hear instead heavy bongo music with a mysterious and ominous musical undertone. He is a global representation of Alwina's character, and contrasted with Mirecourt in his tux, we are now visually prepared for a relationship between what has been constructed as a savage, primitive, black culture and a more civilized, more educated, white culture: "It is a colonial film that exploits and exoticizes its female star … through channels of representation that belie fetishism, but also cast a pejorative comment on the young, primitive Tunisian, Alwina" (Ezra 115)

Yet everything is not as ideal as it may seem in the civilized world. The first scene shows Mirecourt being slapped across the face (in close-up) by his wife Lucie (Germaine Aussey), as she screams at him for being a failure. She is dressed in an elegant, long, light-colored, backless satin negligee, and her medium length platinum blond hair is curled about the pale white skin of her face. Mirecourt has had enough of her high-society dealings, and feels he has no place to go for inspiration for his deteriorating writing career. His wife's friends, dukes, among others: "la bande d'imbéciles que tu m'obliges à fréquenter," have caused Mirecourt's creative juices to run dry.

Just then Mirecourt's good friend Coton enters their apartment and convinces Mirecourt that they need to get away for a while (without Mirecourt's wife) to stir the imagination and creativity of the writer. Lucie "flirte avec les gens du monde" affirms Coton, and she has become completely spoiled. The

two men decide to go to Africa, where they can be among real savages, and hopefully find some inspiration for Mirecourt's next novel.

We are taken to Tunisia in the next scene. Among the palm trees and thick cactus growth we spy Alwina's face dwarfed among the cacti in long shot, as she hides as if she is hunting wild game. She smiles and quickly steals a lamb from a flock of sheep nearby and runs with the lamb over her shoulders across what seems to be an expansive, deserted plain. She then places the lamb in some shrubbery, and leaves him there as she continues on her way.

We then see sights of the city in long shot, and Mirecourt is seated in a small outdoor café where a man is serving whole oranges on a large platter. Mirecourt spies a hand coming from under the table stealing oranges from the tray and rescues the culprit when the server catches site of her. It is Alwina, and she is literally on the floor at the feet of Mirecourt, with her head resting on his leg, as she tells him that she has no money for food. This first interaction with Mirecourt speaks cinematically of what their relationship in the film will be. She is beneath him in vertical space, she rests her head upon his leg just as a pet might do, and she looks up towards him with her large, dark eyes, as he smiles downward at her. The relationship between their respective positions implies his superiority and dominance.

The frames are in shot-reverse-shot sequence, however, they are not point-of-view shots. We see them returning the eye line match of their gazes,

but it is from a different angular perspective of the camera. It is as if there is someone watching them closely, as they interact. Then a passer-by overhears Alwina give her name to Mirecourt and remarks that it means “petite source.” What better way for Mirecourt to get his creative juices to flow? Alwina then rises and quickly places the platter of oranges on her head as she leaves the café. She offers a smile to the two gentlemen as she hurries out, and it is apparent that Mirecourt is fascinated with her.

Africa does not seem to be inspiring Mirecourt or his collaborator Coton, so they decide to accept an invitation to visit the ancient Roman ruins of Dougga and perhaps find the motivation to write. At the ruins we see the expansive area in long shot with a female figure running towards the foreground from a distance. We also see and hear dozens of happy children awaiting her arrival. Alwina approaches and sits among them, not saying a word. She imitates a clay figure she sees, and then climbs the wide, stone stairway to the top of the ruins where she cartwheels and dances in wild gestures to the children’s great delight. We have not yet seen Alwina actually walk as she moves from one place to another in the film. She is constantly running, as would an animal or a child. This short dance performance is representative of the music-hall dancing she will do later in the film.

When Alwina spies a caravan of camels approaching in the distance, she runs to greet them, and again vertical space implies superiority. Mirecourt is riding a camel and looks down at Alwina (in a very low-angle two-shot) as

she looks up at him and offers to be their guide. In a condescending gesture, he pats her on the side of her face and accepts. Then two female members to the group, also on camel back, call her a “sauvage” and a “bédouine,” as they are each shown successively in very low angle medium shots. When the group stops for lunch, there is talk of the savage smell of musk with Alwina nearby, and one of the members of the group calls her a “bête sauvage,” to which she takes offense by filling the group’s saltshaker with sand. Mirecourt is as fascinated as ever with Alwina as he watches her commit her innocuous crime.

The setting then turns back to France where Madame Mirecourt is lounging in bed at a late hour. One of her friends comes to visit and they recount their escapades of the previous night. Extravagance and decadence pervade the conversation, but the variety theater, another name for the music hall, is also validated and supported by Lucie. She states that the night before she had watched the opening at the variety theater with a Prince. Therefore, in this film, music hall is equated with the “bourgeoisie” and high society.

We are then taken back to Tunisia where we watch Alwina run into the jungle near the villa of Mirecourt and Coton, and quickly and agilely climb a tree to play with a monkey. Dar, the Arabian manservant of the two Parisian men, catches her for trespassing as she descends, ties her to a tree, and exposes her bare back to his impending whip. Alwina is not only subject to the white male’s control, but also to that of another man of color, an Arab.

Mirecourt and Coton immediately stop the servant and bring Alwina inside. They have decided that it would be fascinating to civilize Alwina, and write about her reactions in a novel. Mirecourt's attraction for Alwina has definite sexual undertones, even though he remains faithful to his wife. He finds her "délicieuse," and often remarks that she is his "petite vagabonde." He also decides to pretend he is in love with her for the novel's sake. The vision of the black female as sexually potent lends itself well to this ruse, and is not accidental:

> Discourses of French colonialism and the development of the slave trade helped to reinforce the ideological positioning of the black female as seductive and hypersexual … the skin of black women, less agreeable to the gaze, is softer to touch, and the hidden pleasures that one tastes within their love are more delicious and delightful'" (Kalinak 319-20).

Meanwhile, back in France, Lucie has attracted the attention of a rich Maharajah. Lucie very much enjoys his doting over her, and hopes to use his advances to make her husband jealous when he hears of the news from afar. The Maharajah has an interesting collection of butterflies that he shows to Lucie at his villa. The butterflies are also a metaphor for Alwina, a caterpillar who is about to become a butterfly, if Mirecourt has his way. In addition, Lucie's relationship with the mysterious ruler mirrors that of Mirecourt and Alwina, and adds validity to the feigned love that Mirecourt supposedly holds for the young Tunisian maiden.

Alwina soon takes a short trip in a small sailboat with Dar, and sings the first song of the film. With the sail to her back, her dark form is framed in

close-up by the pale, variegated surface of the sail as the wind blows softly through her dark, wavy hair. This off-stage music-hall number is entitled "Rêves:"

> Rêves
> La brise au loin se lève
> Les vagues nous soulèvent
> Nos yeux perdent la grève
> Nos coeurs se battent plus fort.

Alwina may have had a premonition, as she will soon be traveling across the waves to France. Mirecourt has received news (from an anonymous correspondent in France) that his wife is behaving scandalously with a Maharajah, and he hopes to leave for France as soon as possible. He therefore hastens Alwina's lessons in proper etiquette, piano playing, math, dance and proper dress, (including the art of wearing shoes), and they prepare to leave.

When they arrive in France, Mirecourt rents an apartment for him and Alwina, and sends Coton to speak with his wife about her supposed affair. When Alwina sees Mirecourt staring at a picture of Lucie, she becomes jealous and asks him if he loves the woman in the picture. We are reminded of Jean's tatoo in Zouzou. Once again the dark-skinned maiden takes second place to a white lover.

Alwina is quickly transformed into the "Princesse de Parador," in a grand scheme to make Lucie jealous, and to counter her supposed affair with the Maharajah. Mirecourt takes Alwina to the opera, the horse track, and all

the while Lucie and the Maharajah attend the same or similar events, often glimpsing their counterparts. All of high society is aghast, and there are more spectators watching the two unlikely couples through opera glasses than there are watching the opera. Wherever they go, the princess is photographed and observed. In an amusing group of still shots she is shown in caricature in several comical renditions. These drawings call to mind the many posters of Baker done by Paul Colin.

Alwina quickly becomes bored with the high society lifestyle and decides to go out one evening with Dar to an amusement park and a local café. They happen upon a neighborhood dive where African entertainers play native music, and Alwina, in a nostalgic mood, begins to sing with them. She then dances to a more up-tempo beat doing a variation of the Charleston, but with her trademark limb flailing and leg lifting. It is certainly not typical behavior for a princess of her supposed upbringing.

One of Lucie's friends happens to be at the same bar and can't wait to tell Lucie what she saw that night. Lucie realizes that it would be scandalous if society were to see the princess dance in this wild, savage fashion, so she arranges with the Maharajah to throw a huge party in Lucie's honor and to invite all of high society to the event. When Mirecourt hears of the party, he thinks that the party would be an excellent venue to show off his princess, so they all head to the gala event.

The evening begins with the gong of a huge drum by a dark-skinned Arabian wearing a white turban. He is nude above the waist and he bears a striking resemblance to the Maharajah. The setting for the festivities is a huge multi-level structure complete with fountains and curved, open stairways. It reminds one of the interior of a music hall, but is much more open and spacious. Then with a second gong, the Arabian appears with a large silver ball that he places on the ground. It begins to spin, and the image of a spinning spiral appears magically, in cinematically transposed images, as several beautiful music-hall dancers begin to emerge from a doorway in the ball. Thus, the Arabian takes on grandiose proportions through cinematic intervention. This setting recalls the giant stage in Zouzou with a huge chair and bed, but there is no giant male performer controlling the female performers in Zouzou.

The young dancers slowly descend the open stairway and then rotate in unison on round platforms showing off their beautiful black and white transparent costumes. Each costume has see-through, yet dotted draping under the arms that creates a beautiful, fanlike effect for the spectators. Each time the large, intimidating Arabian makes a move it causes tremendous effects on stage. With a puff of his breath he topples a long line of dancers who resemble dolls under his spell. His lifts the tiny dancers individually and places them on a checkerboard-patterned, black and white stage where they perform in unison to the music. Then the spinning spiral-like hypnotic wheel

returns and transforms itself into a plate being spun atop a long stick by Asian performers. As we watch them execute their craft, the Arabian places one of the dolls atop a plate, and she begins to spin uncontrollably. These magical music-hall effects would not be possible without the intervention of the cinematic medium. Using special effects such as stop trick and stop motion, as well as miniature sets and performers, the cinematic illusion is complete.

Alwina is watching the show intently as Lucie's friend encourages her to drink more and more. While a conga number is in progress, she convinces the princess to let go and run to the dance floor. Alwina strips off her white gown to reveal a sheer black skirt with long slits to her waist. She also kicks off her high-heeled shoes and one hits the head of a surprised male spectator.

All of the dancers to this point have been white, and now Alwina takes the stage. It is also interesting that the whole production number is based on the contrast between black and white costumes and mise en scène, even before Alwina makes her appearance. Since Alwina is the same size as the chorus girls on stage, she is also cast in miniature, and under the Arabian's control, as she was earlier with Dar.

The music to this point at the party has been melodious big band music, but we now change to the rhythm of the conga. The contrast of her color, as well as her unconventional style of dancing, would have "set Hollywood on its ear in the thirties," yet in France, the combination worked, and worked very well. Kalinak explains: "The combination of her gender and her race makes it

impossible for Princesse Tam Tam … to have been produced in the Hollywood studio system" (Kalinak 316). The Maharajah and Lucie are delighted to see the princess "let down her hair," while Mirecourt and Coton turn their heads in shame. She dances uncontrollably, and when finished, she welcomes the ringing applause of the audience. Katherine Kalinak comments on Baker's image in this "spectaculact:"

> This production sequence encodes and relays culturally empowered definitions of gender and race in a number of fascinating ways: …the montage, which literalizes Baker's fetishization; the chorine's visual representation … in opposition to Baker's strikingly modern dance based upon West African traditions; … the convergence of Baker's off screen and onscreen character through her dance; and the historical context of the French fascination with black women. … this production number foregrounds and links Baker's gender and race to such an extent that I would call it a flashpoint in the representation of gender and race in film (316-7).

After the performance, several tuxedoed men place the princess on their shoulders, to the great dismay of Lucie, and everyone follows her as the Maharajah escorts her admiringly out the door. The Maharajah then convinces Alwina to return to her native land. She is not willing at first, but when she spies Mirecourt and Lucie kissing in their car, she realizes that she has no future in France.

We are then transported back to Tunisia where Mirecourt and Coton finish their novel, and we realize that we have actually been watching the narration of a fictitious story, as the two devised the plot. Alwina then appears barefoot eating raw fruit with her hands, and overhears that the two men will

be leaving soon. She would like to go with them, but Mirecourt convinces her that her place is there in Tunisia.

Back in France, Mirecourt's novel Civilization is a great success, and he thinks back to Africa and wonders how Alwina is doing. As he imagines his Princess in her native land, we return to Tunisia where Alwina and Dar have since married. They have a beautiful child, and are living at the villa left to them by Mirecourt. Various animals roam the vestibule of the villa, and ducks swim in the lavish, interior fountain. A small monkey has strewn about some books, and just as Alwina enters, a donkey tears off the cover of Mirecourt's novel and begins to eat it. Alwina only smiles, and the film comes to an end.

Racial tensions pervade the narration of Princesse Tam Tam, but the light tone of the colonial musical lessens the gravity of the situation. After the Colonial Exposition in 1930 in Paris, the French had ambiguous feelings about the colonized blacks. They were fascinated with them, stimulated by their Otherness, but also fearful of what they represented. Political domination and feelings of superiority calmed their apprehensions. Kalinak explains: ""Princess Tam Tam is above all a cultural product and as such embodies the historically complicated, deeply ambivalent, and contradictory French attitudes on race" (323). Tam Tam, just like Zouzou, satisfied a national curiosity about the people of the colonies, but Zouzou was much more popular with the cinema-going public.

Princess Tam Tam did not catch fire at the box office. Perhaps the public found the story too simplistic. A closer reading of the film proves otherwise. The beautiful Alwina is an innocent victim of her race, and she is exploited and objectified by the white colonists. Cultural beliefs during the period of the film's release only served to complicate any clear interpretation of this colonial film. In Princesse Tam Tam, fascination and curiosity for the Other demean and denigrate the beautiful Tunisian.

Baker's life mirrored that of Tam Tam in that she also suffered from racial oppression, especially early in her life. Mistinguett never had to deal with racial oppression, however. She was white, and grew up on the outskirts of Paris. Baker endured poverty, physical and mental abuse, racial oppression and discrimination in the U.S. She joined the International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism in 1939 in her fight to combat Hitler (Edwards 42). She applied for French citizenship in 1937 and denounced her U.S. citizenship, as she harbored ill feelings about the treatment she received in the U.S. as a child, and later as a performer. She loved France and all it stood for, and in France she was even "freer" than Mistinguett because she was a new, modern woman (Rearick 81).

Both Baker and Mistinguett wanted to help the French in the war effort. Mistinguett traveled to Germany to perform for the troops. Baker went even further and was an undercover agent for the Allied Forces (Edwards 43). Hermann Goering, the German commandant, poisoned her in her own home

for her collaboration with the Maquis. She was so ill she nearly died, but during her long recovery she sent a wire to Mistinguett: “Darling, please keep the stage hot until I get back. Love, Josephine” (Papich 130).

Mistinguett had little of the exotic in her persona, although she was highly fetishized on stage and in film. Baker’s hyper-sexualized presence went far beyond that of a typical fetishism. The element of the savage and unbridled libido, as a result of stereotypical notions of the exoticism of the black race, posed an attraction and a curiosity to men and women alike. Baker was called the “black Venus” (Bouillon 53), while Mistinguett was called “the queen of French music hall” by Baker herself (Bouillon 46).

When Mistinguett passed away in 1956, the whole country of France was in mourning, as well as most of Europe:

> Sa mort endeuille le music-hall. Elle avait commencé sa carrière de chanteuse par un numéro de caf'conf'. Puis à l'Olympia, premier grand music-hall, elle était avec Joséphine Baker l'une des vedettes de ces revues à grand spectacle où régnaient plumes et strass (webencyclo Miss 1)

At Josephine Baker’s funeral in 1975, the French bestowed a huge honor upon her memory: “In tribute to her military service, there was a twenty-one gun salute, an honor usually reserved for heads of state” (Edwards 58).

The films discussed in this study of Mistinguett and Josephine Baker are important for three reasons. First of all, all three of the primary films discussed, Rigolboche, Zouzou and Princesse Tam Tam, (and also La sirène des tropiques) tell rags to riches stories of a female character who finds fame

in the music hall; secondly, because when looking at these three examples, it is evident that racial tensions due to differences in skin color cause Zouzou and Alwina to be victimized in a white world. Lina, on the other hand, rises to stardom and ownership of her own music hall. She is able to *turn down* an offer of marriage to a wealthy Count, while Zouzou and Alwina do not get their *white* man; and lastly, because they were both idols of music hall before appearing onscreen in music-hall content films. Mistinguett and Baker were both headline performers at the Moulin Rouge and the Casino de Paris, and they both went on to make films about their craft, but Mistinguett *was* Paris and Baker was the *Other* in Paris.

CHAPTER 3

BACKSTAGE AT THE MUSIC HALL

Music-hall content in film may range from a single salient performance of interest to films that were written specifically *about* the music hall. Those films within the period of study that are *predominantly* music-hall films will be treated in this chapter. These films derive their narration from actions and events that revolve around the lives of the music-hall personalities represented. These films include Chacun sa chance (Steinhoff, Pujol 1930), Paris-Béguin (Génina 1931), La vagabonde (Bussi 1931), Divine (Ophuls 1935), Le bonheur (L'Herbier 1935) and Romance de Paris (Boyer 1941). There are also a few films outside the period of study that are used for comparison: Nana (Renoir 1926), Ah! Les belles bacchantes (Loubignac 1954) and Mitsou (Audrey 1956).

Legrand-Chabrier realized in 1931 in Les Music-Halls that the music hall would provide a crucial point of reference for the cinema:

> Le music-hall n'est-il pas un étonnant et magnifique instrument scénique qui place son spectateur comme aux écoutes du monde ? Ce en quoi il n'est incontestablement un divertissement au sceau de notre époque, et ne fut-il pas en

> quelque sorte le prophète du cinéma et de l'audition sans fils ? (248).

As one of the most widely recognized historians of music hall, Legrand-Chabrier uses a cultural thread to weave together all popular forms of entertainment in the twentieth century. He sees the cinema as a central and integral form of entertainment, but he applies no less importance to the music hall: "Ce siècle est celui du cinéma, mais il ne l'est moins du music-hall" (248). As a result, the marriage of music hall and cinema is solid. The music hall provides roots in popular culture that the public recognizes, and the cinema (after 1929) embodies the latest in the technology of sound and image to produce a "spectacular" result.

The first backstage music-hall film after the advent of sound is a surprisingly entertaining delight for the senses boasting carefree melodies and a very young and handsome Jean Gabin. As the light and lively plot of Chacun sa chance unfolds, we are carried through a fantasy of music-hall repertoire. The film is listed as an "operette filmée" in the catalog of the Forum des Images, and it exhibits a theatrical nature that duplicates an on-stage performance. There are many songs performed on and off-stage during the film by both male and female singers.

The use of sound in cinema was at first disquieting, and directors and producers were often puzzled as to how best to implement the new sound technology. Conway writes: "This separation of the voice from the body, made possible first by the phonograph and the radio, and now in sound

cinema, generates no small amount of anxiety in several French films …" (1999:306). Anxiety over the new technology could well be the reason for an odd occurrence at the beginning of Chacun sa chance. In the first scene we observe a stage in medium shot from the spectator's perspective. A well-dressed middle-aged gentleman (André Urban) appears from behind the curtain and announces "Et maintenant, assez de titres. Puisqu'il s'agit d'un film parlant, il vaut mieux commencer à parler." He then begins to introduce the actors, who appear successively from behind the curtain to take their bow.

The actual filming of the orchestra in the loge, the introduction of the characters on stage, and the opening of the curtain to signal the beginning of the narration evidence the theatrical nature of the production. However, through the magic of cinema, Urban is actually able to introduce *himself* in the role of the Baron de Monteuil. With a motion of his left arm he looks to the left on stage, and in the next shot he appears from behind the curtain with his female counterpart La Baronne (Renée Héribel). He introduces himself as "Mon meilleur ami, André Urban."

The tendency towards theatrical representation in film dates from very early on in the industry, as it was the only point of reference that spectators could relate to regarding spectacle. Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs report that theatrical productions served as a starting point for screen representation "because the theater served as one of the nodal points for conceptualizing 'the pictorial' and hence provided a more general guide for cinematic mise-en-

scène" (vi). However, the theatrical nature of the film Chacun sa chance takes this notion one step further. This is a music-hall film, and there can be no music hall without a stage, orchestra and audience. Not only do we see the stage and orchestra in the first shots, we actually hear a musical prelude of all the songs in the film, complete with high-angle shots of individual musicians, as well as the maestro skillfully conducting the group. This shot sequence reminds one of actually being at the theater for a stage production. This same effect is achieved in Nana (Renoir 1926), a music-hall film where orchestral activity is shown by exaggerated movements to the tempo on the part of the musicians and maestro, since sound cinema had not yet been introduced.

In the first scene after the curtain opens, the camera travels forward in medium long shot through double doors and a lighted entry marquee to what could very well be a theater. There is a double stairway converging at the middle of the shot, with people bustling about. A very polite doorman opens the main doors for customers. The camera then tracks left to reveal Jean Gabin as Marcel Grivot, standing behind a sales counter. We quickly realize that this is actually a department store, Dalmas, where Marcel works as a sales clerk. He is hiding behind a low sales counter as his boss approaches and informs him that he is in charge of the window dressing at the "Imperia Variétés" Music Hall where the store displays its latest fashions for men and women.

Since the store looks like a theater, and the store actually displays clothing in an inside display window at the theater, we are constantly reminded that this is a music-hall film, and the characters' physical surroundings continuously place them in theatrical settings. Also, since Marcel is an employee of the store and must work on the new display at the theater, his connection with the theater is established.

