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A NOTE ON THIS EDITION

The present publication is based on a version published in French, by *L'Avant-Scène du Cinéma*, which was taken from Jacques Prévert's own shooting script and then adapted to conform to the final version of the French film. The English translation of this version, by Dinah Brooke, has once again been carefully revised and checked by Nicola Hayden, with a print of the film obtained from the British distributor, in order to make it as accurate a rendering as possible of the film which the English or American spectator will see on the screen. Significant divergences between the shooting script and the final screen version are indicated in the script by footnotes and square brackets.

Acknowledgements and thanks are due to *L'Avant-Scène du Cinéma* for providing stills, and to Connoisseur Films Ltd, for a print of the film. John Mathews translated the extracts from the introduction by André Bazin which originally appeared in *Regards Neufs sur Le Cinéma* (Une Production Peuple et Culture réalisée par Jacques Chevalier, 1953).

LE JOUR SE LEVE . . . POETIC REALISM

André Bazin

In *Le Jour se Lève* we can see two different ways of progressing from one shot to another. In the sequences set in the present, the shot changes are made very quickly with wipes. A wipe is the substitution of one image by another through a sort of sweep across the screen. Wipes are used in particular in newsreels.

Marcel Carné used these because he wanted to show the difference between the parts of the action set in the present and those set in the past. Each scene set in the present is, on the other hand, cut off from the events evoked in Jean Gabin's mind by an exceptionally long dissolve.

What does this dissolve correspond to? First it corresponds in a physiological way to the dreaming state. The eye stares, the pupil dilates, the image of objects on the retina is blurred. The lack of voluntary attention prevents the lens from focussing.

Secondly the dissolve is suitable for superimposition techniques. In general, superimposition is used to convey the imaginary quality of an event or character. It is often employed to represent ghosts. Since the objects and characters have a transparent quality, the spectators interpret them as only half true, part dream and part reality. The very long dissolves in *Le Jour se Lève* come across as the tangible symbols of the purely imaginary images to follow. During the whole of the transition period we have visible evidence that our reality is in some way changing. We are taken from the solid, concrete present to a different reality, one found only through memory.

Ask the public how many of them understood from the start, right from the first dissolve, that Gabin was going back into his past. Probably a few spectators would have understood, but not at once. Filmic means of expression are less explicit and have fewer nuances than literary means. Thus

it was decided to add to the soundtrack of the original print, before general release, a superimposed voice which represents in a way Gabin's conscience and which proclaims in sepulchral tones: 'And yet it seems like only yesterday . . . do you remember?' This short phrase, designed to eliminate any doubt in our minds, did not appear in the original shooting script.

The Music

Ask the public what they noticed in particular about the music of *Le Jour se Lève*. They probably found it much more noticeable in the transition periods between past and present, where it is haunting and distinctive. The instruments chosen have a strange quality. We can distinguish two principal themes, one sentimental, played by the little flute, and the other dramatic and oppressive, played by the basses and percussion instruments. These two themes are either separate or subtly interwoven. The oboe theme is in musical and logical counterpoint to the drum theme. The oboe is clear and very melodic, while the drums are heavy and exclusively rhythmic. Now each change in scene from past to present, or the other way round, is accompanied by a change in the music, or simply the appearance of the musical element, and this corresponds psychologically to a sort of reversal of values. There are even passages where the music seems to have been played the wrong way round. Thanks to the music we are made physically aware of a reversal in the nature of things.

If the dissolve had been the only device which Marcel Carné had at his disposal, the time changes would have been much less noticeable. The particular quality of Maurice Jaubert's score is largely responsible for the spectator's being psychologically prepared for this sort of dramatic reversal corresponding to the evocation of memories. You only have to compare the facility of these passages with the awkwardness the returns to the present in *Le Diable au Corps*, for example.

In this context it is important to underline the role of the music in the film. The composer was Maurice Jaubert, perhaps the greatest musician the cinema has had till now. He wrote the music for all of Marcel Carné's films up to 1940, when he died. Jaubert did not think it was enough for film music just

to reinforce or paraphrase the action, like the innumerable wedding marches which accompany weddings, or sentimental violins playing behind love scenes. Instead the music has its own dramatic role to play, and should be introduced only when it adds to the action or characterisation . . .

If we could perform the experiment of showing *Quai des Brumes* or *Le Jour se Lève* with the music taken away, leaving only dialogue, we would find that the film had been emptied of a part of its meaning, that the psychological make-up of the characters had been impoverished, that the action was more obscure. The music here is never just an accompaniment, but an integral part of the action, an action in its own right. The problem was to make the spectator aware all the time of the weight of the past, to prevent the present, when it returned, from escaping the clutches of the past. When the action which we see on the screen is set in the past, there is no music (except for the greenhouse love scene) but when we come back to Gabin in the present, in his room, the music is introduced again and lasts for as long as we stay in the present. Because this procedure is repeated, but above all because of the quality of the music, we quickly identify it with Gabin's imagination and it stays with us just as his memories live within him. One scene in particular is very characteristic in this — towards the end of the film, Gabin goes crazy, stops in front of a mirror, picks up a chair and throws it. A shattering of glass. The music stops, as if this frustrated act had freed the hero of his shame, as if the mirror were Gabin's memory even, instead of just its symbol. A few moments of silence, then the ragged, heavy drum theme fills the dramatic vacuum, followed by the oboe irresistibly working its way into the background noise, imposing in its turn the memory of Françoise.

At the end of the film when Françoise is wounded in the crowd and taken up to Arletty's room, there