Another music-hall film that roots itself very naturally in the theatrical motif is Ah! Les belles bacchantes (Loubignac 1954). In this film the camera only leaves the inside of the theater once near the beginning to set up a weak narrative plot about a city inspector, Michel Leboeuf (Louis de Funès), who goes on a witch hunt at a music hall to ensure that moral propriety is being upheld. The rest of the film takes place in the theater throughout the long, real time rehearsal for an upcoming show, Les Belles Bacchantes, and the farcical film ends with the end of the rehearsal.

Nearly every music-hall act rehearsed in Ah! Les belles bacchantes involves nude women. Genuine talent is difficult to find among the transparent raincoats and the fashion show where the models wear hats, and nothing else (Supposedly due to a delay in the arrival of costumes). When women do wear clothes in this film, men rip them off brutally, or other women rip them off each other in cat fights. At the end of Ah! Les belles bacchantes, as we see the stage in extreme long shot from the back of the theater, the MC's head (complete with top hat) pops up in the front of the shot in close-up, and he

makes excuses for all the errors and silly events in the rehearsal that the spectators had to endure. He goes on to say "…je vous assure que si vous reveniez demain, tout se passera très bien." This film's extreme exploitation of the nude woman as spectacle tends to negate any redeeming aspects it may hold.

Returning to Chacun sa chance, Marcel must work as long as necessary to finish the new window display of evening attire. He scowls as Mr. Dalmas walks away and he utters under his breath "Et moi qui voulait aller au cinéma ce soir !" Little did one suspect at the time that this deliberate valorization of the cinematic medium was to come from one of the most influential male actors in French film history. In fact, after the success of Chacun sa chance "Pathé propose un contrat de longue durée à Gabin," even though Gabin "se trouve détestable" as an actor (Billard 149).

The young Marcel then begins to sing "Depuis mon enfance la chance me fuit…," and we are given the first clue to the reason for the title of the film. The camera begins in medium shot and slowly moves in to a close-up, but one aspect of the gaze is difficult to ignore. Marcel is looking straight into the camera lens for most of the song. Even when he walks slowly to the right in medium shot, the camera follows him and his gaze does not vary from direct engagement with the spectator, just as a performer on stage might address his audience. Yet when Marcel is walking stage right, and still looking at the camera, we have the impression that we are watching an amateur

performance where body movements appear unnatural. Therefore, the transition into this song seems rather awkward.

Through the next series of events, Marcel takes advantage of a music-hall ticket accidentally given to him by the Baron de Monteuil (André Urban), who has come to the performance with a beautiful blonde named Colette (Odette Josylla). The baron quickly chooses Marcel by "chance" and uses him as an alibi when his wife, La Baronne, suddenly shows up at the theater. He pretends to be good friends with Marcel, whom he introduces as an American, and explains to his wife that they are together at the theater. Since he now has a ticket, Marcel decides to change clothes with the mannequin in the store window wearing a tuxedo. The simple and inexpensive clothing Marcel is wearing is certainly not appropriate for the loge seats in the theater. He then heads for his free loge seat.

The Baron also passes Marcel his coat check ticket with the loge seat ticket, and an usher brings the *baron's* coat to Marcel in his seat as he watches a modified Charleston being performed on stage by a group of female dancers. They are dressed in light-colored costumes with small hats covering the crown of their heads. The shots in this sequence are from Marcel's point of view. The girls are low in the shot with the backdrop curtain taking up the top two-thirds of the shot frame. There is also a slight high-angle to duplicate Marcel's position in the loge.

The visual progression of these first scenes sets up an interesting "mise-en-abime:" the spectator is taken behind the curtain (after having seen the orchestra), and is eventually taken inside another theater to its performance with the orchestra in view. We are penetrating the glamorous, superficial façade of the theater performance to witness mundane, but fascinating backstage events. It is as if we are in a music-hall fun house with mirrors reflecting every event.

Marcel in not shown in shot-reverse-shot with the girls on stage. We see instead a group of four cigarette girls backstage catching a glimpse of *Marcel*, one by one, through a small hole in the backstage partition. The penniless cigarette girls have just been coached by their manager on how to be outgoing, pleasant, and accommodating to their customers, but instead of selling their goods, they gaze at the handsome young man alone in the loge seat. One of the young girls is Simone (Gaby Basset), a petite, pixy-like brunette with large, dark eyes and medium length hair. Basset was Gabin's first wife, but they were divorced before the filming of Chacun sa chance. (Billard 149)

One of Simone's customers gives her a gift to deliver to the music-hall star backstage, and the star is so taken with the young girl's love of the theater that she gives her a ticket to the show. Since Simone has nothing to wear, the star's maid gives her one of the star's own costumes, and Marcel and Simone end up in the same boxed seats to watch the rest of the show together. A

parallel has developed between Marcel and Simone even before they meet. They are both given loge seat tickets unexpectedly, and they both change into someone else's expensive clothing. Since a friend has made a bet with Marcel that he could find him a glamorous companion for the show, Marcel believes Simone to be his date. Simone believes Marcel to be a rich baron, as he shows her his calling card from the *baron's* coat pocket.

The *real* Baron de Monteuil is put in jail for impersonating a baron, trying to claim his *own* coat and hat, and for not having proper identification. He is in the same cell as Monsieur Dalmas, the owner of the department store (Marcel's boss), who has been jailed for his a sudden case of insanity. He has seen the new window display that Marcel has arranged, and cannot believe his eyes when he sees his dapper, tuxedoed mannequin in Marcel's casual work clothes! Now in a stupor as a result, he repeats over the over the same phrase "Un complet gris pour le soir !" While in prison the Baron sings a ballad about his destiny: "Le roi du destin fait de moi un rien…". Again, this song echoes "chacun sa chance." Monsieur Dalmas listens on as his sings, realizing that he, too, has been the victim of bad luck.

Throughout the film the baron's beautiful wife makes several telephone calls, often while trying to locate her cheating, jailbird husband. She decides to call a male friend, Jean d'Artaud (Jean Sablon), for a shoulder to cry on, and each time she repeats his phone number in French to the telephone operator, "8888," she exclaims after a few seconds "Je ne fais pas l'oiseau !"

This type of nonsensical comedy was typical music-hall repertoire of the era. In Le cirque et le music-hall, Pierre Bost reminds us that one finds comedy in every day life, and one need not look far. He determines: “Chacun sait bien que la vie de société est pleine de ridicule, et qu’en tout groupement humain, en toute cérémonie, il n’est que trop facile d’apercevoir du bouffon” (18).

When Marcel and Simone return to the baron’s home after the show, Marcel has the door key in the coat he exchanged with the baron. Luckily for Marcel, no one is home, so the two dance fancifully through the large mansion while singing “Sous ces rayons bleus, nous fermerons les yeux, …”. The production number bears a striking resemblance to Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers numbers where the dancers move lightly across large stage sets with precise choreographed movements. Hollywood films were very influential on French productions of this era, and the French enjoyed this type of American production in the 1930s: “The French masses … remained faithful patrons of the movie theaters, and there they came to know America’s cultural response to hard times in Hollywood spectacular musicals, which presented on film the lavish dance-and-song specialties of the music halls” (Rearick 49).

Chacun sa chance ends happily, like many Hollywood productions of the era, as the lovesick couple confesses to each other about their true mundane occupations, and perform on stage to close the film. They recant the lively melody of love and chance that they sang as they moved through the baron’s mansion, and happy couples surround them as they ascend a white

on-stage ramp in long shot. This representation again attests to the theatricality of the film. The film begins on stage and ends on stage, and Marcel and Simone, even though they are returning to their mundane existences, are raised to stardom as we see the curtain close and hear the orchestral finale.

It is quite interesting to see how Gabin is portrayed in two different publicity posters for Chacun sa chance. Both posters show Gabin alone in close-up: one with shadows cast across one side of his face and his hair harshly combed back, and the other a rather austere profile wearing a fedora. His facial expression in both exudes a serious and mysterious sadness that one does not find anywhere in the light comedy. The posters do not typify the character of Marcel that we see in the film.

This image of Gabin actually fits perfectly with his role one year later in Paris-Béguin. Here we find him in a very different character, as a burglar, Bob, who breaks into the home of a famous music-hall star, Jane Diamond (Jane Marnac). Bob enters smiling and brandishing a gun, and what follows are a series of very suspenseful and unusual medium shots to close-up shots on the star and Gabin. Bob approaches her as he sets his eyes on her long legs, then grabs her and kisses her. “Lachez-moi !” she screams to no avail. Bob finds that he is attracted to more than just the jewelry he is eyeing.

This scene implies no less than a rape by today’s standards, but surprisingly, the next day Diamond has lost her trademark negative and critical

attitude that we witness at the beginning of the film, and actually looks euphoric. The morning after shot reveals her smiling face in close-up in a large, soft bed surrounded by a billowy haze of light colored, chiffon netting. Gabin is nowhere is sight, but we also see in a close-up that he has also *not* taken her precious jewels.

Miss Diamond is so obsessed with her mysterious lover from the underworld that she decides to change the narration of the music-hall scene she is currently rehearsing, and these changes cause the scene to look almost exactly like the burglary scene at her own home the night before. The show is a huge success, but Miss Diamond soon learns that her mysterious burglar has been accused of a murder on the same night he was with her in her apartment. She cannot let him be accused of the murder, but it will ruin her reputation if she provides his alibi. She decides to let her *maid* take the fall, and confess to having Bob in *her* quarters on the night of the murder.

Unfortunately, despite all the efforts to vindicate Bob, he is eventually shot and killed by a scar-faced gangster in front of the theater and in plain site of Miss Diamond. She cries over his body and kisses him one last time. Her large music-hall poster looms over the two of them in the background as she cradles her lover's body, a sobering reminder that "the show must go on." This series of circumstances sets up the realist song that will follow.

The last scene is in grand revue style with Diamond in feathers and sequins. The sequins gleam with the same brilliance as the tears in her eyes

as she sings “C’est pout toi que j’ai l’béguin,” and she slowly descends a grand stairway on the huge stage. Jane has actually lived her song, just as realist singers often do, and her performance style is genuine and moving, as the bourgeois clientele listen and watch her intently.

The realist theme of this song does not, however, fit the staging of the performance. Typically, realist stars performed alone on stage, often in plain, dark clothing, with little or no surrounding décor, and never with chorus girls. The setting for the realist song usually roots us in the Parisian landscape, instead of transporting us to a fantasy world (Conway 2004:77). This realist song staged in grand revue is discussed by Conway: “Jane has taken the realist song from the seedy hotel room and the laundry to the music-hall stage, recapturing, for a moment the intimacy, the emotion, and the authenticity felt to be missing from the music-hall experience” (2004:147). This is a very fascinating aspect of music-hall films. The often-difficult life of the artists is revealed, and we are allowed to enter their private lives in their entire realist splendor, yet they still appear in superb display for the spectacle that they embody.

Unlike Chacun sa chance, this film lacks lightness and levity, and roots itself in two opposing realms of Parisian life, that of the music hall and the underworld of crime. Marcel Grivot and the cigarette girl, Simone, live happily in their mundane blue-collar lifestyle, with the music hall just a stone’s throw

away, but Jane Diamond's world of spectacle and Bob's underworld life of crime can never exist together on the same plane.

The world of spectacle fascinates one of France's most celebrated female authors, whose own life is laid bare in our next film under discussion. Toni Bentley describes La vagabonde by Colette: "The heroine of this book, …, Renée Néré, 'dancer and mime,' is a music-hall performer living a celibate life following a painful marriage of betrayal to Adolph Taillandy – Willy – who is manipulative, untalented, and degenerate" (Bentley 190). The novel was adapted for the screen in 1917 (Parego) in Italy, and in 1931 in France (Bussi). The actress, Musidora, known for her signature role in the adventure serial Les vampires (Feuillade 1915), plays the role of René Néré in the first film version, and Marcelle Chantal, sometimes known as Marcelle Jefferson-Cohn, plays the role under the direction of Bussi. The first version with Musidora was filmed in Rome, and Colette spent time on the set while there with her second husband, Henri de Jouvenel.

The famous realist singer, Fréhel, is described in detail in Colette's novel as "Jadin," yet we cannot witness the film versions to see how she is represented conematically. Fréhel made sixteen movies in her career, but she did not play the role(s) in the film adaptations of La vagabonde; yet Kelley Conway finds that the description of Jadin in the novel captures Fréhel perfectly (2004:93):

> Elle chante en cousette et en goualeuse des rues, sans penser qu'on peut chanter autrement. Elle force ingénument son

> contralto râpeux et prenant, qui va si bien à sa figure jeune d'apache rose et boudeuse. Telle qu'elle est, avec sa robe trop longue, achetée n'importe où, ses cheveux châtains pas même ondulés, son épaule de biais qui a l'air de tirer encore le panier de linge, le duvet de sa lèvre tout blanc d'une poudre grossière, le public l'adore (19).

It is unfortunate that neither film version of La vagabonde is available today, since Colette's poignant descriptions depicted visually on the screen would be intriguing to see.

Colette quickly became fascinated with the cinematic medium after having written for one of the first critical journals on film (Le Film), and fate paved the way for her future collaboration in French film production. The industry faced a crisis in 1929 because film production in France fell to fifty films per year (Flitterman-Lewis 161). This sudden drop in the production of films posed a huge problem for the filmmakers of the country. Hollywood was dominating the market with new technology and the innovation of films with sound. A major adjustment was needed:

> In France, the cooperation that grew up more or less spontaneously between certain directors, scriptwriters, and technicians, can in some ways be seen as a reaction to the massive machinery of Hollywood, as a sort of joining of collaborative forces to stimulate French film productivity. …what has come to be known as the renaissance of French cinema (1934-1940) (Flitterman-Lewis 161).

Filmmakers began looking for famous name dialogists and scenarists in order to attract more people to the new French films. As a result, in 1935, Max Ophuls collaborated with Colette to create a film entitled Divine, inspired by her stories in L'Envers du music-hall, a collection of stories that she had

written in 1913. Alain and Odette Virmaux comment on the adaptation of the stories written by Colette and decide that the publicity at the time "correspondait mal à la réalité …ce livre n'était pas un roman, ni un récit, mais plutôt un recueil" and they advised that for the cinema "il avait bien fallu … inventer une histoire" (1981:221).

In spite of the need to "invent" a story, Colette signed the dialogues, in testimony to the collaboration of resources. Sandra Flitterman-Lewis confirms this tendency toward teamwork in her book Desiring Differently. She mentions a few other very important "cinéastes" and dialogists of this period of history:

> …in this stimulating climate of cooperative work, some of the most enduring and important cinematic collaborations were born… the thirties is known for the significant work of scenarist-dialogists like Charles Spaak, Jacques and Pierre Prévert, and Henri Jeanson … (171).

It's unfortunate that Flitterman-Lewis doesn't mention Colette's name as dialogist in this quotation while talking about this period of renaissance. Colette was already very well-known in France at this time, even though the film Divine did not achieve great success: "Divine did not catch fire at the box office, and on the whole has been…sadly underrated" (White 267). Colette had already achieved success with the film Lac aux dames (Allégret) in 1933 and would later film the popul arGigi with Jacqueline Audry in 1948. Divine offers critical examples of back-stage music-hall mise en scène that is unprecedented and extraordinary.

While watching the film Divine for the first time, two scenes in particular impressed me: one involves a serpent, and the other a baby. The images of the two scenes remain vivid in my mind's eye over and above any other scenes in the film. There are perhaps several reasons. These two scenes alone represent the dramatic interplay of the whole film, based upon the juxtaposition between the unhealthy world of the music hall in the city and the healthy world of the farm in the country, as they relate to the female protagonist. The Virmaux team explains this phenomenon: "Car l'ouvrage paraissait reposer sur une opposition très schématique entre un milieu malsain (le music-hall, la débauche, les artifices, la drogue), et un milieu sain (la campagne, le grand air, les animaux, la simplicité)" (1981:221). Note also the expression used in the publicity for the film: "Un grand film de music-hall, et de nature" (Virmaux 1981:221).

Before discussing in detail the two salient scenes, a brief recounting of the narration is in order. A beautiful young farm girl, Ludovine Jarisse (Simone Berriau), receives a visit from a good friend, Roberte (Yvette Lebon), a dancer in the Paris music hall, The Empyrée (Roberte had already found fame in Colette's work, La vagabonde). Ludovine becomes fascinated with her friend's exciting lifestyle and decides to follow her to Paris to take her place in a show currently in rehearsal. Roberte has recently suffered a leg injury and is leaving the show soon on an extended trip.

Ludovine is given the stage name “Divine” by Victor (Paul Azaïs), the assistant to the music-hall director. Her introduction to the music-hall realm is fraught with lewd and vulgar men who try to take advantage of her innocence, and the inference of illegal drug trafficking in the theater is completely unfamiliar to the naïve and innocent Divine. The men in this film are not, however, the only characters who try to seduce Divine. One woman in the film also brandishes a phallic symbol. The dancer Dora, played by Gina Manès, is a serpent reincarnated in female form with a long cigarette holder as her phallic symbol. She also stands in opposition to the typical innocence of many women in the film. She tries to tempt Divine in the apartment of the fakir, coming much too close for the comfort of the young farm girl. Divine resists the advances of the men in the music hall, and of Dora, and falls in love with the milk delivery boy, Antonin (Georges Rigaud), who delivers her milk to her apartment door each morning. Antonin adores farm life, as does Divine, and they dream of a quiet place in the country together surrounded by Mother Nature.

The chickens and ducks of the farm life that Divine adores never appear in the music-hall setting, but another animal, a serpent, is nonetheless present in one of Divine’s signature “spectaculacts” (as described in the Introduction). The scene begins with Divine and the Fakir Lutuf-Allah (Philippe Hériat) on stage looking at each other from a distance in long shot: Divine has her back to the spectators at the edge of the stage, and the fakir is at the back

of the stage sitting at the top of a long staircase. They are both dressed in metallic costumes, and the fakir actually has metallic makeup covering all of his exposed skin. The fakir can see the audience and Divine while the crowd looks at the fakir and Divine's back. The scene relies on the gaze of the spectator and the gaze of the actors on stage for its force and dramatic power.

Just before the scene was filmed, Colette writes in L'Envers du cinéma: "Ce fut le même jour que les mains d'un dompteur devaient poser sur les épaules de Simone Berriau, un python vivant, presque aussi lourd qu'un homme… Qu'est-ce qu'il va faire? Demandai-je un peu avant au maître du serpent… Il leva les épaules, incertain" (Colette 1913:287). The theatrical interplay of the scene begins as a huge serpent slowly climbs the body of Divine while caressing her skin as she stands immobile. She appears hypnotized by the fakir who coaches her softly saying "Reste tranquille, regarde-moi" (Virmaux 1981:239). The fakir forbids Divine to look at the serpent, but forces her to stare at him as he hypnotizes her with his charms and his seductive language. He whispers "Tiens le cou," and Divine, in a medium close-up shot, grasps the serpent's neck and holds it in front of her face while still staring at the fakir on the stairway. There is an interesting pun implied with the use of this expression in French. A homonym of "cou" is the word "coup," and the idiomatic expression "tiens le *coup*" means "Hold on" or "Stay the distance," as Divine is also asked to do.

Colette was on the set for the filming of this essential scene, and she commented:

> La tête du serpent disparut derrière l'épaule, emmena le corps dans l'indicible progression ophidienne, et je pense que l'épreuve touchait à sa fin… Mais au sommet de la coiffure orfévrée, la tête du python reparut, se dressa en fer de lance…Les grandes paupières de Simone Berriau s'abattirent, voilèrent ses prunelles et Ophuls permit qu'on délivrât…mais je crois bien qu'il était plus ému qu'elle, qui déjà secouait le mauvais charme et s'enquérait: - "Ça a marché? Nous étions bien, Joseph (le python) et moi?" (Virmaux 1981:287).

Snakes often appeared on music-hall stages to the delight and wonder of their spectators. Fréjaville announces a similar act with hands-on engagement while discussing variety animal acts: "C'est l'heure où l'on va sortir de sa cage de verre le grand serpent python des Indes, pour le faire toucher aux spectateurs…" (247). Pythons were extremely popular as they embodied mystery, fear, curiosity and exoticism in one slithering mass of poison. Eduoard Beaudu also mentions pythons and cobras and their rapport with dancers in Histoire du music-hall: "…lourds pythons de Brésil lovés au corps de la danseuse, cobras dodelinant envoûtés par la flute …"(85).

Colette had not anticipated the scene with the serpent in her L'Envers du music-hall, although there are many animals discussed in her work. There is a whole chapter dedicated to dogs called "Les Chiens savants." There are also monkeys in sequined costumes, a miniature horse, a beige poodle, a little bear and a white donkey, but there is no serpent. Exotic animals paraded music-hall stages from England to France and beyond. Their presence can

be traced to the enormous, yet brief, popularity of the circus. Pierre Bost explains that the music hall and the circus only differ in respect to two types of acts. The circus does not have singers, and the music hall has no clowns. He notes, however, the popularity of elephants and tiger tamers as popular animal acts in both venues (23).

Extensive symbolic clichés pervade this suspenseful scene of Divine. The serpent, eternal icon of sin, the temptation of Eve, evil and debauchery, wraps itself around the scantily dressed body of Divine. If we see the serpent as a phallic symbol suggesting sexual gratification, the woman does not resist these advances – neither those of the fakir, or of the serpent. However, Divine is petrified with fear. The fakir transforms himself into a serpent that dominates the female body and does exactly what he wishes to her throughout the scene. Divine is as fetishized and objectified by the fakir as by the spectators in the theatre and the spectators who watch the film.

This scene is reminiscent of writing style of Colette with regard to the role of the spectator. Colette had the amazing gift of a very keen eye and the ability to describe what she saw in non-traditional ways. This opinion is shared by Garett Heysel who writes “And yet among countless critical approaches taken to read Colette, few have considered to any serious extent the role of theatricality, and especially the process of spectatorship in her writing” (95). The Virmaux team allude to this quality in “Colette au cinéma:” “Ce livre n’était pas un roman, ni un récit, mais plutôt in recueil d’impressions

et de ‘choses vus’” (1981:221). Colette herself recognized this gift she possessed. She proclaims: “Nous ne regardons, nous ne regardons jamais assez, jamais assez, jamais assez passionnément” (Virmaux 1981:276). Colette’s own unique and passionate regard brought to life on the screen a spectacle of a man, a woman and a serpent in this first key scene.

Not long after the encounter with the serpent, the second critical scene takes place. We must first call to mind the spectator’s perspective on the female body that exists up until this point in the film. The spectator has just seen the performance with the Fakir, the serpent, and Divine. The woman is objectified and exploited in her role as “female body” and “desired object” by the man as master who controls her movements, or precisely, lack of movement. He condescends to Divine in a figurative sense and a true physical sense as he stands above her on a stairway. The woman in the spectacle solicits her master’s gaze and the spectator’s gaze is mediated through him at the same time.

The second scene begins as a young music-hall dancer runs up the stairs to the loge in medium shot to find her hungry little baby hidden in a suitcase. She is already half nude when she picks up the child. The spectator, who had just seen the female body in a sexual connotation, is shocked when her nudity is represented in a completely different manner. She takes the child and “Elle allaite sa fille” (Colette 1913:134). All of the other women in the loge gather around the mother and child in a very close shot to

watch a backstage spectacle that is never viewed by the audiences below, but which is nonetheless fascinating to see.

Colette had written of a similar scene with a mother breast-feeding her child in the chapter entitled “L’Enfant de Bastienne.” She writes: “Sans prendre le temps de s’asseoir, ni de dégrafer son corsage ouvert, elle presse et délivre, à deux mains, un sein gonflé, bleuté de veines généreuses” (134). Bastienne is only seventeen in the book, and she rehearses and appears on-stage all through her pregnancy. As for the father of her child: “…pas de nouvelles,” (128) explains Colette in this chapter in L’Envers du music-hall. Just as the men use the women in Divine as sexual objects for their own pleasure, a man has taken advantage of the young Bastienne, and has given her child and abandoned her to raise it on her own.

The symbolic and stereotypic implications relating to women in the scene with the baby are rather evident: an innocent child that depends on its mother for maternal nourishment, in the figurative and the true sense. She alone can satisfy the needs of the child. The child symbolizes fragility, purity and innocence. The mother represents the maternal image for which she is designed. Just before leaving the loge to take part in a slave-market scene in the role of a nude slave, the mother gives the baby to Divine. Note the progression: Divine gazes at the fakir while experiencing the heavy weight of the serpent, which represents the fakir exploiting her and caressing her body. Divine then watches the mother and the baby, and she holds the baby in her

arms. The viewer is faced with a dichotomy of visual and sensual stimuli to sort out. Is she “mother”? Is she the fetishized object of man’s desire? Is she objectified by the spectators? Is she all of these?

Even though it may be at first difficult to see, the two scenes do have elements in common. There is an element of mystery that exists in each of them. In the scene involving the mother and baby one thinks of the mystery of creation, of birth, and of the mystery of the rather primitive looking act – breast-feeding. In the scene with the serpent, one thinks of the mystery of the serpent itself and of what it could potentially “do” to the woman, and of the fakir with his enchanting and seductive manner. Also, even though the field of vision is very limited in the loge scene, yet expansive in long shot in the scene with the serpent, the serpent and Divine in the first scene, and Divine with the baby in the second, are situated exactly in mid-shot. In addition, in the scene with the baby, everything stops for several seconds in the midst of the chaotic world that surrounds the women. The action also stops in the scene with the serpent, with very little dialogue and only the rolling of the drums.

In addition to these similarities, the voice of the fakir whispers to Divine as if she were an infant: “Tranquille petite fille…” (Virmaux 1981:239) and the young mother and the other dancers speak softly to the baby in the loge. So, the two scenes represent events that one does not often, and sometimes never, observe. When we see a mother breast-feeding an infant, our tendency is to look away. Societal morals normally prevent one from staring

closely at a mother breast-feeding her child. Equally beautiful, disturbing, and fascinating, one doesn't often see a serpent caress the body of a beautiful woman. Both must be considered "spectacles" as a result.

The differences between the two scenes are, of course, rather evident, and they have already been treated briefly above. The scenes oppose one another at the levels of space, duration and representation of the female body. The women dominate the scene with the infant, but it is a man who controls the serpent and the woman in the first scene. There is a feeling of warmth evoked in the scene with the mother and infant: warmth of the skin, the proximity of the women, and warmth of the mother's milk. The cold blood of the serpent in the spectacle, on the other hand, evokes coldness on stage. If one also considers the opposing liquid states evoked in each scene: the warm, nourishing milk of the mother and the cold blood of the snake, the comparisons apply directly to the opposition between good and evil, masculine and feminine and innocence and guilt.

There are several other scenes that we can relate to these two key scenes. The implication of "mother's milk" is, of course, evident in the scene with the infant, but toward the beginning of the film, a young boy overturns a bottle of milk in front of Divine's apartment. The scene announces to us allegorically what will ultimately happen in the film: Someone will try to corrupt Ludovine, to lead her far from her simple, innocent life as a farm girl. In addition, the milkman in the film, Antonin, who delivers the milk to Divine's

apartment in the mornings, is a reminder of a simpler life, and the man that she will marry in the end. His character stands in opposition to the other leading men in the film, who corrupt and tempt Divine.

Divine will eventually return to the pure and innocent life on the farm where she can milk cows of breast-feed her own children that will no doubt arrive in the future. She leaves behind her the corrupt world of the serpent and the world of the music hall. Colette explains this phenomenon in terms that apply perfectly to Divine's situation, in saying that her heroines "reviennent toujours à la campagne après ce grand mal, la vie citadine" (Virmaux 1981:222). The white milk of the milkman is the pure, cleansing liquid that erases the shadows of the dark corners of the music hall where Divine meets temptation.

The confusion of the two worlds of innocence and guilt disturbs the spectator all along the plot of Divine. When the young women smuggle the baby into the music hall in a black suitcase, the viewer is already aware that there is illegal drug trafficking in the theatre. When we see the hidden suitcase, we think that it is perhaps full of drugs to be delivered clandestinely to a buyer. Not even in their conversation do the dancers reveal the secret of the suitcase before the arrival of the mother to the loge. The suitcase is passed from hand to hand before it is finally opened, exactly as one imagines drugs in transit. We are aware that the suitcase contains precious cargo since the young dancers pass it very gingerly from one to the other. Finally, the

suitcase is opened and the contents melt the hearts of the viewers and the dancers who look on. The fragile, innocent child circulates in the same corrupt world as the drugs.

Although Divine includes many elements of the short stories of music-hall life observed by Colette in L'Envers du music-hall, it cannot really be considered an adaptation of the work. The scenario for the film, surely written by Colette, has never been found. Alain and Odette Virmaux searched the archives of the film's records thoroughly and they concluded that:

> On est cependant en droit de voir en elle (Colette) le véritable maître d'œuvre de l'argument et de la progression dramatique, même si quelques scènes seulement – la figurante allaitant son enfant dans la loge…– s'inspirent directement des souvenirs évoqués dans L'Envers du music-hall (1981:221).

Women are the objects of the male gaze in Divine, but they are also naïve victims of that gaze. Susan White explains: "Ophuls made two films which … depict women as a beast in need of training, or as the victim of the beasts who feed on spectacle" (White 261). Susan White is speaking here of the films La tendre ennemie (Ophuls 1936) and Divine respectively. White continues by saying, Divine offers us "some of the anxieties about single women's economic survival" (267). The film also shows us the anxieties in relation to the possibility or the impossibility of staying financially independent as a woman without being corrupted, unless one marries a financially independent man.

This is the exactly the case in the film Mitsou (Audry 1956). The music-hall dancer, Mitsou (Danièle Delorme), marries an older, well-to-do aristocrat, Pierre Duroy-Lelong (Fernand Gravey), but the class differences between the two pose many problems. Not long after their marriage, Mitsou is subjected to long hours of training to educate her in proper, high society etiquette: including lessons on poetry, literature, and, of course, ladylike horseback riding. Unlike Divine, Mitsou is taken *from* the world of the music hall to that of high society.

Susan White comments: "…the film (Divine) is a complex and beautifully filmed commentary on the nature of theater, the theater of nature, and a woman's role in both" (White 273). The image of the woman exemplified in the film is far from complementary, and in fact, is rather pejorative, in spite of authentically beautiful aspects of the filming. Although not specifically addressing Divine's character, Sandra Flitterman-Lewis summarizes the role of the woman in the film: "Thus the female figure, always and inevitably defined through her sexuality, can be seen as the structural mainspring of conventional cinematic narrative" (299). Divine's presence advances the narration in this film, and despite her subservient role, she is the focus of Ophul's and Colette's music-hall story.

François Truffaut comments on the film as being "un vrai petit chef-d'œuvre de verve et de santé," and even "un vrai petit Renoir" (Virmaux 222). It is perhaps easier to see the film as a masterpiece from the *male*

perspective. As for Renoir, he was yet another man who adored “se faire une toile” in fetishizing his women on canvas. The art of classic cinema in the 1930s relied upon the female star for her vulnerability, as well as her strength, but in either case, she is clearly the object of the male gaze. Divine does not provide the most complimentary representation of woman in French cinema of the 30s, but it is, nonetheless, an accurate depiction of the many struggles in the life of the female music-hall performer as she attempts to make her way though each long day. Her life may have appeared glamorous to the spectators, just as Roberte’s life as a music-hall performer appeared to Ludovine, but backstage at the music hall there is a dark world of exploitation and deception, and the “Ludovine” that becomes “Divine” quickly finds out that this is not the life she had imagined.

Backstage also plays a key role in a very romantic music-hall film, Le bonheur (L’Herbier 1935) when a music-hall star, Clara Stuart (Gaby Morlay), decides to make a film entitled, Le bonheur. This mise-en-abîme duplicates that of Paris-Béguin, where Jane Diamond’s revue show is also called Paris-Béguin. Miss Stuart’s film will replicate her real life love affair with the bohemian artist Philippe Lutcher (Charles Boyer). Near the beginning of the film the caricature artist targets her and shoots her to prove a philosophical and political point about fame and society. Clara becomes so fascinated with his marginal behavior that she falls in love with him, despite the fact that she is

already married to a prince. Like Bob in Paris-Béguin, Philippe lives on the outskirts of society flaunting a non-traditional existence.

Just as we saw in Paris-Béguin, the life of the music-hall star and that of her bohemian lover cannot coexist long together. Clara pleads with Lutcher to stay with her near the end of the film, but he only replies "Si je restais, je te perdrais." She refuses to give up, but he ultimately leaves for good saying "Je te donnerai rendez-vous dans le cinéma. Je ne verrai que ton image." The film ends with Clara Stuart performing the song "Le bonheur" in her own film by the same name, with Lutcher watching in close-up from the theater audience.

The whole premise of the film Le bonheur demonstrates cinematically the fate of so many music-hall stars of the period. Those who were successful in the music hall had to learn to adapt to the cinema as soon as the new technology began to take hold. Otherwise, they were left behind to eventually be part of the demise of the music hall. The cinema was soon considered more self-sufficient than music hall, and René Bizet reminded us in 1927 that "Le cinéma se suffit à soi-même, j'imagine. Il est assez puissant pour n'avoir besoin de personne. Nous vivons à l'époque du cinéma" (173).

When we watch the female star performance in Le bonheur, it seems as if we tap into another world. The performance shot sequences are traditional in the sense that we see spectators in close-up watching the star, also in close-up. But the film carries this notion even further by breaching

another dimension that does not appear to exist in the rest of the film. No matter what has happened just before or after a performance in the narration, we are awestruck as we gaze at the iconic features and exquisite form of the star. She becomes an object of perfection in every sense. She surpasses the "human" and the "mundane" and she becomes a goddess in the eyes of the spectators. Cinematic techniques such as filtering, backlighting and blissful music enhance these effects.

There is only one exception to this effect within the film, and it is during a performance when Clara sings "Le jour se lève…". Very unusual shot sequences are present throughout this song, and they are atypical of the rest of the film. The camera moves from very high angle long shots from above and behind Clara on stage, to very low angle medium and long shots of her from the orchestra pit. This radical difference in shot composition and angle leaves the spectator with a feeling of loneliness for Clara. The stage looks cold, and the spectators in long shot are a mass of lifeless heads. The spectacle is not just Clara, but is rather the whole ensemble of this particular performance. Clara has not yet met Luchet, so she does not exude the passion that she will find with him. Her performance on stage is simply her job, and it does not seem to give her much satisfaction. The shots of this scene depict visually the lack of passion and excitement in her life.

Throughout the rest of the film the female star's objectification takes precedence over the narration. Her performance is not only powerfully

mesmerizing, but Kelly Conway finds that "Whether in the music hall or the cinema, Le bonheur implies, female performance possesses an overwhelming and destabilizing power, rendering spectators mute, incapable, apolitical" (2004:150). Since Lutcher's political statement is rendered mute by the drugging effect of the performance as he watches Clara, there exists no hatred, no seriousness, and no gravity towards conviction. Clara's performance power is evident, yet *she* falls under the power of her unconventional lover to reveal a more vulnerable side in her real life existence.

In opposition to the discussion of the *female* star that we have treated thus far in the chapter, we now move to Romance de Paris (Boyer 1941), where a *male* music-hall star now holds the principal role in the film. Charles Trenet, in the role of Georges Gauthier, plays a would-be music-hall singer who lives with his mother (Sylvie) and sister, Madelaine (Jacqueline Porel), and struggles to make ends meet. He dreams of the life of a music-hall star, and often sings while working at odd jobs with his friend Jules (Jean Tissier). When his sister suddenly elopes, he is left to care for his mother, who strictly forbids him from becoming a performer. Music-hall life had been his father's downfall. Burch and Sellier describe Georges' childhood: "…son chanteur de père, homme vaniteux et despotique, lui (Sylvie) mène la vie dure" (350). Jules mother has other ideas in mind for Georges as she exclaims to Jules "Il faut qu'il prenne un travail réalistique !"

Despite his mother's wishes, George becomes a famous singer named "Papillon," but keeps this secret from his mother and his fiancée, Jeannette (Yvette Lebon), as long as he possibly can. Once he is earning huge sums of money, his mother and his fiancée are told the truth, his sister comes home from an unhappy marriage, and they all live happily ever after. George Rearick says of Trenet in this film: "In Jean Boyer's Romance de Paris (1941) for example, he was the Parisian little guy who, resourcefully dealing with unemployment, sings his way to musical stardom and a true love marriage" (263).

Trenet had been a popular music-hall singer in France since 1937, when at his debut he wore a "Chevalier-type straw hat, a pale blue suit" (Damase 67). His songs pleased Parisian audiences and lifted their spirits. One of his most famous numbers was entitled "Moi, j'aime le music-hall." He performs many lively and upbeat numbers during this film. One of his most famous, "Les femmes qui ont les yeux bleus," is performed just after beautiful shots of the Parisian landscape, and one has the feeling that Paris is also a woman, and that she is being seduced by Papillon.

Romance de Paris contains some amazing camera work with regard to depth of field. Numerous shots of Paris through windows and doors are beautifully framed with buildings, churches and cafés lining the streets. Stage depiction shows extreme stage depth with great care being paid to angle and

composition. Many backstage shots are from *behind* the curtain, as we can only hear the performance that is taking place on stage.

Since we are faced with a *male* music-hall star in this film, it is interesting to note how the female gaze is mediated. There are noticeably more women in the audiences when Papillon performs in the music-hall theater. They are often seen in close-up and shot-reverse shot with Papillon, and are either smiling, wide-eyed or swooning. During the press interview scenes, there are mostly *female* reporters present. They push each other aside to get close to him and shout out questions in unison in chaotic, squeaky voices. Therefore, females within the film mediate the female gaze, and the presence of Jeannette, with her adoring nature, only contributes further to the objectification of Papillon as a male star.

The French were very much in need of ”happily every after” stories at this difficult time during the German Occupation, and this light musical helped carry them away from their troubles, if only for a short while. Rearick tells us: “Here again was the old myth of Paris as the beautiful city of lovers and joy – without a trace of German soldiers, hardships, and persecutions …” (263). Dietmar Reiger specifically addresses the power of song in France during this trying period: “la chanson provenant du cinéma recherche, elle aussi, l’évasion dans un monde moins hostile et plus propice aux rêves d’amour et au rire franc” (308).

To carry this notion one step further, the women of the theater seemed to be protected during periods of war, as if in the "bubble" of music hall. For example, in the film Mitsou, a backstage hand remarks to a group of chorus girls "Vous avez de la chance vous filles – La guerre vous passe au dessus de la tête." It may at first seem as if this quote applies to the difference between men who must go to war and women who do not, but if we consider the case of so many light film musicals of the early forties, perhaps these women are protected both physically and spiritually because their life *is* the music hall.

The final shots of Romance de Paris are reminiscent of traditional Hollywood films of the forties with the main characters being framed, often in close-up, in very symmetrical shots while we hear the music of the finale. At the end of Romance de Paris we see Jeannette and Madame Gauthier dressed in lavish furs with Georges in the center of a symmetrical three-shot. Georges holds a child and is singing "Romance de Paris" at the close. Parisians viewing this film were undoubtedly asked to look to a brighter future, and hope for the Paris of by-gone days to one day reappear, and for families to grow and prosper, as a result.

Rick Altman describes "the gender dynamics of the backstage musical in particular as Ziegfeldesque in formula: man = eyes = camera = desire; women = body = art = object of desire" (Mizejewski 1999:32) and thus depicts the traditional notion of the woman as the object of the cinematic gaze. If

French music-hall films took their cue from Hollywood, this formula should hold true for the backstage films we have discussed in this chapter.

Women are certainly the objects of male desire in Chacun sa chance, yet Gabin addresses the spectators directly when singing his first ballad. He is deliberately engaging the male and female spectator's gaze, so *he* becomes the object of desire, and desire itself. He is also calling attention to the self-reflexivity of the cinematic medium, acknowledging the presence of the spectator. Mediation of the male gaze by Marcel and Jean d'Artaud takes place in many scenes throughout the film, but the cigarette girls voyeuristically ogling Marcel in his loge seat also exhibit mediation of the female gaze. These women are not placed in this scene for the purpose of their own "to-be-looked-at-ness," but for that of Marcel.

Jane Diamond is undoubtedly the object of the gaze in Paris-Béguin, and her male lover Bob, as well as her adoring fans, evidence this desire for her. However, her "to-be-looked-at-ness" does not transcend the narrative thread as does Clara Stuart's in Le bonheur, where the world seems to stop turning whenever she is on stage in close-up. Luchet's relationship with Clara will be reduced to her own objectification. He will ultimately gaze upon her on the screen just as all the other spectators in the theater do.

Divine turns slowly on a pedestal with lovely chorus girls at her feet, motionless and smiling, completely aware that the only reason she is there is for the visual pleasure of those gazing at her. Absolutely no talent is required

to spin and smile. This is clearly an exhibitionistic and voyeuristic endeavor. Romance de Paris is the exception to this rule, since it features a *male* star, but Charles Trenet was so immensely popular with the French public that a film with him as a star worked very well in the difficult period of the Occupation. Thus, with the exception of Marcel and Papillon, the captivating female star *is* the focus of the gaze in the majority of these films, and her face in close-up captivates the spectator.

We have been privy to secret lives, love won and lost, and the underworlds of crime and drug trafficking on our trip backstage in music-hall cinema. Dudley Andrew finds that "The music hall … takes its cue from the modern theatre, masking its performers behind curtains so as to present them dramatically or mysteriously" (1992:24). We can now add to this mystery that of backstage drama, penetrating even deeper behind the curtain and revealing dark secrets through cinematic representation. It can be as captivating as the angelic face of the music-hall star, yet as ephemeral as the happiness that so often eludes her.

CHAPTER 4

MUSIC-HALL CAMEOS

There are several films within the period of study that are in some way reminiscent of music hall. These are not films specifically made *about* music hall, but they contain either music-hall stars or on-stage music-hall acts. These films are categorized in this study as "music-hall cameos," since cameo performances or appearances are the only evidence of music-hall content. Even though the music-hall performances in these films may be brief, they make an important contribution to the narration of each film. They are also significant because the music-hall content has usually been added for specific reasons. These reasons, however, vary with each film. The films include: Faubourg Montmartre (Bernard 1931), Coeur de Lilas (Litvak 1932), La garçonne (Limur 1936), Le crime de Monsieur Lange (Renoir 1936), La grande illusion (Renoir 1937), Pépé le Moko (Duvivier 1937), La bête humaine (Renoir 1938), Le jour se lève (Carné 1939) and Etoiles sans lumière (Blistène 1946).

Since the music hall played an important role in the lives of the people of Paris during the twenties and thirties (eight of the nine films above were

produced in the thirties), we glimpse its integration, however limited, into the lives of the various film characters. Even though they can all be classified as music-hall cameo films, there are distinct differences among them with regard to how the music hall is evoked. For example, Etoiles sans lumière stars Edith Piaf (1915-1963), an iconic performer in Paris music halls and around the world, yet the film is primarily about a famous cinema star Stella Doro (Mila Parély), who uses Piaf's voice to launch a successful career in sound film. Parély is known for her role as Josette in Cocteau's La belle et la bête (1946) and for her role as Geneviève de Marras in La règle du jeu, (1939), another well-known film by Renoir.

The music hall itself does not enter the narration of Etoiles sans lumière until the end of the film when Madeleine (Edith Piaf) is asked to perform on a music-hall stage for the first time in her life, and is a complete failure due to reasons that will be discussed. Therefore, the film specifically treats *filmmaking* and the advent of sound cinema around 1930, and the music hall is evoked through the presence of the music-hall star, Piaf, and the final scene of the film in the music-hall setting.

An unusual illustration of a cameo performance film takes place in La grande illusion. This film features prisoners in a German POW camp during World War I, hence the setting is far from that of the music hall. About midway through the film, the French and British prisoners decide to put on a show to entertain the others in the camp, and several of them don female costumes

and perform a kick line and song before German officers and French and British prisoners. The performance is completely unprecedented and unexpected. We are spellbound as we watch it, because the scene invades the typical narrative setting of the film and we glimpse the threshold of another world.

When discussing music hall's capacity for taking us to another place, René Bizet vividly points out: "La scène … du Music-Hall apporte avec elle un univers. La rampe sépare cet univers de l'univers du public. Il y a deux mondes l'un devant l'autre…. "(160). The "otherworldliness" of the show itself casts an unanticipated and humorous light on the prisoner's uncertain situation in La grande illusion. This is the only evidence of music hall in the film, yet it is a key scene with regard to showmanship, gender politics, and narrative events revolving around the capture of the French fortress in northeastern France, Douaumont.

The prisoners of La grande illusion long to see once more the "faubourgs" of Paris where popular music halls thrived. Throughout French cultural history the "faubourgs" represented the old working-class neighborhoods located just outside the central city limits (Rearick 94). Many dark passageways near the Grand Boulevards in Paris lead to the various faubourgs. The Faubourg of Montmartre was known for the Moulin Rouge and numerous dens of prostitution. The famous "Moulin" is still located near the Place Blanche in this historic district.

In Faubourg Montmartre two sisters, Ginette (Gaby Morlay), and Céline Gentilhomme (Lina Noro), encounter misfortune after the sudden death of their father. Gaby Morlay (1893-1964) appeared in 112 films from 1913 to 1964. Her roots bring her from the Théâtre de Bouffes Parisiennes, where she performed with Lucien Guitry, the father of director Sacha Guitry. In 1914, at the age of sixteen, she played Max Linder's partner in the short comedy Max dans les airs (Leprince, Linder). She also produced two films in 1934, Jeanne (Marret) and Nous ne sommes plus des enfants (Genina). Line Noro (1900-1985) appeared in 46 films from 1929-1956 and is best known for her role as Inès in Pépé le Moko.

In the first scene of Faubourg Montmartre an establishing shot shows a dark corner of a street with the sign "Rue de Faubourg Montmartre - 9e" suspended at one side. We see several women of dubious character on the street, and not long into the narration we meet Dédé (Charles Vanel), Céline's pimp, and Frédéric Charençon (Pierre Bertin), a boarder taken in by the Gentilhomme sisters to help them put bread on their table.

One day Frédéric exclaims "Nous irons au théâtre!" We then see the first of two music-hall cameos in this film. We are quickly transported to a music hall, where we watch an all-girl kick line on stage in a high angle long shot showing the orchestra and the audience, as well. The girls on stage wear comical dresses resembling umbrellas, and they also hold parasols to

complete the effect. They all sing, but the commotion from the audience as the spectators talk among themselves serves to overshadow the performance.

We then notice that one of the beautiful, shapely “figurantes” is Irène (Florelle), whom Céline and Ginette are waving to from the audience. Florelle (1898-1974) was a very well known music-hall star in the twenties and thirties. She began her career at the age of four, and she appeared in 47 films from 1922-1956. In 1936 she starred in Le crime de Monsieur Lange, another music-hall cameo film which will be discussed further on in this chapter. Céline and Ginette are seated in the balcony in the less-expensive seats, while the bourgeois audience is seated below. The audience stands and applauds at the end of the act, and Irène shouts “Bonjour Céline et Ginette!” as she waves back to the Gentilhomme sisters with a very informal gesture.

This tradition of informality is reminiscent of the café concert era, when the distinct spatial separation of stage and audience was absent. Even though the memory of the informal setting is quaint and familiar, many audience members in the music hall are disgruntled by the actress’ display, signaling the transition from the informal environment to a more formal one in the larger revue music halls (Conway 2004:133).

As the film continues the sisters find themselves on the brink of poverty. Their lack of money is in part due to the fact that Céline has developed a very expensive drug habit, and her pimp Dédé is more than pleased to provide her with what she needs for a price. In order to ease their financial difficulties,

Céline tries to convince Ginette to join her in her profession. Ginette agrees to try to adapt to the underworld environment in order to survive, so Céline transforms her into a provocative beauty. Before they step out for their first night on the streets of the "faubourgs," the girls stop at a bistro with other girls in the profession. The second music-hall cameo scene takes place in this venue.

The large room is sparsely furnished with simple décor and no windows. It is rather crowded, and the girls are gathered around the music-hall singer Madame Elise (Odette Barency). Her song is appropriately titled "Faubourg Montmartre," and was written by the director, Raymond Bernard. Barency performs in the café concert style, with her audience gathered closely around her in an informal setting. She sings a poignant, realist song about prostitution and poverty, and she is certainly not a vision of svelte loveliness, as is Irène. The years have begun to show on Madame Elise' ageing face. During the chorus of the song we hear:

> …et y a des mômes
> comm' des fantômes
> qui déambulent sur le trottoir,
> au crépuscule,
> cherchant chaqu' soir
> un idiot d'homme
> offrant un' somme pour s'entendr'
> dir' des mots d'amour....

Many point-of-view shots of the women in the bistro pervade the song sequence. The numerous working girls obviously empathize with the singer,

the song, and its message, even though they are not seen in close-up, but in long and medium shots highlighting their forlorn expressions

Even though Céline and the other girls try to convince Ginette to join them, Ginette realizes that she cannot follow in their footsteps. Finally, Céline's addiction worsens Ginette is forced to move her to an asylum. Ginette does not want to end up like his sister, so she escapes the underworld of the "faubourg" and marries Frédéric. Ginette and Frédéric then begin a new life in the country, but when neighbors in the new community find out that she is from the infamous "faubourg," they burn the newly married couple in effigy. This sequence appears misplaced and overdone, and the hooded villagers resemble Ku Klux Klan members from the 1960s in the United States.

Eventually the young couple is accepted in their new surroundings, but nostalgia for the "faubourg" remains poignant in Ginette's memory. Near the end of the film she phones an aunt in the Faubourg Montmartre just so she can hear in the background the familiar sounds of the street where she used to live. This attention to sound was quite common in the beginnings of sound cinema, as directors experimented with on and off-screen sound techniques after 1930. The film then ends as it began with a shot of the Faubourg Montmartre sign in the now familiar neighborhood.

Barency's realist rendition about the hard life in the underworld of prostitution mirrors Ginette's impending corruption as she hesitantly steps into Céline's world, and stands in direct contrast to the music-hall scene at the

beginning of the film. When Florelle sings and dances to a popular, upbeat tune, the spectator glimpses a very recognizable place, where variety entertainment brings pleasure to everyone.

Faubourg Montmartre celebrates the cinematic realism of the 1930s in France, and the addition of music-hall cameos accentuates the contrast between the two different worlds of the film. The dark alleys, hidden corners and underworld milieu of Faubourg Montmartre cast their spell on the spectator, as the film spans cultural milieus to take us from light and lively popular entertainment to seedy backstreets, and on to wholesome, yet deceiving, provincial surroundings.

The "faubourgs" of Paris again play a key role in the film Coeur de Lilas, which is based on a play by Tristan Bernard and Charles Henry Hirsh. Popular music-hall tunes by Yvain permeate the narration from the beginning of the film. Coeur de Lilas could be classified as a musical mystery, not a common type of film in France. There are three music-hall songs featured in Coeur de Lilas. What is particularly interesting about them is that none of the music-hall cameos are performed on stage in a music hall. They are woven into the narration at convenient, yet sometimes awkward moments. The three songs are performed by three music-hall stars of the day: Fréhel (1891-1951), Jean Gabin, and Fernandel (1903-71).

We are given a clue to music's role in the film, and to the mystery of the film itself, in the very beginning. While playing cops and robbers, a small

group of young boys discover a dead body. They run to find a policeman nearby and take him to the scene of the crime. During this scene we also watch a blind man wind up his “Limonaire” music box, and it begins to play as the background music for the scene.

Lilas Couchoux (Marcelle Romée), a quiet, young girl with large, sad eyes, is accused of the murder of a prominent industrialist because her glove is found at the scene of the crime. After several interrogations of possible subjects, an employee of the deceased is accused and held, as it appears that he stole a large sum of money from the corpse after the murder. Convinced of the young man’s innocence, Inspector Lucot (André Luguet) asks permission to follow the other possible subject, Lilas, even though she has provided a seemingly solid alibi.

Just before he begins his investigation, there is an unusual musical transition to a long shot of a disadvantaged, bordello neighborhood in the mythical Zone of Paris. We saw the blind man with his wind-up music box in an earlier scene. Now in close-up we see a man turning a crank with the same type of carnival organ music in the background. We assume it is again a music box that is producing the melody, but as the camera pans back to a long shot, we see that it is instead a dance-hall owner turning a ground-level crank to raise the exterior window barrier of his small “bal musette.” We have been cleverly tricked with the use of music, repetition, close-ups and body movements.

Just as we realize that we are mistaken as to the origin of the music, the camera pans left to reveal the same blind man playing his music box while begging in the street, and our original supposition is validated This is again typical of experimentation with the use of sound in the early thirties. His tune continues as we see prostitutes with their potential clients along the narrow cobblestone streets. The camera then pans upward to a high angle and focuses on a streetlamp.

Soon we hear a woman's voice begin to sing to the tune. As the camera moves further upward and to the right, passing through an open window, we see La Douleur (Fréhel) singing to the music. Fréhel had been an iconic personage in music halls since the teens. This is, however, her first sound feature film. She is engaged in the mundane task of doing laundry, and she shows signs of fatigue on her plump face surrounded by curly, dark locks. The lyrics of the song "Dans la rue" echo the hard life of prostitution, and we realize that she has been a workingwoman all her life:

> Dès qu'on a vu se barrer l'soleil
> Tous les jours, c'est pareil.
> Sans hâte, on descend sur le trottoir
> Pour chercher les coins noirs….

After her brief number, we are taken into a hotel bar, where Lilas lives a meager existence in an upper room, and we are given the impression that she, too, works as a prostitute. We then see Martousse (Jean Gabin) in the bar, sporting a bright white neck scarf and a fedora, slightly tipped to one side. He

is obviously a gangster and a roughneck, as we watch him physically evict a troublemaker from the bar.

Inspector Lucot and Lilas soon become friends, and frequent the “bal populaire” across from the hotel. It is there that Martousse begins to sing “La môme caoutchouc” to the tune already playing in the dance hall. He epitomizes the image of the apache, as he grabs female partners, draws them close, pulls their hair, or forcefully pushes them away. He sings:

> J’ai une petite gosse extra
> (inaudible)
> et la fille est vraiment fantastique
> Elle se met la tête sous les pieds
> Et les doigts de pied dans le nez….

After a few verses Martousse ends his solo, and Fréhel proudly stands up and continues with her own lyrics to the same song, confessing that she is indeed “la môme caoutchouc:”

> Je peux vous dire entre nous
> Et bien la môme caoutchouc, c’est ma pomme
> Et oui, c’est comme ça qu’on me nomme….

The posture of Fréhel in her second Coeur de Lilas song, along with her risqué admission of being a rubber woman in bed, breaks from traditional French female coquettish behavior. Even when women play prostitutes in French films of the thirties, they do not talk about their work, and they do not brag about their dubious talents. Also, Fréhel’s round figure and dowdy appearance is not consistent with the female singer as the object of male desire.

This sequence is also unique in that we seldom see male actors in French film take to song, and then be answered in song by a woman. Two exceptions that fall within our realm of study both occur in Chacun sa chance (Chapter Three), when La Baronne (Renée Héribel) and her male escort (Jean Sablon) hold a singing telephone conversation. Later on in the narration there is another flirtatious singing conversation between Sablon and the beautiful blond Colette (Odette Josylla), who has been abandoned at the theater by the Baron de Monteuil. Chacun sa chance contains so many songs that it seems more natural to hear this type of musical repartee along its narration than in Coeur de Lilas.

Lilas and Lucot quickly fall in love and take a boat trip to "une île d'amour" in the middle of a lake where a wedding reception is taking place. Fernandel is the best man at the reception, and after an instrumental cue from Lucot himself, who sings a few bars to Lilas, Fernandel continues the lyrics with the crowd at the reception joining in at the chorus:

> Ne te plains pas que la mariée soit trop belle.
> Ne te plains pas….

This light and gay tune stands in complete opposition to Fréhel's "Dans la rue" and also to "La môme caoutchouc," if one considers the milieu represented. Kelley Conway explains: "Gabin, Fréhel, and Fernandel all performed in the glamorous music halls of the 1920s and '30s, but in Coeur de Lilas, their performance styles are wedded to specific places and to specific classes"

(2004:113). Gabin and Fréhel represent the working class, and Fernandel, the bourgeois milieu at the extravagant reception.

Despite the brief, carefree moments spent together on the island of love, Lucot has no choice but to implicate Lilas, since she confesses to him out of spite when she finds out that he has been spying on her. He is in love with her, but he cannot lie, and he will not let an innocent man be accused of murder. The film ends with cruel destiny taking its toll, very similar to many poetic realist films of the thirties.

Two of the three song performances in Coeur de Lilas are seamlessly woven into the narration. La Douleur's short ballad about her life of prostitution evokes sorrow and regret, and it seems as if she simply decides to start singing to the tune that begins before the camera travels upward to her open window. The realist theme of her song blends perfectly with the images of street-walking women, who catch the eye of lonely men wandering slowly down the cobblestone streets below. Her song establishes the milieu where she and Lilas coexist.

Martousse's rendition of "La môme caoutchouc" does not, however, blend as seamlessly into the action. There is a very rough crowd in the dance hall, and the music does not suggest an introduction for a singer. Martousse appears quite jealous, as he watches Lilas and the inspector at a corner table. When he suddenly begins to sing, we are quite surprised. The lightness of the risqué lyrics contrasts sharply with the mood of the room. As he continues to

sings, however, we become more accustomed to the sound of his voice, and when Fréhel rises to answer to his lyrics, it now seems more natural and fluid. She has more of a stage presence in the room, and her brusque movements mimic those of bystanders in the hall.

As the setting changes to that of a quaint, little island on a beautiful, sunny day, music is anticipated, as we watch guests celebrate wildly. The long shots of the outdoor courtyard resemble a lavish stage set with Fernandel strategically placed front and center for his solo portion of the song performance. Since the inspector first begins to sing to the tune alone, and then the whole crowd chimes in, it seems as if this could be a natural occurrence at such as celebration. As the guests continue to sing and form a human train around the yard and through a small house, we also realize that many of them have had a great deal to drink by this point. Fernandel simply picks up the tune and sings a few bars for his solo while encouraging everyone else to sing with him at the chorus. This song inclusion and its whimsical theme are more credible that that of Gabin's song in the dance hall.

Music-hall cameos were a common inclusion in films just after the advent of sound, but to combine these cameos with a dark mystery in Coeur de Lilas is an awkward endeavor, at best. A portion of the believability in the mystery is sacrificed with the addition of lyrical content, and the "musical" world of the film does not blend well with the "mystery" in progress. The effect created is that of a fragmented narration, but the music-hall song

performances themselves are nonetheless striking, as they feature on screen three music-hall favorites, and again root the spectator in a familiar locale.

La garçonne is yet another film which contrasts the bourgeois milieu with a marginal lifestyle. It features a young, beautiful, bourgeois woman, Monique Lerbier (Marie Bell), who rebels and temporarily withdraws from conservative bourgeois society. Jean de Limur, the director, began his career in the United States as an actor, and studied under Chaplin and Demille. He then returned to France and directed 24 French films from 1928-1945. He is most well known for his French film L'âge d'or (1940). La garçonne was adapted from the 1922 novel with the same title by Victor Margueritte.

The novel was so controversial that Margueritte actually lost his "Légion d'Honneur" as a result of its publication (Weber 76). The novel's implications of a thriving lesbian culture were shocking to the public of the day, especially because: "its portrayal of the sexually liberated 'bachelor girl,' represented the worst fears of conservatives, who knew she was not just fictional" (Rearick 53). Niquette's lesbian persona threatened the unsuspecting public, but the actress who played her, Arletty, actually began her career in the theater and the music hall as a singer and dancer:

> Un jour, par hasard dans la rue, elle rencontre Paul Guillaume, l'homme qui imposa l'Art Nègre et le Cubisme. Il conseille à la future Arletty de tenter sa chance au théâtre et lui donne une lettre de recommandation pour le directeur du Théâtre des Capucines. Ce dernier l'engage dans un emploi très précis à l'époque : "petite femme de revue" (Cinépassion 1)

The film begins with scenes from a lush girls' boarding school in the country, where the boarders play tennis, swim, and hold slumber parties in their rooms. One of the young boarders, Monique, is suddenly called to her parents' side and leaves by boat to join them in Cannes. Her parents encourage her to marry a wealthy and handsome bourgeois gentleman, Lucien Vigneret (Maurice Escande), because their business is currently suffering. Monique is open to the idea, but she soon discovers that he has cheated on her and already has a child by another woman.

Monique quickly retreats from high society and becomes a "liberated woman," as she has numerous affairs; including one with the beautiful, blonde lesbian, Niquette, a music-hall dancer. Lesbianism in this sequence of the film is equated with drug addiction and promiscuity. Female lovers are shown dancing with one partner dressed in men's clothing; hair slicked back and little make-up. This was a scandalous, blatant display in 1930s France.

The music-hall cameo in this film is a song by Edith Piaf, who also plays a lesbian. She even flirts with Monique at one point after she sings to a large group at a lesbian gathering. This was her first film appearance, and she was 22 at the time. In this scene she wears a sleeveless, satin, sailor top and pant, and the wide pant legs are of transparent chiffon. The group has gathered on a yacht for a party, and the other women are grouped closely together on the floor as they watch her intently. Some of the women lie on the floor while others drape their bodies across another's legs or back. Most of

them are extremely beautiful with shapely figures and very stylish apparel. There are as many as twenty woman and a few men captured in one eye level long shot during the song performance. Piaf sings “Quand même, fais-moi valser” and near the end we hear:

> Je bois quand-même
> Je comprends quand-même
> J’aime quand-même.…

The “J’aime quand même” of the song echoes of an attraction toward a forbidden love that cannot be ignored. It is a song about death and a “femme fatale,” and it exhibits poignant realist themes. The song also has a drastic change in tempo in each verse. The first few stanzas of music are sung quickly with great determination, and incite in the listener a feeling of heightening suspense. Suddenly, the music and her voice slow markedly for a few prolonged bars.

Piaf is standing and leaning back against a mast on the yacht as she sings, and mooring ropes wrap around the mast and behind her body. She keeps her hands behind her back as she stands, and the image evoked is one of Joan or Arc at the stake. Since she is also singing about death, the mood is one of sadness and impending doom. These women have willingly chosen their alternative lifestyle, but the tone of the song suggests to them that they will not lead “normal” lives like their heterosexual counterparts, due to societal prejudice and ignorance.

There is just one other music-hall cameo scene further on in the narration that takes place in Niquette's sumptuous loge at the Casino de Paris where Monique has come to visit. Niquette is dressed in a light-colored satin robe, and Monique's black dress contrasts with hers, as she often wears black during her lesbian sojourn in the film. The scene is short, yet it situates both female characters backstage at the music hall in the private loge of the star. This scene is important because traditionally in music-hall cinema, it is only an intimate *male* acquaintance who is privy to the private loge of the performers.

Monique is determined to start her own business with the help of Souzaies (Jean Tissier), and she becomes a very successful interior decorator and antique dealer in a brief period of time. However, despite Niquette's lavish lifestyle, Monique realizes that this is not the life for her. A handsome director that Monique is attracted to soon vows to her: "Je vous arracherai à cette saleté Monique!" then he kisses her passionately.

We receive a visual cue that Monique has returned to conservative, mainstream society the next day when we see her all in white, with flowers all around her apartment; the bright light of day beaming in. In fact, two men have now fallen in love with Monique and they engage in a traditional, old-fashioned rivalry for her love. She has returned to the "wholesome" lifestyle that her parents wished for her in the beginning, and her temporary "fall from grace" has been forgiven.

The two music-hall cameos in this film contradict traditional representation. Piaf's song illustrates the lesbian sub-culture, and glimpses the difficult lives of the women who choose to follow their heart. Likewise, the loge scene between Niquette and Monique situates the women in their intimate relationship with each other, by placing them together in the star's private quarters, but also breaks with customary representation regarding the female music-hall star and her *male* admirers. In Faubourg Montmartre and Coeur de Lilas, music-hall numbers echo the underworld life of prostitution, while La garçonne suggests promiscuity in the marginal lesbian culture of 1930s France.

Promiscuity, crime, and murder, as well as wholesome family life, play a key role in the fourth music-hall cameo film, Le crime de Monsieur Lange**.** This is the first of three music-hall cameo films directed by Renoir**.** This film is also a striking example of the period of poetic realism in French film history, in that it supports the populist ideal and the working class. However, it is also atypical of this style in that it does not end with a cruel destiny that takes its toll (unless one considers Batala's death) or in an "amour impossible," since Valentine (Florelle), the beautiful owner of the courtyard laundry, and Amédée Lange (René Lefèvre), the struggling writer, walk off into the sunset together on the beach.

Jules Berry (Batala) plays a very similar role in this film as he does in Le Jour se lève, where his character, Valentin, seduces women and places

them under his domination. In Crime, Batala also seduces women at any cost, uses their charms to get what he wants from others, murders a priest in order to assume his identity, and flees from his company's financial debts. When he hears of the recent success of his old publication company under the new ownership of the printshop worker's cooperation, his greed cannot keep him from returning to claim what he feels is rightly his. When Batala returns to the familiar courtyard, Lange hears of his plan and does not hesitate to murder Batala in the very courtyard setting where most of the film's action takes place. (The film was originally to be titled La Cour).

Many scenes in Crime accentuate depth and breadth of field. We see staircases, spiral and otherwise, framing of doors, windows, views through windows to other windows, shots full of people and objects; people hurrying in and out of the frames, bumping against each other, squeezing through tight spaces. There is a sense of limited space, but the camaraderie of the characters creates warmth that is anything but uncomfortable.

The representation of space in this film can be equated with that of the backstage music hall which also features narrow stairways, crowded surroundings, and especially, just as we saw in Divine, women being victimized by men. The camaraderie of the performers coincides with that of the close-knit workers of the co-op. In addition, since Lange finds success with his "Arizona Jim" stories, the characters eventually dress in costumes for

publicity shots for future films based on “Arizona Jim.” They resemble a motley crew of music-hall performers preparing for an upcoming show.

There is only one music-hall cameo scene in the film, but there are actually two songs performed. Valentine sings a song to Lange in his apartment at the dinner table, not long after they have begun spending more time together. Valentine sings a realist song, but she does not resemble most music-hall realist singers, who often show the toil of their labors on their face, and typically do not have beautiful figures like the grand revue stars. Florelle was most well known for this type of grand revue numbers in which she wore revealing, glitzy costumes and sang amusing and uplifting tunes. This cinematic song performance of Florelle in role of Valentine contrasts with her image and persona on the music-hall revue stage.

What is most interesting about Valentine’s song is what happens at the very beginning of the musical introduction, as we hear her voice singing the first few bars before the shot actually cuts to her and Lange sitting in the apartment. Batala has just boarded a train to flee from his creditors, and has left his doting secretary, Edith, on the platform at the station in a classic “kerchief-waving-tear-in-the-eye” scene of departure. Batala has just told her to move on and find another man, and as she stands stupefied on the platform, a man approaches her, recognizing her vulnerable state, and leads her off to obviously take advantage of her. We then hear Valentine’s voice:

Il y a des filles très belles
Et beaucoup de vauriens….

an exact melodious vocalization of what we have just witnessed on screen. Then just for a brief moment, another man walks behind the young couple as they leave the right side of the frame. The man is a priest who curiously resembles Batala, except that he is wearing glasses. In a split second, and perhaps without conscious recollection, we see a projection of what is to come. Batala will kill a priest and assume his identity. This is yet another "vaurien" that we see as Florelle sings the lyrics. This simple song and its accompanying musical introduction demonstrate the power of a musical score and sound track in film since "musical scores very often tell our emotions how to read a given filmic sequence" (Brown 54).

Valentine's realist song to Lange in Crime, represents the day-to-day life of the common worker. Valentine sings:

Au jour le jour
A la nuit la nuit
A la belle étoile
C'est comme ça que je vis.

She is referring here to a life moving from day to day, night to night, without much rest, and without much change. It is her life as a laundress, and the life of the others in the courtyard. Since Florelle usually sang lively and dynamic numbers at the music hall, her rendition of a realist song is striking, as it again calls attention to the workers' lifestyle. Bergan feels that it is difficult to accept Valentine's song in the film since it "…is rather awkwardly interpolated into the

action, accompanied by a hidden orchestra on the sound track" (Bergan 149). One might tend to agree if it were not for the musical introduction to the song in the previous scene, which prepares the spectator much better for her upcoming solo.

The only other song in this film is "C'est la nuit de Noël," and the drunken concierge of the courtyard square of apartments and businesses sings it at a "fête" (Marcel Lévesque). This scene celebrates the success of the small group of neighbors who bond together to form their own "coopération" at a publishing company, after the presumed death of the swindling Batala. This scene has frequently been cited as an optimistic view of what a dedicated group of workers can accomplish. It is a warm, extremely realistic depiction of one big happy family having fun in simple ways. They all drink and laugh, and join in with the concierge after he has sung a chorus of his silly song, for it is certainly not Christmas they are celebrating.

In her Cahiers du cinéma article on Crime, Claire Simon describes the representation of the intimate courtyard space in the film:

> C'est un espace courbe, sans bords, dont on sort par un panoramique ou par un personnage mais qui finalement nous ramène toujours plus près du centre, par un élastique invisible, dont la dynamique augmente à chaque tour, et qui tourne sur lui-même à la fin en la personne du concierge saoul (61).

The courtyard in Crime is also a stage. The description above could well apply backstage at a music-hall theater where performers circulate about the

perimeter, and where a labyrinth of narrow hallways and stairwells caresses its characters on their way to and from the central location of the stage.

Women like Florelle in Crime, Piaf in La garconne, Fréhel in Coeur de Lilas, and Barency in Faubourg Montmartre, have played key roles in all music-hall cameo films to this point in the discussion, but we now encounter a film with a singular music-hall cameo performance of *men dressed* as *woman* performing before male prisoners in La grande illusion by Renoir. This film stars Jean Gabin as Lt. Maréchal, but surprisingly, Gabin does not participate in the cross-dressing music-hall act, even though his roots brought him to the cinema from the music hall originally.

Men in similar positions in the film, such as high-ranking officers, bond together and form their own world, at times oblivious to national strife or conflict. The English officer Captain de Boeldieu (Pierre Fresnay) and the German commander von Rauffenstein (Erich von Stroheim) develop a deep respect for one another in the film, even though they are enemies from opposite sides of the war. Other lower-ranking French and British prisoners also bond together, and the preparations and the presentation of the music-hall show is one representation of the small world they create together.

Separation from loved ones also bonds the men together in this anti-war film, and this fact serves to overshadow the hatred felt from one side to the other. The drama and realism of La grande Illusion shows that “le terrible de la guerre réside moins dans la haine de l’autre que dans le drame de ceux

qui sont séparés" (Lelouch 65). This fact is demonstrated by the men's camaraderie, as they get ready for the show they have planned to entertain the troops and the officers. They long for their wives and girlfriends whom they haven't seen in a very long time, as they examine the women's clothing from the costume crates that have recently arrived for the show.

Since male prisoners are disguised as women, gender ambiguity causes interesting reactions and consequences. When the men are removing the dresses, feathers and woman's undergarments from the crates to prepare for the performance, they ask the diminutive Maisonneuve with his "figure d'ange" to try on one of the costumes. Just before Maisonneuve appears in drag, the men are discussing the new trends in women's short hairstyles and short skirts when one of the prisoners, Julien Carette, remarks "On doit se figurer qu'on couche avec un garçon," so the stage is set for allusions to homosexuality.

When Maisonneuve emerges shortly in a woman's dress and wig, the men are speechless as they look at him. He looks so much like a woman that they indeed do think they see an illusion, and they seem immediately uncomfortable with the emotions they are feeling, as an awkward silence pervades the room. When the camera suddenly moves to the back of the hall where men are decorating for the show, we see everyone immediately stop what they are doing and stare at Maisonneuve. Seeing him from a distance at the back of the hall, the illusion is even more convincing. The camera pans to

the left from the far right and back of the long room to reveal several prisoners dumbfounded and immobile at seeing Maisonneuve in female attire. They can't help but stare at him. The silence pervades the continuous shot, as Maisonneuve repeats "C'est drôle," since he can feel their interested eyes intent upon him. Perhaps they have all simultaneously realized that "a man could arouse erotic thoughts in other men" (O'Shaughnessy 2000:131)

Just before the performance on stage in drag, Carette sings the lively music-hall tune "Marguerite." The melody of the uplifting tune flows naturally and fluidly from the end of the German victory song for Douaumont in the previous scene (This infamous battle came to be known as the Battle of Verdun, where 300,000 lives perished). The song "Marguerite" casts a less serious light on the German battle song, making it seem more like a happy celebration rather than a proud moment amidst a raging conflict.

Carette introduces seven unusual prisoners after his song. They have donned dresses, make-up, hosiery, and shoes, to create a "spectaculact" of inter-war drag. The cross-dressing scene is as full of life as a gay night at the theater. Make-up illuminates the faces and smiles of the elated prison participants. Even the rigid German officers and guards in the audience can't help from letting a smile creep out of the corner of their mouths as they applaud. Throughout the cross-dressing scene we see shots from the stage of the long, narrow hall, appearing hazy as the depth of field is realized. There is a note in the screenplay that alludes to the fact that the armed sentries

standing at the back of the room make the setting much like that of a music hall (Grand Illusion 48).

When Maréchal interrupts the performance by running onto the stage to announce that the French have recaptured Douaumont, the cross-dressers immediately remove their wigs and begin singing the Marseillaise. Since Carette has just finished singing his ode to Marguerite, one cannot fail to see the connection between *Mar*guerite and the singing of the *Mar*seillaise. Both titles have the same number of syllables and begin with the syllable "Mar."

Even though the prisoners' postures change noticeably when they remove their wigs and sing, the preface of the music-hall act creates incredulity on the part of the men who are at war in this film. The harsh reality of the war is rendered less severe by the absurd context of the moment, yet when the men begin singing proudly to the Marseillaise, the action proves to be "a simple but moving climax to the episode" (Finler 339). Perebinossoff feels that the carnivalesque gender role reversals in the film mirror the victory reversals on the battlefield (54). This may be true, but as a result of the music-hall atmosphere, the war they cannot *s*ee from the windowless hall takes on a less serious nature.

For one brief moment during the curious cross-dressing music-hall scene in La grande illusion, the world is not at war. The men think of nothing but the spectacle before them, and they unite in thunderous applause signaling that the performers and the audience have temporarily been able to

escape the thought of the raging conflict; that is, until Maréchal's interruption breaks the spell, and the real world comes crashing back from the very stage that provided the momentary refuge. One of the principal illusions in La grande illusion is the unprecedented cross-dressing music-hall performance.

This temporary act of camaraderie and lightheartedness among the prisoners and their captors caused criticism of the film relative to the imminent war with the Germans: "the pacifism of his (Renoir's) film was met with censorship" (Hayward 2000:451). In fact, along with La grande illusion, fifty-five other films were banned during the Occupation in France (Crisp 1993:252). Despite censorship and opposition, the film won the "Prix du meilleur ensemble artistique à la Biennale de Venise 1937," the "Prix du meilleur film étranger à New York en 1938," and it was the "premier film français cité à la Compétition Internationale de Bruxelles en 1958" (Bertin 451).

We now move from a World War I prison camp to the extremely exotic Kasbah of Algeria with Julien Duvivier's masterpiece, Pépé le Moko. A prison-like atmosphere is evoked in this film, since many inhabitants who have fled from France to the Kasbah may never return to their homeland. Pépé (Jean Gabin) is a gangster and jewel thief, who is also fleeing from justice, and for him, the Kasbah is like a prison in paradise.

Pépé le Moko is a colonial film in which nostalgia for Paris is evoked through the realist song of Fréhel, the famous but then outdated "chanteuse"

of the music-hall era who also performed in Coeur de Lilas. First known as "Pervenche" on the Paris stage, Fréhel led a very difficult life, and at the age of nineteen she attempted suicide. Her husband had left her for another realist singer of the day, Damia, and Maurice Chevalier later deserted her for Mistinguett. After years of alcohol and drug abuse in Bucharest, Turkey and Russia, she returned to Paris in 1923. She then changed her stage name to "Fréhel," after Cap Fréhel in Brittany where her parents were born. At the Olympia in 1924 Fréhel was able to "recapture the former magic with a powerful performance and was soon headlining at the most popular venues in the country" (Wikipedia 1)

Tania, Fréhel's character, is also leading a difficult life in the Kasbah. Fréhel was exiled from Paris for more than ten years of her life, and Tania is exiled, as well. Here in the darkened corners, shady alleys and linking labyrinth of stucco terraces above the seaside city, Paris is spoken of only through memory and longing for times gone by. Tania's lover, the abusive Carlo (Gabriel Babrio), is also confined to the Kasbah due to his criminal record back in France.

Towards the end of the film, Tania, or as Pépé calls her, "ma grosse," is talking to a downhearted Pépé about what she does when she is feeling down: "Quand j'ai trop le cafard, je change d'époque." She winds up a Victrola at the side of the room, sits down, and begins listening to her voice on a recording of "Où est-il donc ?" a song she had sung in her youth on the music-hall stages

of Paris. Tania glances briefly at a youthful image of herself on the wall, taken when she was still quite beautiful, and she tells Pépé that she likes to look and this picture and pretends it is a mirror.

When the vinyl recording reaches the chorus of the song, Fréhel sings along with her own voice, tears welling in her eyes. She is alone, centered in a medium shot from her chest upward, sitting on a bench against a plain stucco wall. The tears glimmer on her cheeks as she sings of the old "moulin" of "La Place Blanche" that she used to love. We note a difference between the voice on the record and that of the aging woman who has lost the shapely allure of her youth. Her voice has deepened. She sings with even more melodramatic emotion than she did in her days in Paris when she captivated her music-hall audience. She now captivates the cinematic spectator with her forlorn gaze into nothingness, as she realizes that when she sang the song many years ago in Paris, she had only to leave the theater to see her "Place Blanche."

The song sequence is rather short, yet it provides a calm oasis amongst the action sequences near the end of the narration. Fréhel sings:

> Où est-il mon moulin de la Place Blanche ?
> Mon tabac et mon bistrot du coin ?
> Tous les jours étaient pour moi dimanche !
> Où sont-ils les amis les copains ?
> Où sont-ils tous mes vieux bals musettes ?
> Leurs javas au son de l'accordéon
> Où sont-ils tous mes repas sans galette ?
> Avec un cornet de frites à dix ronds.
> Où sont-ils donc ?....

The “ils” she is referring to in the song are familiar places in Paris, even though traditionally the whole city of Paris in general is represented as a woman. The gender shift in the metaphor reinforces the romance Fréhel feels for her distant home. In this way she is in effect the author of the city of Paris, as Kelley Conway suggests (2004:23). Paris is unattainable since Tania will never return there, and the sadness evoked in her voice is one of longing and desperation. Dudley Andrew explains that:

> One might imagine that the music-hall milieu had grown too elaborate to serve as appropriate mise-en-scène for the pathos of such lyrics, whereas the cinema, at least that cinema known as naturalist, realist, or later ‘poetic realist’ was eager to spread such sentiment across the screen (1995:26-7).

During Fréhel’s song we see no stage, no glitzy costuming, no spectators, besides Pépé, that is, who lies in an elevated bed at the other end of the room. In the last shot before Fréhel’s song, he is not even watching her. He stares at the ceiling, as if he is caught in the same “coup de nostalgie ” that she finds herself experiencing: “… the Moulin Rouge acts as a mythical reference point …, connecting … with the French café-concert and music-hall traditions explicitly represented in Pépé le Moko by Gabin’s and Fréhel’s songs” (Vincendeau 1998:22)

The short song sequence performed by Gabin in this film also warrants further examination, especially since, as noted before, Gabin performed on music-hall stages before moving to the film industry. His parents were also music-hall singers, and he appeared with Mistinguett at the Folies-Bergère.

His first film was Chacun sa chance, which was discussed in Chapter Three. In 1931 Gabin met Julien Duvivier and they worked together on La bandera in 1935 and La belle équipe in 1936, before filming Pépé.

Pépé sings a happy tune on a rooftop in the Kasbah, as he dreams of his second rendezvous with the beautiful French woman, Gaby Gould (Mireille Balin). When the scene begins, we hear Pépé's voice singing to the fast-paced beat with maracas, a muted trumpet, and a xylophone in the background. We do not, however, see Pépé singing, but instead see many women of all ages gazing at him from other rooftops nearby. Pépé is not in any of the shots during the song until just before the ending. He sings:

> Aujourd'hui c'est merveilleux!
> Je suis gai. Je suis heureux.
> Je vois tout avec le soleil dans les yeux.

The melody for the tune is tapped out by a cobbler's hammer on the sole of a shoe and the vibrating of a gold necklace worn by a beautiful woman as she sits sifting a pan full of grain. It is as if the nature of the Kasbah and its sounds creates the world of the song.

The people in the narrow passageways of the Kasbah looks up and smile when they hear Pépé's voice. Many cannot see him, but can only imagine the scene. He sings a song of love, and love is in the air. There are all types of women looking up and smiling at the sound of his voice, and even men notice the newfound happiness in his tune. Young girls dance to the tune, and rock their babies to the beat. It seems as if Pépé's song brightens

everyone's day, as he is well known to all in the Kasbah and adored by the Arab women, young and old.

More attention is called to Gabin's voice and the music during this scene, than to Gabin's star quality. When we finally see Pépé and realize that he is indeed the one who is singing, the rooftop with the patterned laundry hanging in the wind acts as his stage. The backdrop is the panoramic of the ocean and the Kasbah. We only see Pépé long enough to situate him singing on the rooftop, and the end of the song arrives as we see his reflection from the rooftop balcony in an ornate oval mirror located just inside the small apartment. Then Pépé's Arab girlfriend, Inès, steps in front of the mirror to ask Pépé if he has gone crazy. This fast-paced tune sung by Pépé also provides an oasis among the action of the film, and marks Pépé's sudden change of mood. He has fallen in love, and everyone in the Kasbah will benefit from his happiness since it is difficult to keep secrets in the myriad of connecting passageways.

Pépé's euphoria does not last long. Pépé has not only fallen in love with Gaby, but also with the homeland that she represents. When Gaby is leaving on an ocean liner to return to France, he steals aboard, only to be stopped by the police before the ship sails. At the end of the film, Pépé is leaning against a very high, barred gate to the port. As he watches the ship leave, he commits suicide with a knife hidden in his suit. We do not actually see him stab himself, but see instead the sudden agony on his face in close-

up through the bars. The barred gate provides the perfect visual metaphor for the prison from which he will never escape.

A temporary escape from reality did exist, however, each time there was a music-hall performance, or a film that called to mind the nostalgia of the neighborhood music halls waning cultural traditions. Frehel's music-hall cameo in Pépé le Moko generates symbolically nostalgia for the realist singer, but also mourns her demise on Paris music-hall stages. The cinema had taken over, and glitzy grand revue performances were now the norm in music halls. Neither Tania nor Pépé would return to Paris, and symbolically, the realist singer's reign on music-hall stages there was also ending.

A dance hall scene is the focus of our next cameo film, La bête humaine by Renoir. La bête humaine is another example of the poetic realist film style of the thirties. It also exhibits traits of the American film noir genre, evidenced visually by characters that often disappear into the shadows or emerge eerily from them. Renoir makes use of many dark, gloomy settings, revealing many shadows, such as those of Venetian blinds, as in the murder scene. Also, scenes are often staged at night during the rain or in the fog (Vincendeau 1998:116). In addition, mystery, suspense and murder pervade the narration of this film, as the railway conductor Lantier falls in love with the beautiful, but married, Sévérine, and conspires with her to kill her husband Roubard (Fernand Ledoux).

Emile Zola is one of the most adapted novelists in history, and La bête humaine is based on his novel by the same name in the Rougon-Macquart series. The train itself, La Lison, plays a major role in the film as the love of Lantier's life: "The locomotive is filmed as a mechanical Beauty ridden by the human Beast, and Gabin's eyes light up with genuine passion as he speaks of La Lison…" (Bergan 193). The moving train sequences are extremely powerful with rolling countryside, bridges and tunnels flying by as we hear sounds of all types from shrill whistles and clacking rails, to the coal shovel as its load is thrown into the thunderous, steaming engine.

In the music-hall cameo scene in this film, a male music-hall singer, Marcel Veyran, is performing on stage in front of a large audience of spectators. He sings the simple waltz "Chanson de Ninon" on stage at a railroad worker's "bal," and this song actually provides the peculiar choice of background music for the murder of Sévérine Roubaud (Simone Simon) at the hand of Jacques Lantier (Jean Gabin). Sévérine is the ultimate femme fatale, corrupting Lantier and holding him prisoner to her love. Lantier fails at his attempt to kill her husband, Roubard, due to his own cowardice, and instead kills Sévérine in a temporary fit of madness.

When Sévérine leaves the "bal" near the end of the film, Lantier follows her home and enters the apartment through an open door. They continue conversing about an ideal life together, and Lantier convinces Sévérine that he now has the courage to kill her husband. Just as they await the arrival of

Roubard, they kiss passionately in the darkness of the entryway, and Lantier suddenly freezes with a very odd look in his eyes. He begins to strangle Sévérine, who frees herself from him twice before he finally takes a knife off of a table and kills her off-screen as we hear her scream. Without hesitation, the scene cuts immediately back to the dance hall where we see Pecqueux (Julien Carette) and his wife Victoire (Colette Régis) seated in the dance hall in a medium shot, as Veyran sings on stage in the background:

> Le petit cœur de Ninon
> est si petit, et si gentil, et si fragile
> C'est un léger papillon
> Le petit cœur de Ninon….

The camera then moves in on the singer in mid-shot, and after another verse, the sequence cuts back to the scene of the murder where we see an extreme close-up of Sévérine's right hand on the bed. What is different about our second view of the crime scene is that this time we continue to hear the lyrics and music of the song with nearly the same intensity as in the dance hall. Since we did not hear any music or lyrics during the murder itself, we are primed to pay attention to them now.

The camera then pans right for a close-up of Sévérine's left hand that is posed at her stomach, then upward for a close-up of her face at a slight high angle showing her eyes fixed and lifeless. The same lyrics as above continue through this close-up sequence. The camera then pulls back to reveal Lantier, who stares in disbelief at the lifeless body. Veyran continues with his lyrics, which tell us that Ninon's heart is so cute that it is not her fault if at times she is

a bit foolish. We cannot help but project the image of innocence onto Sévérine, if only in irony. The music continues until Lantier slowly leaves the apartment. He throws himself from his train the next day when the cruel reality of Severine's death is too much for him to bear.

The background music at the murder scene is extremely unusual, and yet, quite interesting. The lyrics and music warp our perception of Sévérine's lifeless body. She is transformed into a doll that suddenly seems completely harmless, and we must continue to remind ourselves that a murder was just committed. The melody's measured bars are visually tied to the shot progressions, but we struggle to make sense of the song's inclusion. Muriel Joubert explains that "Les événements s'enchaînent dans un rythme qui s'accélère et un temps qui se contracte, aux sons de la 'chanson de Ninon' qui accentue le caractère dramatique du montage alterné" (Joubert 9). This scene is a one-of-a-kind juxtaposition of murder and levity to the tune of a light-hearted, but upbeat waltz that speaks of a carefree and innocent love. The tune is so trite that "we are likely to hum it on our way home from the movie theater" (Andrew 1995:315).

The cameo music-hall performance in La bête humaine does not appear in Zola's novel. It is possible that Renoir added the dance hall scene and the song performance for two reasons. He was fond of theatricality, and often used it to root his films in tradition. More importantly, however, the song performance is a backdrop for Sévérine's murder, and it fashions the peculiar

irony that reflects Lantier's sudden, involuntary, and lethal desire to kill the only woman he had ever loved so passionately.

The ill-fated Gabin again meets cruel destiny in the next of the music-hall cameo films, Le jour se lève by Marcel Carné (Gabin had worked with Carné on films such as the very successful Quai des brumes in 1938). The outline for the film was written with the help of Carné's friend, Jacques Viot, but Jacques Prévert adapted it for the screen (Karney 300). This film is a classic example of poetic realism, as it involves cruel destiny and fatality.

Le jour se lève features a rather extensive music-hall scene where, among other acts, costumed dogs perform tricks to the crack of their master Valentin's whip (Jules Berry). One of these women is Clara (Arletty). She worked with Carné in Hôtel du Nord (1938), and would work with Carné again in Les enfants du paradis in 1945 in her famous role as the boulevard star Garance. We also saw Arletty earlier in this chapter in La garçonne.

In the first scene of the film, the camera is placed at a high angle and a man on a horse enters the frame, leading another horse to his direct left. The spectator notices that the horse on the left does not have a rider. Had the horse been following behind the man, it would not appear as unusual. This deliberate attention to the void on the left of the screen reminds us of solemn processions where a horse without a rider is representative of a fallen soldier or statesman. This is an early indication that someone will die in the film.

Directly in front of the rider there is an unusually tall hotel with narrow frontage. The camera moves into the stairwell where we hear a man shouting, and then a gunshot. Valentin then staggers out of the top floor room holding his stomach and then falls down the stairs. He has obviously been shot by someone and is dead or dying. There is much commotion in the street as the police arrive, but when they approach the murderer's door he shouts for them to leave immediately, and he eventually shoots a few bullets at them through the closed door. François (Jean Gabin), a young, tough, romantic factory worker, is sequestered inside for the balance of the film, but he tells his story through flashbacks triggered by objects in the room, such as a teddy bear, a broche and an armoire. This is characteristic of German Expressionism where one finds in certain films the effect of mise en scène on the characters themselves (Cook 32).

François has fallen in love with the beautiful Françoise, a young and innocent flower girl. One night as he leaves her apartment, he follows her to the music hall, where she enters and sits in a center aisle seat. François buys a ticket but remains at the bar in the back of the theater. On stage as Françoise enters is a realist singer, Germaine Lix, in a long black dress and contrasting scarf draped across her shoulders in the front and down her back. She is alone at center stage, with no stage decorations, and she resembles many of the realist singers in that she is care-worn and of a stocky build. (Lix

also appears in La romance de Paris in 1941, which is discussed in Chapter Three.) She now begins to sing “Ce sont nos légionnaires:”

> Le sable est chaud
> Mais qu’est-ce que ça peut bien faire
> Le soleil brûlant
> Ce n’est pas une affaire.…

There are slightly more men in the audience, but there are also women and children. After Lix’s song, the curtain opens and the small live orchestra plays off-key as we see a tiered platform with several dogs poised at different levels. They are all wearing bows at their neck as they bark excitedly. Soon Valentin appears in his black knickers and hose and long, flowing, black cape and top hat. He takes his bow as the audience claps and it is apparent from Françoise’s face that she has come to watch his act.

Then from stage left appears Clara (Arletty), Valentin’s beautiful assistant, in a black sequined tutu with large sequined bows at the bare shoulders. She bows and accepts Valentin’s gloves, and then his cape, but lets his hat drop to the floor as the audience laughs. He is surprised by this action and turns quickly to ask her why this happened. She replies “Je l’ai fait exprès,” and she leaves the stage.

Valentin then continues his act by showing the skill and intelligence of a group of small dogs that he coaxes with a long whip. They dance on balls, do back flips, jump over his whip, and walk on their hind legs together. Meanwhile, Clara has come from backstage to take a seat beside François at the bar. She has only to glimpse the act on stage before commenting: “La

vache! Les femmes sont bien folles, et moi, je suis la reine!" She is speaking from her own frustration regarding the spell that Valentin had cast over her in the past. She even sees the blatant display on stage as metaphorical. She continues by saying that she must have been crazy to have stayed with Valentin for three long years. She explains to François that Valentin is a liar and a cheat, and that he mistreats and abuses women. François is a bit surprised at her candor, since he does not know her, but they soon become friends and have an on and off affair that lasts several weeks.

The dogs in Valentin's act are a metaphor for the women in his life that he dominates through brute force and shrewd deception. When Clara is explaining to François how Valentin's dogs are trained very quickly and very well, she states: "Il dressait les chiens en trois jours … Tu sais comment ?" Valentin brands the dogs with a hot iron, then whips them on their sores to train them. The dogs on stage look all the more feminine since they wear bows around their necks, and there are no large dogs on stage that could be mistaken as masculine, so the illusion is complete. The music hall is being used as a concise cameo for important relationships in the film.

To further substantiate the metaphor of the dogs for the women in the film, Valentin actually comments upon the possible confusion between dogs and women in a scene in Clara's apartment in front of her and François. He is wondering if Clara would like to see his dogs, and when she quickly says "Non," he replies: "Les femmes oublient si vite - pauvres petites bêtes - pas les

femmes, les chiens." Valentin realizes that his statement "pauvres petites bêtes" could apply to dogs or women, so he feels the need to clarify. The ambiguity suggested validates his confusion of the two.

The next act on stage continues with visual allusions to the narration. It is a fast-moving bicycle act with three women and a man turning in circles. François has come to the show on a bicycle, so we are immediately reminded of him. There are two women involved in the love triangle with him in this film, Françoise and Clara, but it may have been entirely too obvious to have *two* women and *one* man going in circles on the stage. Since the film is told in flashback, it ends where it began, and completes a cycle, just as the cyclists do as they go around in circles. The narration of Le jour se lève leads François nowhere but back to his room and his own suicide as the sun comes up through his window. A simple music-hall act has captured symbolically the fatal denouement of a story of the futility of jealous love.

François is still in love with Françoise, despite his relationship with Clara, but when he tries to win her back, Valentin lies and tells him that he is her father, and that he forbids their relationship. This is another one of Valentin's famous fantastic stories that is not in the least true, and François is duped right along with the women. When he finds out he has been deceived, he shoots Valentin in a fit of rage, and the narration returns to that of the beginning of the film.

The small-scale music-hall show is the only evidence of music-hall acts in the film, but it is the cement that bonds the narrative events together, and provides another way to look at the story. When discussing notions of simplification and stylization in films like Le jour se lève, Alexander Trauner stresses the important of not "overloading the screen with … boring things that attract the spectators attention to useless details" (Crisp 373), and André Bazin sums up this statement in his own words: "… symbolism never takes precedence over realism in this film, but it completes it as a sort of bonus" (Crisp 372-3). The cameo music-hall performance in Le jour se lève is certainly symbolic, and it mirrors the most important narrative themes, just as a spectacle within a spectacle creates depth of meaning and validates the cinematic medium that makes it genuine.

The spectacle within a spectacle again plays a part in our last film for discussion, Etoile sans lumière, the only film in the music-hall cameo group released in the 1940s. Raymond Bourgine comments on this film in 1946: Une star de cinéma muet, … est réduite au désespoir par le cinéma parlant. Sa voix, qui n'est pas radiophonique, lui interdit désormais l'écran" (1). After the advent of sound cinema, those actors and actresses who had displeasing speaking or singing voices were left behind by the cinema industry. Sound cinema at first demanded ideal examples of the voices that it would now eternalize along with the image. This last cameo film deals specifically with

the dilemma of a beautiful actress, Stella Dora (Mila Parély), when she is not able to continue making films since she cannot sing.

Edith Piaf, in the role of Madelaine, solves Stella's dilemma by being her voice. There are more than just cameos of Piaf in Etoiles sans lumière. Piaf appears in nearly every scene in the film, but not as a music-hall star. This film is added to the chapter on cameos, however, because near the end of the narration, there is one scene featuring Piaf on stage in a music-hall theater for her debut as a newcomer to the music-hall stage.

Edith Piaf was the last of the realist singers. She achieved iconic status as a solo singer in Europe and around the world. She has already been seen in this chapter in La garçonne, where she sings to the group of women on an expensive yacht. In this rather obscure film, Madeleine is a maid who loves to sing sad songs as she works, and her voice is beautiful and melodious as it echoes through the hotel where she works.

Sound cinema has just been introduced in France, and Stella Dora is mourning the death of silent cinema because she knows she cannot go on to make talking films. Her agent, Roger Maney (Marcel Herrand), having heard Madeleine sing, decides to hire her to sing for Dora as she pantomimes, without revealing the trick to the spectators. A young sound crew boy, Gaston Lansac (Serge Reggiani), has developed a state-of-the-art microphone system that will allow the voiceover to appear authentic on film. This ruse will enable

Stella Dora to make a smooth transition from silent to sound cinema, while maintaining her super star status.

The whole technique of the voiceover works better than anyone expects, but watching Dora receive constant accolades, not to mention large sums of money and extravagant gifts as compensation, causes the petite Madeleine to become jealous. Gaston urges her to take control of her destiny and stage her own début, since her voice is both unique and beautiful. However, when Dora finds out about Madeleine's plans, she realizes that she cannot suffer the humility of being exposed, and she commits suicide.

Madeleine moves forward with her plans, since Dora is gone and can no longer interfere with her future. Her song performance on stage is a failure, however, because she suddenly realizes that she cannot betray the trust of her deceased friend, Stella, or that of Stella's former lover and director, Roger. Even though her rehearsal in the empty theater is superb and spellbinding, before the crowded theater audience she is haunted by the superimposed image of the star's ghost sitting in the empty seat next to her former lover. Dora's ghost is also superimposed cinematically across the audience in grandiose proportions, smiling warmly at Madeleine. When Madeleine tries to sing, her voice is weak and off-key, and she turns pale and faints as the curtain closes quickly on the disastrous scene.

Madeleine never becomes a music-hall star, and Léo Savage explains that: "… l'absence d'apothéose est un bel hommage d'Edith Piaf au cinéma,

car toute autre vedette de music-hall aurait exigé sa revanche finale, après avoir été chassée d'une scène, même imaginaire, sous les huées du public" (1). Piaf was such a famous singer, that it did not hurt her image at all to star in a film where she is not a success as a singer on stage.

Madeleine's failure is perhaps also symbolic of the decline of the simple, yet moving realist music-hall singers, and the rise of the high-cost production sequences in film in France in the forties: "The popular café-concert and music-hall melodies … receded in importance, completely disappearing from many of the new works in favor of lush, 'high culture' symphonic scores" (Williams 1992:264). Kelley Conway follows this reasoning to explain why Piaf did not appear in more films, despite the fact that she was so extremely popular in France:

> ….her (Piaf's) career coincided with the Occupation, an era that constituted an enormous rupture in French film history in terms of both industry organization and narrative preoccupations. The dark, moody films of poetic realism that so easily accommodated the realist singer gave way to films with higher production values…. (2004:181).

Etoile sans lumière is a historically significant film that deserves recognition among the music-hall cameo films, as its cinematic representation of the advent of sound cinema and the intricacies of related technological advances is unprecedented. Its attention to the novelty of sound is exacting. "Quelle magnifique film historique!" exclaimed the critic Maurice Dampierre in 1946 (1).

Of all the music-hall artists who actually perform in films in this chapter, there are only five men: Jean Gabin in Coeur and Pépé, Fernandel in Coeur, Marcel Veyran in La bête humaine, Valentin in Le jour se lève, and Julien Carette in La grande illusion, and the group of seven cross-dressing prisoners in La grande illusion. The rest of the performers are women, yet the male performances all have specific themes that somehow *relate* to women. The cross-dressers in La grande illusion represent the missing women at the prison camp, and the act reminds the men of their homes, while casting a disturbing light upon gender ambiguity and male desire. Carette is more or less the clown who introduces the cross-dressing prisoners, who are the object of the gaze. Pépé sings a love song, as he has just met the stunning Gaby, and Valentin's act, in Le jour se lève alludes to his mistreatment and abuse of the women in his life. Martousse's song in the dance hall is a risqué tune about a double-jointed prostitute, and Veyran's only purpose in La bête humaine is to provide the background music for Sévérine's murder. Lastly, Fernandel's song at the reception in Coeur is about a happy bride and groom.

It is evident that the female star is prominent in this small selection of music-hall cameo films. The traditional belief that the woman is the object of the male gaze, and that her value in cinematic representation lies in her "to-be-looked-at-ness," figures prominently in all films studied in this chapter. Furthermore, the pattern that develops in many of these films is one of female exploitation and subjugation, even when the film has a "happy" ending, as in

the case of La garçonne, when Monique comes to her conservative and traditional senses and settles down with a bourgeois husband.

Since Etoile sans lumière was set in 1929 at the advent of sound cinema, and the first film discussed, Faubourg Montmartre, was released in 1931, we have come full circle in this chapter on music-hall cameo films of the thirties and forties. In addition to the nine films discussed here, there are potentially more music-hall cameos in films within the period of study. In addition, any films that include a music-hall personality would warrant further attention. Unfortunately, many of these films are not available today, or may only be available for viewing at archives in Paris.

From realist singers to grand revue "vedettes," the public adored the image of the beautiful woman, and they especially loved to hear her sing. Patriarchal notions of societal norms in the thirties and forties in France also visualized the woman in a man's world and from the male perspective, regardless of her ability. Women in France were not yet accepted as film directors in the thirties and forties. Of these nine films, there are nine male directors. Male authorship of the female performer must be considered in these cases. Men direct the world of music-hall films, and they *choose* the women to star in them, yet through determination, talent and drive, the female music-hall star shines brightly, even in music-hall cameo performance, leaving her ineffaceable mark on the virtual stage that is classic music-hall cinema.

CHAPTER 5

MYSTERIOUS MUSIC HALL

Music hall plays a key role in several films from the French "polar" genre that were released during the 1940s. These include: Le dernier des six (Lacombe 1941), L'assassin habite au 21 (Clouzot 1942) and Quai des Orfèvres (Clouzot 1947). All three of these films exhibit characteristic traits of crime thrillers: dark, dead-end, deserted streets, and looming shadows. In addition to the mysterious atmosphere, the presence of the music-hall casts a ray of light upon the otherwise dismal landscape. Animal acts, magician's tricks and bird calls are juxtaposed with disappearing corpses, mistaken identity and death by quicksand. Special effects also play an important role in this chapter, and particular scenes with special effects will be analyzed in detail as they relate to the music hall depicted cinematically. In some cases the use of cinematic special effects can actually betray the music-hall motif.

Georges Lacombe creates the dynamic duo of Mila Malou (Suzy Delair) and Commissaire Wens (Pierre Fresnay) in Le dernier des six. Mila aspires to a music-hall career while Wens attempts to solve a murder mystery involving

six men who form an unusual pact. In L'assassin habite au 21, Clouzot casts the same dynamic duo that had impressed him when he wrote the screenplay for Le dernier des six, using Delair and Fresnay in the respective roles. Mila is once again an aspiring music-hall singer and dancer, and her lover, Wens, attempts to solve another puzzling murder mystery. Quai des Orfèvres explores the music-hall life of an unlikely couple, Jenny Lamour (Suzy Delair) and Maurice Martineau (Bernard Blier). Lamour is a well-known music-hall singer, while her husband Maurice accompanies her at the piano. This film mixes music-hall content with jealousy, guilt, murder and sexual ambiguity.

Murder is one aspect that each of the three films has in common. Le dernier des six is an adaptation of the novel Six hommes morts by the Belgian writer Stanislas-André Steeman. Steeman is credited with 37 "romans policiers" or "polars," and Six hommes morts has become "l'un des meilleurs films du genre" (Naumann 1). Steeman received the award for the best "roman d'aventure" in 1931 (ibelgique 1) for Six hommes morts. Henri-Georges Clouzot is credited with the screenplay adaptation, and this film appeared one year before Clouzot's debut as a director in 1942 with L'assassin habite au 21, another adaptation from the Steeman novel by the same name. Both of these films were released during the Occupation when French cinema was under the control of Continental Films, the German-based production company.

What is particularly interesting about Le dernier des six is that special effects are used during key music-hall scenes, and this film is one of the first music-hall films to include extensive cinematic special effects in the music-hall performances. Other filmmakers used special effects in early music-hall cinema, but these were usually limited to the one cinematic effect, transparent super-imposed film images. Two such films are Coeur de Lilas (Litvak 1931) and Romance de Paris (Boyer 1941). These films were discussed in Chapter Four and Chapter Three respectively. Litvak uses superimposed images to represent Lilas' (Marcelle Romée) nightmarish thoughts as she runs errantly down a path to escape from the crime she has committed, and Boyer uses this effect in Romance de Paris to represent a type of dream state, or imaginary situation, and for the final on-stage "girls" show, before the appearance of Charles Trenet as "Papillon."

In one particular scene in Romance de Paris, duplicate images of the dancing girls in long shot are superimposed upon one another and rotated in a circular fashion around the frame, similar to the effect one sees in a kaleidoscope. This particular effect, along with many others, is used in Le dernier des six. Cinematic special effects were, of course, not possible during a live music-hall performance, but some special effects produced in the film *were* entirely possible before a live audience.

Since special effects play such a key role in Le dernier de six, a short history of special effects in the cinema in France will help preface the

discussion of the film. According to Lee Zavitz, the term “special effects” was first used at the American Fox Film Company by Louis Witte as a credit on the film What price Glory?, directed by Raoul Walsh and released in 1926 (Brosnan 9-10). “Mechanical” special effects were used in this film, but these effects comprise only one category of special effects. Danny Lee, a veteran of special effects magic, describes mechanical effects in this way: “All it takes is mechanical ability, a knowledge of hydraulics, pneumatics, electronics, engineering, construction, ballistics, explosives and no acquaintance with the word impossible” (Brosnan 9).

Mechanical effects are also called “physical effects,” but these do not include optical effects, which are actually “special photographic effects.” All of these varieties fall into the category of “special effects” (Brosnan 9). Mechanical effects are just a continuation of stage effects; like trap doors, flash powder and see-through wires for flying through the air. Therefore, long before the term was ever used, special effects of many types were being implemented in popular theater, music hall and film.

The first example of cinematic special effects appeared in one of the film shorts of the Lumière brothers shown at the Grand Café in Paris on December 2, 1895. A film of a wall being torn down, Démolition d’un mur (1895), shows Louis Lumière orchestrating the razing of a wall. The projectionist *accidentally* reversed the film with the lantern still illuminated, and realized that the reverse reconstruction of the wall was an interesting

phenomenon in itself. The short film comes full circle and ends with the wall as pristine as it was at the beginning.

In another amusing film short by the Lumière brothers, Accident de voiture (1903), a man is hit by a car, his body parts are picked up off the street and reassembled by two gentlemen, and he gets up and walks away. This film was made as homage to Georges Méliès, the magician turned "cinéaste." The comic element in this film was much appreciated by its spectators, and Bertrand Tavernier finds that the ill-fated comical character in the film resembles Michel Simon in Boudu sauvés des eaux (Renoir 1932). It is interesting to note that Boudu was also pulled from the Seine after an "accident," of sorts.

One cannot discuss primitive cinema and special effects without mentioning Georges Méliès. His fantastic Le voyage dans la lune in 1902 was not only the first science fiction film, but it contained elementary yet ingenious special effects. Most of these effects were mechanical, as his films resembled stage acts that often contained mechanical real time tricks. In Theater to Cinema Ben Brewster and Lea Jacobs note that early cinema often resembles theater performance:

> …not just because stage influence can be traced in certain films which are adaptations of film plays, but also, …, because the theatre served as one of the nodal points for conceptualizing the "pictorial" and hence provided a more general guide for cinematic *mise-en-scène* (vi).

At the moment in Voyage dans la lune when the astronomic voyageurs are beneath the surface in an underground grotto, Georges Méliès himself, in the role of Professeur Barbenfouillis, the president of the Astronomer's Club, opens an umbrella and places it on the ground. It magically transforms into a giant mushroom, which grows taller and taller, as one of the moon creatures, the Selenites, emerges from behind the mushroom to harass the travelers. The rapid growth of the mushroom was entirely possible with mechanical stage effects in a live performance, but the transformation of the umbrella into the mushroom was not possible without a stop trick and a camera. There are many, many special effects in this film, and as the film progresses, the space travelers use their canes to disintegrate the Selenites one by one into puffs of smoke. This was again done with the use of trick cinematography and mechanical effects. Méliès' film is also music-hall content film, as the quick-moving double-jointed moon creatures, the Selenites, were actually acrobats from the Folies Bergères in Paris (Dirks 1).

Since Méliès was a magician before becoming a filmmaker, we should expect nothing less from him than disappearing acts that duplicate those he created on stage during his magic shows. Méliès, like Lumière, "accidentally" discovered the "disappearing act" special effect technique one day when "he was filming a Paris street scene and the camera jammed" (Katz 928). When viewing the film he realized that the moving object he filmed disappeared, or another object suddenly appeared where the camera stopped working. He

went on to use this technique in his filmed magic acts. He would film a magician with a female assistant; the magician would make a dramatic gesture, and Méliès would stop the camera. He then removed the girl from the scene and restarted the camera. In the finished product, it appears as if the girl vanishes suddenly with the help of the magician. Among Méliès' other special effect techniques is the use of a painted backdrop with a stage in the foreground, as he uses on the rooftop near the beginning of Voyage dans la lune (Brosnan 18). John Brosnan confirms that it was indeed Méliès' films "that had the greatest influence on other film makers in the field of special effects" (17).

Georges Lacombe relies on special effects near the ending of Le dernier des six to sensationalize a grand music-hall revue show. In addition to belonging to the "policier" genre, the film's lavishly set stage performances are evocative of "grande revue" music-hall performances of the late 1930s. In the original novel, Six hommes morts, there were no music-hall scenes. In fact, when Steeman saw the film adaptation he had trouble recognizing his novel (Billard 405). Why, then, was the music-hall content added? This can be traced to Alfred Greven, the director of production for Continental Films during the Occupation. Under orders from Goebbels, Hitler's Propaganda Minister, Greven was instructed to ensure that Continental's French productions were light, superficial and entertaining films (Billard 380). This is precisely the reason why Lacombe and Clouzot added music-hall acts to their scripts. In

fact, in L'assassin habite au 21, as noted previously, Clouzot casts the same actors in the respective roles of Inspector Wens (Pierre Fresnay) and Mila Malou (Suzy Delair), a music-hall hopeful. Despite the adjustments to the narration that take place from the novel to the scenario, Axelle states, in *Le Matin*: "… Le dernier des six (est) l'un des meilleurs films du genre" (Naumann 1).

A brief summary of the narration will help preface the music-hall act near the end of the film. Six men: Senterre (André Luguet), Perlonjour (Jean Chevrier), Tignol (Jean Tissier), Gribbe (Georges Rollin), Namotte (Raymond Segard) and Gernicot (Lucien Nat), win a sum of money in a lottery and decide to split the cash and separate to build their individual fortunes. They agree to reunite in five years, and the one who has made the most profit from the money will then share these profits with the other five – an unusual pact, as noted earlier. Not long before five years have past, Namotte disappears mysteriously on a cruise. Gernicot was with Namotte on the trip, and he believes he saw someone push Namotte overboard. Then Gernicot is killed in Senterre's apartment, but his body disappears.

The first time music hall enters the narration of Le dernier des six is just after the opening sequence where the six men have reached their curious agreement. They are shown together in a medium shot spinning a globe to choose a place for their travels and projected rendezvous. As the globe spins, the camera moves in closer and we hear brief, light, fanciful orchestral

music with a harp interlude. The spinning globe, with spinning text superimposed upon it reading “cinq ans plus tard,” dissolves into a medium shot of a man singing on a stage, apparently before an audience of some type. The spinning globe with the dissolve to the music-hall setting could be said to introduce the international variety highlighted on music-hall stages in Paris, and in addition, the first words we hear the singer chant also relate to around the world travels: “Vingt fois, j’ai fait le tour du monde.”

As the camera pans back from the stage to a long shot, we see two gentlemen at the left front of the shot listening to the singer’s heartrending love ballad and smoking heavily. The singer does not get much further when the theater owner thanks him and asks him to leave his name and number. We are given a visual clue to this outcome, as we see the two gentlemen watching the performance appear to visually dwarf the singer who is at the far back right of the shot as the camera travels even further backwards. He is nearly cut out of the shot, in fact. The singer protests, but nonetheless leaves the stage.

Now that the camera has established the music-hall setting, we are taken back-stage, as a group of young “figurantes” is interrupted by Mila Malou’s brusque arrival. She pushes her way through the small group, to their dismay, as the stage manager announces her entrance to the theater owner off-screen. Her arrival is upsetting, and she contrasts visually with the other girls in the group. She wears an ornate hat with a large flower and ribbons at the front, a tailored suit and dark gloves. She also stands taller that the other

girls, as she chides them smugly. Her trademark pout is timeless as she chastises the diminutive stage manager for transposing her name from “Mila Malou” to “Malou Mila.” This comic note sets the mood for similar scenes further on in the film.

As Mila begins her dramatic number center stage, the camera soon cuts to the theater owner, and we recognize him as one of the six men we met in the beginning, Senterre. He appears to be interested in her performance, but not totally convinced, as we see him centered in a medium shot, smoking and drinking heavily as he listens. We notice a dramatic difference between this performance and the previous male singer’s attempt. Mila is center stage in a long shot, then a medium shot, and performs for long periods without many interruptive camera cuts or reverse traveling. More attention is being paid to the female performer, and the male theater owner mediates the gaze as he watches her in shot reverse shot sequence. Despite this contrast in cinematic emphasis, Mila is also told to stop before her number is over, and she is appalled as she leaves the stage, her nose in the air. Attention to the male gaze and the female performer is very frequent in music-hall content films, and is often contrasted with different cinematic treatment of males who perform, as shall also be evidenced in other films.

The unexpected arrival of Perlonjour ends the auditions, as Senterre welcomes him eagerly and they begin to reminisce. We then see several costumed performers in medium shot, closely huddled around the stage

manager backstage, as he announces the end of auditions and asks them to return next week for another chance. They all protest loudly, but quickly leave the shot. This short scene is a vivid reminder of the difficult and often volatile life of the average music-hall performer. In addition, when Perlonjour arrives, he is mistakenly told to take his place in line with the performers, which he does quite willingly. This assures him of an "audition" before Senterre, but is perhaps an indication that life in this film will be mediated through the music hall.

Commissaire Wens is assigned to investigate the puzzling case of murders, and his star-struck sidekick, Mila Malou tags along whenever she can, since she is dying to get another audition to star as a singer in Senterre's music hall. At first, Wens suspects Perlonjour and Senterre. Then Lolita comes into the picture. Senterre hires Gernicot's widow, Lolita, played by Michèle Alfa, to perform as a sharpshooter at his Palladium Music Hall. Just before the climax of the film, a lavish dance hall number is staged before the murderer's identity is revealed. This act adds to the suspense since Lolita is a sharp shooting diva who Wens also suspects played a part in the crimes.

Lolita is performing from a position in the audience as she demonstrates her accuracy using art deco showgirls as targets. The showgirls each hold round lanterns, and then balloons. These stylistic devices mimic the famous art deco designs and statues that were so popular in the twenties and thirties. Women were often pictured with their arms outstretched above them

and slightly to the front, as they held large, perfectly round objects, such as gazing balls or balloons. At first, what we see seems entirely possible in real time, but the scene advances with some unusual special effects created simply by the successive shots from Lolita's rifle. The lanterns and the balloons burst one by one as the girls remain poised and smiling.

In the second segment that ends the music-hall performance, Lolita is again taking aim at dancing beauties, but optical illusions created with special lenses and filters are used to sensationalize her act. We see "double" for the first portion of this short segment as identical images of the dancers are superimposed upon each other and then moved to the side on the screen. Suddenly, one of the dancers is miniaturized and dropped into a champagne glass on a table in the audience. The glass with the dancer swimming inside miraculously disappears when shot by Lolita's rifle.

As the plot thickens, it happens that another of the six men in the ill-fated group, Tignol, is shot and killed while watching the performance described above from a box seat, but the fatal blast is concealed by the gunshots from Lolita's own rifle. This is yet another indication of life and death being mediated through music hall in this film. Finally, Gribbe is stabbed in his home. Who is the guilty party? Gernicot. His own murder was "staged," so he was free to kill the others and steal their money. The film soon concludes with Gernicot getting trapped in quicksand in a cavern, while being pursued by Inspector Wens and the authorities. He sinks and perishes, and happily, our

music-hall “vedette,” Lolita, is vindicated. Inspector Wens and Mila conclude the film with their fast-paced banter. When Wens discusses the intrigue involving the men and their pact, Mila comments that the whole thing sounds like a movie. And where does the film end? It ends in the music hall, of course, where everyone forgets his or her troubles and Senterre finally hires Mila as a singer for an upcoming performance.

There are certainly no special effects created in this film that surprise us today. Objects and people disappear and reappear, or are shown in miniature, and optical effects are created with special lenses and camera techniques. This film was made, of course, before the intervention of the computer and digital film effects ushered in a world of fantastic possibilities for special effects and cinematography. But the film was also made after the advent of sound, and this development in the cinema industry posed many new problems for filmmakers. The camera, which had become very mobile in outdoor filming in the twenties, was now forced back into the studio for static filming, while sealed within booths to muffle its sounds. This prevented the camera’s noises from interfering with the carefully controlled soundtrack of the film itself, since only the most primitive recording methods were available at the time. (Brosnam 47).

What is particularly interesting about the special effects created in this film is that it is one of the first films in the history of cinema to incorporate cinematic special effects in music-hall content after the advent of sound. In

filming a live diegetic on-stage performance before an audience, the optical special effects achieved *cinematically* would never have been possible in a live stage performance. We watch a representation of music hall, but we could never have actually seen this performance live on stage. In the cinematic medium, the music-hall performance is altered to take advantage of cinematic techniques. When Brewster and Jacobs discuss early cinema, they wonder: "To what extent was the original theatrical production altered for film recording? To what extent did the limitations of the camera alter or distort the theatrical performance?" There can be no doubt that the technical requirements of the cinema, and the use of special effects transformed staging and acting techniques (Brewster, Jacobs vii). Just as the tradition of music hall was immortalized for all time through filmic representation, that tradition's representation was also enhanced and *mis*-represented by the cinema's intervention.

Special effects and media sensationalism are so much a part of our daily lives that we hardly notice them, but sensationalism originated with *live* performance variety acts, void of high-tech cinematic special effects. The music hall in France was actually the birthplace of the cinema, because short films were originally shown as music-hall acts. Ironically, the ultimate demise of the music hall can be partly contributed to the increasing popularity of the cinema. If the cinema is the "fils ingrat" of the music hall, Le dernier des six is

surely a sensationalized, albeit false tribute to the music-hall content it celebrates (Frejaville 376).

Music hall again plays a key role in L'assassin habite au 21, Clouzot's first film in the role of director. As stated earlier, after seeing the chemistry between Delair and Fresnay as Mila and Inspector Wens in Le dernier des six, he decides to use the duo again for a second murder mystery. The film is the screen adaptation of the novel by the same name by Stanislas André Steeman published in 1939. Inspector Wens and Mila do not exist in the novel. In addition, "L'assassin habite au 21 se déroulait à Londres, dans le brouillard," affirms Stéphane Steeman, the author's son, and it takes place at 21, Russell Square. Steeman was not happy with all the changes made from the novel to the screenplay. He complained sarcastically that "Je vis le film … et fus heureusement surpris de constater que l'on avait bien voulu garder le tiers de la moitié des gags sur lequel j'avais sué (par bonheur) un mois durant. Le tiers de la moitié des moins bons, cela va sans dire" (1980:4).

Alan Williams attests to the added humor in this particular film: "Occupation mystery films generally treated their subject matter with a light, comic tone – as, for example, in Clouzot's … L'assassin habite au 21" (Williams 260). This film, however, was the "bonne séance de gamme avant de passer aux choses sérieuses," remarks Pierre Billard. (405). He is referring here to Clouzot's next release one year later, the infamous Le corbeau, known

for its untimely political inuendos. It was even banned from public viewing as it was considered “anti-French propaganda” (Borger 1).

Suzy Delair, in the role of Mila Malou, adds comic relief throughout this murder mystery, just as she does in Le dernier des six. Her energetic desire for attention, her relationship with her lover, Inspector Wens, and her passion for working in the theater as a singer provide quick-witted, fast-paced humor at every turn. Jacque Siclier describes Mila as “un personage comique, d’une incroyable vulgarité …un style assez flamboyant” (Siclier 1957:91). When Wens and Mila determine that the murderer is living at a neighborhood boarding house, the Pension Les Mimosas, Prof. Wens disguises himself as a preacher who finds a room at the “Pension” by divine intervention. That night Mila enters the boarding house and crawls along the floor to suddenly appears at the dinner table. After the dinner at the Pension Les Mimosas Mila sings for everyone to the accompaniment of Prof. Lallah-Poor (Jean Tissier) at the piano. Through the boarders conversation we learn that Monsieur Colin (Pierre Larquey) is also a musician. He tinkers with the violin. Mila looks forward to performing with the musicians as back up for a future performance.

The whole premise for Mila being involved in the search for the killer, Monsieur Durand, is that as a struggling actress and singer, she is trying to find a job. Just after the chilling opening of the film, where a drunken lottery winner Alfred (Réné Génin) is assassinated from the point of view of the mysterious M. Durand, Mila appears before a theater manager and actively

solicits his interests in her “talents” by sitting on a desk beside him and uncovering her knee. She murmurs to him that she needs to be “discovered,” “Pour qu’on me découvre…,” obviously insinuating “discovery” in more ways than one.

This exploitation of the female form and sexuality is quite common among the music-hall content films. Interestingly enough, just as in her role in Quai de Orfèvres as Jenny Lamour, where she uses her girly wiles and flirtatious ways to convince Monsieur Brignon (Charles Dullen) to hire her at Omega Films, Mila also tries to entice the preoccupied impresario (Léon Belière), since her musical talents don’t seen to be enough to impress him. She insists that she is never hired because she is just *too good* for the venue. When she suspects him of not hiring her because she is not visually solicitous enough, she retorts “Moi, j’ai mon talent dans le masque, pas dans les fesses!” The impresario state that what she needs most of all is a name, one that everyone recognizes, like that of the infamous Monsieur Durand, for example. She then quickly comes to the decision that if she can track down the killer, Monsieur Durand, she will surely have her name in the papers, and the theater owner will then hire her. Therefore, the optimistic Mila and her lover Inspector Wens both begin investigations of the murders. Wens is simply doing his job, but Mila is trying to get one.

Music-hall content is peppered throughout the Pension Les Mimosas, where a motley crew of boarders coexists. In addition to a magician’s act in

this film, there is a celebration commemorating the release by the police of the suspects from the Pension Les Mimosas. This celebration is held inside the large home with a makeshift stage and curtain and a small audience from the neighborhood. Lallah-Poor's act is on the program, as well as the other boarders, and Mila Malou, of course, never misses a chance to perform. She sings a curious ballad that will be discussed in more detail shortly.

This scene provides resplendent music-hall atmosphere since it promotes a series of variety acts in an informal setting. In the novel, the group celebrates by going to a cabaret together. There is no variety performance at the boarding house in the book. In fact, the only reference to music hall in the novel is Professor Lallah-Poor's magic act at the Palladium. In the film adaptation, the butler, Armand (Marc Natol), is quite adept at birdcalls. In fact, as the good Dr. Linz (Noël Roquevert) points out to Professor Wens "Il prépare un numéro de music-hall." Docteur Linz is a retired physician who plays the cello. Monsieur Colin is an artisan of faceless wooden puppets. He borrowed the idea of a faceless figure from the infamous Monsieur Durand, the murderer without a face. Professor Lallah-Poor (the "h" was added for the film version), is the "vedette" de la maison: "Le roi de la manipulation, le maître de mystère" as he describes himself to Professor Wens.

When we see Lallah-Poor throughout the film, he is wearing the white head-wrap of a fakir, decorated at the front with a jeweled fob. After these colorful descriptions of the boarders, one might think that Madame Point

(Odette Talazac), the owner of the rooming house, only boarded those individuals with music-hall repertoire. In addition to these lively music-hall characters, we also we meet another boarder, Kid Robert (Jean Despeaux), a blind boxer who meets misfortune along his route to fame.

When Inspector Wens attempts to search Prof. Lallah-Poor's room for clues to the murders, he peaks through the keyhole to make sure the magician is nowhere in sight and silently enters his room to look around. Professor Lallah-Poor then pops out of a sarcophagus at the back of the room. The sarcophagus is quite ornate with an elaborate mural on the wall behind it and heavy draperies surrounding the "stage." Prof. Lallah-Poor exclaims "Le spectacle en vaut la peine" to Inspector Wens, who realizes he has been caught at his own game. Lallah-Poor then conducts a one-sided conversation with the Inspector while he demonstrates all his talents with disappearing objects, giant card tricks, collapsing boxes, and objects pulled from a magician's top hat. As the Inspector leaves, Lallah-Poor hands him his wallet that he has forgotten, then Wens does the same, to the consternation of the magician. A similar scene occurs in the novel, but it is staged in the only music-hall scene with the boarding house roomers in the audience.

Despite the music-hall atmosphere created by the talented occupants of the boarding house, and the variety performance staged near the end of the film, there are only three actual scenes *in* a variety theater in L'assassin: Lallah-Poor's magic act on stage, and two short scenes back-stage in his

dressing room. In the first shot back-stage we see what appears to be a close-up of a blank wall, and we hear a light music-hall tune in the background, apparently outside the room at a distance. As we observe the wall, two knives impact one after the other and embed themselves in the wood in close-up. We hear Lallah-Poor in voice-off say “Entrez,” and a reporter from Paris-Soir opens up the “wall,” which we now see is a door. As he opens the door the music becomes louder, and we realize that the scene is taking place back-stage at the music hall.

Lallah-Poor is quite hospitable as he pulls a glitzy costume from the closet, yet when the reporter accuses him of being the killer. Lallah-Poor uses another toss of a knife just to the left of the reporter’s neck, to explain that if he were Monsieur Durand, he could surely have just killed him. The small dressing room resembles the sleeping room of Lallah-Poor at the boarding house. There is a mural on the back wall, and music-hall posters are scattered about. We see a Casino de Paris poster with a woman who could very well be Mistinguett just to the right of the stereotypical dressing room table and large mirror surrounded by bright lights on three sides.

Just after the next scene when the police at the station are questioning another suspect, Dr. Lintz, we cut back to the music hall, where Lallah-Poor is now on-stage performing his act. The orchestra and a few rows of the audience are visible in long shot as we watch the stage from the point of view of the spectators. The act has been in progress as we hear applause and see

Lallah-Poor and his tuxedo-clad male assistant produce a long, white, paper scroll before the diegetic spectators.

The camera moves in closer, yet still in long shot, and Lallah-Poor quickly continues by introducing his next trick to the audience. He places a large, vertical, opaque screen painted with an Asian design on the stage floor to his right. He then produces a scantily clad, beautiful, blonde female assistant, Christiane Perett (Sylvette Saugé), who breaks through the screen. He ties her hands together as he explains to the audience that she will be placed in a large wooden coffin. The idea of the trick is to make Perett disappear, but instead, when Lallah-Poor reopens the casket, the latest murder victim appears inside with Monsieur Durand's calling card visible for all to see. Just before opening the casket, we see a long shot of Inspector Wens entering the theater to witness the next victim's arrival. This scene recalls a similar incident in Quai des Orfevres, where a magician uses a coffin with trick mirrors to make the beautiful girl he places inside disappear.

We next cut back to the police station where the chief receives a call from Wens to vindicate Dr. Lintz, still in police custody. The camera quickly cuts back once more to the music hall and Lallah-Poor's dressing room, where he is seated and is being questioned by Wens and two other officers. The position of Lallah-Poor and Wens in this shot duplicates exactly the position of the police chief and Lintz in the previous scene at the station. Both Lintz and Lallah-Poor are seated on the left in medium shot, while Inspector Wens and

the chief are standing on the right facing and looking down at their suspect. This is a visual clue to the identity, or identit*ies*, of Monsieur Durand. This scene is only long enough to allow Lallah-Poor to pilfer the handcuffs of the police and sheepishly hand them to Wens. The scene ends abruptly, but we are left with the impression that a third male boarder from Les Mimosa, Lallah-Poor, has now been taken into custody.

After Lallah-Poor's subsequent vindication, Madame Point decides to hold a celebratory spectacle honoring the release of her three colorful boarders by the police. Mila receives an invitation to sing, and the program includes each of the boarder's own variety of entertainment. Mila refers to her act as a "Tour de chant," the typical name for a singer's portion of the music-hall variety show. Wens decides to attend, as he is intent upon solving the mystery that undoubtedly involves the boarders, yet before the show even begins, he is held at gun point and issued out of the boarding house by Lallah-Poor, dressed *without* his fakir head wrap for the first time in the film. Wens is unsuccessful at several attempts to catch the attention of passers-by or the police, and we last see him under Lallah-Poor's control in a dark alley before the camera returns to the boarding house.

The fact that we never see Lallah-Poor without his fakir headdress until near the end of the film when he holds Wens at gunpoint, signals that a change in identity or a twist in identity is about to occur. This same idea is reinforced by the two shots back to back of Lintz and the police chief and

Lallah-Poor and Wens described earlier. These duplicate visual representations create a bond, and at the same time, a confusion, between the two supposed villains.

The song that Mila sings near the climax of the film during the celebratory performance actually leads her to the solution of the identity of "l'assassin," M. Durand. It is the most important "spectaculact" of the film. The song "Je sais bien que tu mens" suggests, of course, that someone is lying regarding the recent murders. The song starts out rather slowly, and the beat of the ballad flows smoothly and melodiously. Just after the first stanza, however, Mila moves forward slowly and the camera follows her in a tracking motion forward and slightly to the right. As she advances, three white roses appear at the front of the shot and directly in front of Mila. Just as she is singing "Je ---sais ---bien, …" Her staccato on the three words (previously slurred together) separate her view of three white roses, as she looks at each individually in a single shot on cue with the three words. In other words, her eyes move from one to the other as she utters each word quickly. Then, to reinforce the same idea, as she continues with "que tu mens" quickly in voice-off, we see each of the three roses rapidly in three close-up shots. They are identical and in triplicate.

The spectator senses that Mila is about to discover something. She quickly turns her head and looks upward at something off-screen. As she sings "mais je viens" – hers eyes move from one of the unseen objects to each

of the other two in succession. We then see three silver stars just as we saw the roses, three successive rapid close-up shots as Mila sings the three-syllable word "lar-ge-ment" in voice-off. This singing style is referred to in the novel, but relates to a young girl singing at a cabaret "Pianissimo, d'abord, puis allegro. Allégro, pianissimo. Pianissimo, allegro" (1980:179). Perhaps this scene in the novel gave Clouzot the idea to have Mila use a song to solve the mystery.

Since Mila moves from a slow pace in the beginning of the song to a quicker pace at the end of each verse, we realize that she first observes the objects (the roses and the stars), and then quickly looks for more reinforcement of her "flowering" supposition. Just then, the camera shows us three young girls of similar age dressed in nearly identical dresses eating stick candy in the first row of the small audience. We then see Mila's point of view as she in turn spots them off-camera, while following the lyrics of the song, "Ah … ah … ah," her eyes advancing to the left and in front of her with each syllable. These "ahs," have more meaning than they at first reveal. It is as if Mila has an "ah-ha," of sorts. As she quickens her lyrical pace, she rapidly turns her head and looks to her left to see in close-up in three point-of-view shots, three music stands with three identical sheets of music entitled "Trio, Op. 3, Number 11, Bethoven." Perhaps it would have been too obvious to cite "Op. 3, Number 21." It is as if "trios" have surrounded Mila on stage.

Mila has solved the mystery and utters a scream to end her song as she runs off the diegetic stage in a panic. She now knows that the killers are three, M. Colin, Professor Lallah-Pour and Docteur Linz. She exclaims "Ils sont *trois* Durand, *trois*!" She hurries out the back door to look for Wens and declare her findings. Wens is nonetheless about to solve the mystery too, as we find him in the next scene surrounded by the three murderers in a dark alley. They each confess as a result of the inspector's shrewd rhetoric and the arrival of Mila with the police ends the exciting climax.

Burch and Sellier include L'assassin in the group of 37 films they call "films de boulevard." They find that these films tend to be "du goût du public," and since they were released during the Occupation, they exhibit a quality of "évasion" that steers clear of political innuendos, and maintains the light, humorous tone of a "comédie sentimentale" (110-1). In addition, they name the boulevard films as misogynistic and phallocentric in nature. These traits are both quite evident in L'assassin. Wens is the "official" investigator. Mila's role as investigator is "unofficial." Wens' clever rhetoric astounds us, while Mila pops blackheads on Wens forehead, to his great dismay. Wens is disguised as a pastor while Mila tries to use her female charms to get a job. She is a victim of her sex. Mila has saved the day in the end, but we only see her lover tap her check tenderly. The final sequence follows Wens, who receives the cinematic accolade for solving the mystery, as he and Lallah-Poor appear in the final two-shot. Wens lights a celebratory cigarette behind the

guilty Lallah-Poor's ear. But where is Mila? She is not seen in the final shot of L'assassin, but her signature performance leads Clouzot to call on her again in the next film under discussion.

Miss Delair changes character in Quai des Orfèvres, but this film also developed from a novel by Steeman, Légitime Défense (1942). Delair plays Jenny Lamour, and in this film she has already established herself as a well-known music-hall singer. Variety theater is nowhere more well-represented cinematically in a mystery thriller than in Quai des Orfèvres. Whether it is for background effect or front stage performance, a plethora of music-hall repertoire fills the screen. We see Spanish dancers, acrobats, a magic show and tap dancers. While Jenny rehearses her song on stage, we see acrobatic dogs join her to the rear, as well as a performing donkey. A female trapeze artist lowers herself from the rafters as Jenny continues. While Jenny is talking backstage to several fans after her performance, we glimpse the on-stage act of two drunken cyclists. This first series of scenes leading up to a music-hall performance by Jenny establishes the setting for the film.

Near the beginning of the narration, Jenny is shown the sheet music to a new melody by Leopardi (Fernand René), the director of the music-hall theater. After she sings a few bars of the song in the studio, the scene cuts to a rehearsal of the song in front of a folding, mirrored screen. The camera then moves on to the Eden Theater rehearsal, with a short break in the melody for musical corrections with the orchestra, and finally to Jenny's actual

performance of the song on stage. Jenny's voice and the continuing lyrics of the song advance the narration from the song's introduction, through two rehearsals, to her on-stage performance before a packed theater audience.

The audience at Jenny's performance is as important to the setting as Jenny herself. It establishes the total music-hall venue. First of all, we never hear Jenny sing the song in its entirety in any one place, and never are we asked to watch Jenny perform more than a few bars, without breaks in the melody or camera cuts from Jenny to the audience. The last object on-screen while Jenny is rehearsing, and before the cut to the theater, is a comical high-angle close-up of a dog that covers his ears with his paw while Jenny sings. The very next shot is that of the audience during the actual performance as Jenny continues.

The first shot of the spectators is an extreme long shot from the right side of the theater framing the entire audience from those closest to the camera to the upper balcony on the far side. They face the stage, of course, but we only hear Jenny in voice-off continuing to sing her ditty "Avec son tra-la-la." The men in the theatre audience outnumber the women at least three to one. Most of the audience is smoking, and a hazy film hangs above the mezzanine. Since Clouzot first chooses to show us the audience in the theater before he cuts to Jenny on-stage, and then cuts back several times during Jenny's performance to the audience, we realize that the audience's presence plays an important role in the sequence, and in the film, while the

importance of Jenny's song is downplayed. What could possibly be going on in the audience while Jenny is performing? Equating the audience to a comical dog covering its ears, as the sequence suggests, could be said to mimic casual, passive and comical music-hall spectators, who sometimes have other things to occupy themselves besides the performance.

Clouzot demonstrates this passivity by focusing on individuals in the audience, each with its own interruptive agendas. We watch two young lovers kissing in the balcony. A woman leaves her seat with a screaming child and pushes her way through the spectators around her. We glimpse a worried wife caressing a small child as she gazes, not at the stage, but at her husband intently gazing at Jenny. A mother chastises a young boy for fingering his gum. An older woman reveling at Jenny's talent sings along a bit too loudly for her nearby guests. She appears as if she is her thinking of herself at that age, when she was also young and attractive, and her voice drowns out Jenny's in her own ears.

Jenny's change of costume from the on-stage rehearsal to the actual performance is striking. Heating of buildings was sparse after the Liberation and Jenny wears her long mink coat and a scarf tied around her head like a babushka for the rehearsal. Dave Kehr with the New York Times notes that, since the film was made right after the war "The sense of sudden freedom is balanced by a crushing lack of basic needs – heat, for example" (1). Mila wears a large fur coat for her rehearsal on the Eden Theater stage, and other

actors don heavy layers of clothing and scarves. This lack of heat is evident from the very beginning of the film, as Maurice wears a coat with a fur collar while at the rehearsing studio, and the male receptionist at the music studio has a dark scarf wrapped completely around his head with a long, heavy overcoat, as well. The first time we see Jenny she is in head to toe fur, with a large fur collared hat surrounding her cupid doll face.

For the on-stage performance, however, Jenny wears a one-piece bustier-style satin and lace maillot, with a large velvet bustle crowning her long, tight, draping, wrap-around velvet skirt. The velvet bustle on Jenny's costume lends itself nicely to the thrust of her hip as we realize that her "Tra-la-la" is her derriere. A loud bong of the bass drum each time she thrusts and swivels her hips at the audience evidences the sexual connotation and exploitation of Jenny's body before them. A back-stage helper even notes afterwards that it is easy to succeed when a woman uses her backside as Jenny does. Jenny, however, thrives on such attention, and sees no harm in using her "abilities" to get what she wants for her career.

Another intriguing woman inhabits the cast of Quai de Orfèvres. The character of Dora (Simone Renant) is an interesting addition to the cast since she does not exist in the novel. We see her for the first time seated and smoking a cigarette watching Jenny rehearse in front of the mirrored screens near the beginning of the film. The next time we see her is in her studio alone with Jenny. She is a photographer for whom Jenny poses for publicity

posters, and she shows an interest in Jenny that extends beyond friendship. She softly rubs Jenny's calves as she places Jenny's legs exactly as desired for a provocative shot, and ironically enough, assures Jenny that she has no interest in Jenny's husband, Maurice.

In this first complete scene involving just the two women, Dora wears a pants suit with her name clearly printed across the bodice "D O R A." It would be impossible to watch this film and not notice her name peculiarly placed on the bodice of her top. Critics have reflected upon this unusual costuming choice, and it has been interpreted by Judith Mayne as possibly representative of textual inversion or clues to her true feelings toward Jenny (2004:47). Another interpretation is also possible. Since we do not find Dora in the novel, and since Clouzot is obviously flirting with gender fluidity by adding her to the mix, perhaps the name suggests this: "I am DORA. You must not forget me. I am important in this film, important to its denouement, and I represent an alternative lifestyle that obeys no cultural norms or stereotypes." DORA must be reckoned with in the film.

Further on in the narration, we find Dora developing one of the headshots she has taken of Jenny in her studio. She is very pleased with the result and hurries out to the courtyard adjoining her studio with the apartment of Maurice and Jenny on the second floor. As she runs out smiling, hoping to call up to Jenny, she looks up and sees the couple kissing in the window of their apartment, as Maurice slowly closes the draperies. At the same time, we

hear the introduction to a song in sound fade. As Dora's smile turns downward, we hear a female singer begin with the words:

> Les amoureux qui s'enlacent
> passent gaiement dans le soir
> Moi, je m'en vais triste et lasse,
> sans amour et sans espoir.

Dora's own sadness is reflected in the song. The scene then quickly cuts to the music studio as the music continues, and we see Maurice rehearsing with the singer, Annette Poivre. She typifies the realist singer of the 1930s treated by Kelley Conway in her book, Chanteuse in the City. We see Poivre seated facing forward, with her chair angled slightly at the left front of a medium long shot, with Maurice at the back of the studio and to the right of the frame. She continues singing the typical realist love ballad that echoes of heartbreak, as was represented visually in the previous scene with Dora.

When Poivre stops singing momentarily as Maurice is given a message from Jenny, she seems to remain caught up in the world of the song. She maintains the same facial expression of longing, with a cigarette continually hanging from her lips. She is oblivious to what is going on around her, even though she does momentarily turn her head to see what is happening in the background. The realist singers' song is her world. We get the distinct impression that she lives it each day. We are reminded of the last of the realist singers, Edith Piaf, whose Polydor catalog edition of February 1936 is entitled "Une chanteuse qui vit sa chanson" (Conway no pag.). The sad eyes of Piaf are reflected vividly in those of Annette Poivre, but it is ironic here that

the implied longing for an unrequited love is echoing from Dora's lesbian desire for Jenny.

The distance between Poivre and the action at the back of the shot is represented visually in two ways. There is a dark screen directly behind her that reaches exactly halfway across the frame. The remaining half of the frame shows Maurice and Leo standing in full view at the back of the frame discussing the phone message from Jenny. The depth of field is striking. The right portion of the shot is light in color, contrasting with the dark screen on the other side. It is as if the shot is not one, but two separate frames. Thus, the singer's world is far from what is happening around her at the moment. As the two men speak, she stares blankly into space. She then resumes the song, after agreeing with Leo that men are dopes. There is virtually no change in her position or facial expression. Nowhere in music-hall cinema is the troubled life of the realist singer depicted more vividly in one very short sequence. The realist singer and her song were virtually obsolete in the music halls in France by the late 1930s, but Richard Dyer affirms nonetheless that the realist song "helped establish the most daring sensibility produced by the cinema of the time" (1992:27).

The "chanteuse réaliste" sings of female hardships like prostitution, physical and mental abuse, poverty, and sexual exploitation, all common in early twentieth-century France. Since these hardships often resulted from the woman's uncertain position in society, we find that phallocentric norms also

pervade the narration of Quai des Orfèvres. Maurice is from a bourgeois family, and his father objected to him marrying Jenny, a girl from a questionable background. The men in the film hold the more prestigious roles, as inspectors, police investigators, or theater managers, while the women are typists, coat check girls, or out of work singers and dancers who are broke and exhausted as they search for a job. Even though Jenny is gainfully employed, she is using her sex appeal to get ahead. Maurice, on the other hand, has genuine talent as a musician. Dora has her own photography studio, but she maintains a marginal lifestyle. On the other hand, Mr. Brignon is a degenerate old man, but he nonetheless owns the Omega Production Company.

All three of the films discussed in this chapter contain varying forms and quantities of music-hall content. Since the films were produced between 1941 and 1947 (Le dernier des six and L'assassin habite au 21 during the Occupation, and Quai des Orfevres after the Liberation), we can conclude that at least in the case of these three films, the mere imitation of the American film noir genre was not deemed sufficient to satisfy French audiences of the same period. Burch and Sellier are correct in their assumption that "… la cible typique de ce cinéma boulevardier est une belle femme active, la trentaine bien sonnée" (112), and not the "femme fatale" found on the screens in the United States at the same time.

In addition to adding the familiar surroundings and escapades of music-hall content and celebrities in these French productions, Lacombe creates Lolita in Le dernier des six, the sharp-shooting diva who wears the pants on the stage and brandishes a rifle as her phallic symbol. In L'assassin habite au 21, Clouzot decides to let a colorful, yet vulgar "chanteuse" solve a crime through her song, and in Quai des Orfèvres he creates a stunningly beautiful lesbian photographer with her name boldly written across her chest.

Mysoginistic and phallocentric tendencies in all three films are often counteracted by non-traditional female behavior. Jenny Lamour exudes a much stronger presence than her meek husband, Maurice, who Burch and Sellier describe as "…amoureux et dupe, gentil et faible… " (233), but conversely "… si Suzy Delair avait obéi à son mari, ce cauchemaur n'aurait pas eu lieu; …" (234). It is Jenny's insistence upon meeting the lewd production company owner, Mr. Brignon, which leads to Maurice's eventual implication in the murder. In L'assassin habite au 21, Mila is relentless and domineering. She refuses to listen to the advice of her lover, Wens, and even though her character is not privileged enough to warrant an appearance in the final shot of the film, it is indeed Mila who solves the mystery of the murderer, M. Durand.

Music-hall content was added to films during the Occupation and after the Liberation so that French audiences could remember the "good times" before the war, and find a familiar setting as they entered French cinemas, but

a closer look reveals that added female character dynamics create rather innovative cinematic representation, and mysterious crime thrillers include colorful, cinematic variety performances with the gaze focused most often upon the female performer. Even though she may often be seen in a phallocentric light, she is also praised for her strength and “débrouillardise.” Mila Malou, Lolita, Jenny Lamour and Dora are “superwomen,” in the sense that they rise above societal norms of the epoch and meet their male counterparts head on at the crossroads of cinematic representation.

CONCLUSION

It is now apparent that music-hall content was a popular motif in French film from 1930-1950. The films discussed in this study have many different origins. Some of them are original scenarios, and many of them were adapted from novels. Discussing these origins further illustrates that the music-hall motif was indeed destined to be included in this exciting period in French film history.

In this twenty-year period, about fifty percent of all French films were adapted from novels (Crisp 209). Three films discussed in Chapter Five were adapted from crime novels by Stanislas-André Steeman: L'assassin habite au 21, Le dernier des six and Quai des Orfèvres (a loose adaptation), yet the music-hall "spectaculacts" in these films were not included in the original narration. Music-hall content was added to these scenarios for the mixed color of popular variety performance, and in each case above, a female music-hall performer is at the center of the action.

Of the other novels adapted for cinema that are used in this study, Mitsou and La vagabonde contained original music-hall themes, and both were adapted from novels by the same name by Colette. Divine is a loose

adaptation of stories from her L'envers du music-hall. Zouzou was adapted from the novel by G. Abatino, and this novel also contained original music-hall themes. These four examples also feature a female music-hall star.

Two films discussed are adaptations of Zola novels by the same name: Nana and La bête humaine. Music-hall content was present in the narration of Nana, as it follows naturally from her profession as a music-hall star, but the song by Marcel Veyran was added to the scenario of La bête humaine. This small sampling shows that within the period of study, several novels were chosen for film adaptation for their inherent and valuable music-hall content, and often music-hall content was added to other book adaptations for its tremendous marketability.

When other variety acts such as acrobats, trapeze artists, clowns, animal acts and dancers are used in music-hall motif films, they usually provide the background color that situates the female performer in her world. Male music-hall singers are the exception in these films, but when they do appear, it is often for the sole purpose of highlighting or situating the main female characters, or it relates to their enormous star quality as male performers, as in the case of Jean Gabin and Charles Trenet, for example.

In most cases of music-hall films in this study, where one female music-hall performer is central to the narration of the film, the film is titled by her first name. This choice of title suggests intimacy with the viewer and peaks the curiosity of the potential male spectator, and of the female spectator, who

identifies narcissistically with the female star. Below are some examples in the current study: Nana, Divine, Zouzou, Princesse Tam Tam, and Mitsou. In addition, many other films *imply* a female protagonist(s) in their title. These examples include: La sirène des tropiques, La vagabonde, Rigolboche, and Ah! Les belles bacchantes.

The female music-hall star and the music-hall motif often validate events in the film's narration, and sometimes allegorically represent the narrative in some way. This was true of Valentin's dog act in Le jour se lève, Jane Diamond's music-hall drama in Le bonheur, Zouzou's song "Haiti," that she sings as she sits on a swing inside a large bird cage, Ludovine's encounter with a serpent in Divine, and Lolita's sharp-shooting prowess in Le dernier des six.

Music-hall motifs may also provide a contrast to the established setting of the film. The cross-dressing music-hall act in La Grande Illusion contrasts with the prison atmosphere of the film and also suggests gender ambiguity among the male captives. The colorful boarders at the Pension les Mimosas in the crime thriller L'assassin habite au 21 contrast with the mysterious air prevalent in much of the film's narration. Contrasts may also prove unattractive and awkward, as with the song performance by Gabin in Coeur de Lilas, where the integration of song in this scene seems to clash with the setting.

The female performer's marketability and her "to-be-looked-at-ness" cannot be denied, and the women in music-hall films tend to perform more than the men, usually in a diegetic theater. This premise alludes to the well-established notion that the subject of classical cinema is male, and the woman is the object of the gaze, yet it also demonstrates that "it is undoubtedly a male fantasy to look – but it is also a female fantasy to show" (Bentley 14). The female spectator who watches the music-hall star on screen often lives vicariously through her, as she imagines herself in the glamorous role.

As the female performer obtains super star status in the music-hall film, her status in society is also elevated, and she transgresses class boundaries. This is true of Clara in Le bonheur, Jane in Paris-Béguin, and Stella Dora in Etoiles sans lumière. In these three cases she is also idealized and adored by her fans. In addition, when she is a glamorous grand revue personality, the music-hall star is often denied access to her lover's world, as in the case of Clara in Le bonheur and Jane is Paris-Béguin, where the lovers come from the underworld of crime.

When a pejorative critique of music-hall performers is present in these films, the world of the female performer is often seen as inferior to her lover's. Zouzou and Tam-Tam's race forbids them from having a romantic relationship with Jean or Mirecourt, and Mitsou's lower class upbringing causes problems in her marriage to Pierre. There is also the insinuation of inferiority in Quai

des Orfèvres, when we learn that Maurice's parents did not approve of his marriage to the music-hall star, Jenny Lamour.

The female music-hall star may also be exploited or abused. This is true of Divine, Tania in Pépé le Moko, la Douleur in Coeur de Lilas, the female performers in Ah! Les belles bacchantes, and Madeleine in Etoiles sans lumière. The Fakir, Dora, and the men backstage at the music hall exploit Divine as a sex object. Carlos abuses Tania, La Douleur is exploited as a talented double-jointed prostitute, and every female performer in Ah! Les belles bacchantes is nude at one point or another. Madeleine is exploited on a different plane. She has a magnificent voice, yet she cannot take any credit for its fame.

Near the end of Etoiles sans lumière, Madeleine wanders errantly down a deserted street. She has just met with devastating failure at her first attempt at singing before an audience on a music-hall stage. Piaf's failure to be a successful singer in the film, after her enormously popular reign on music-hall stages and throughout the world, is a metaphor for the demise of live performance variety music hall after the 1930s. Even though music hall was extremely important to popular culture, and even though the stars on the music-hall stages were known throughout France, the cinema's intervention would eventually cause the death of live performance variety music hall as it was known in the early twentieth century.

Just two short years before the period represented in Etoiles sans lumière, the notion of watching singers on screen *and* hearing their voices simultaneously was unimaginable to most of the public. Celebrating sound cinema with beautiful voices, especially voices of those performers who sung in the music hall, was as spellbinding as watching the first moving images of the Lumière brothers in 1895 in Paris.

The French public chose to keep the faces of their favorite music-hall performers fresh in their mind's eye by frequenting films with music-hall content, and throughout this study it has been clear that nostalgia was a main force behind its inclusion in film. Just as the music hall generated nostalgia for the by-gone day of the café-concerts, the cinema would now create nostalgia for the music halls of the early twentieth century; nostalgia for pre-war Paris, evoked by realist singers like Fréhel and Lix, nostalgia for the quaint variety theater venue, incarnated in Carette and Florelle, and nostalgia for the stars of yesteryear, embodied in characters like Jean Gabin, Mistinguett and Josephine Baker.

The cinema was born in the same decade that music hall became popular in France. The music hall facilitated the birth of the cinema since filmed music-hall acts were first shown in music halls. The cinema in France over the last century has claimed its place as an art in its own right, "le septième art." The music hall still exists in its "grande revue" form, and is frequented with fervor, but this is more as a result of a stereotypical penchant

limited to Parisian and tourist culture. The ultimate demise of live variety music hall can be attributed to several factors, one of which was the growth of the cinematic medium.

In 1927, René Bizet predicted that between the cinema and the music hall, both very popular at the time, the demise of the latter was inevitable:

> Car il y a de grandes ressemblances entre ces deux sources qui ont jailli après la guerre et ont rafraîchi nos imaginations depuis huit ans. Je vous accorde que le Music-Hall se perdra dans le théâtre dont il n'est qu'un affluent, tandis que le cinéma continuera librement sa course. Mais cependant je vous assure qu'on ne pourra parler plus tard des manifestations principales de ce temps sans évoquer à côté l'un de l'autre Music-Hall et Cinéma (176).

With the choice to place the cinema and the music hall side-by-side in his analysis, Bizet created a fascinating connection that we cannot ignore. Music hall and cinema share virtually the same "Golden Age," and thanks to the "silver screen," music hall was immortalized for all time in classic French cinema.

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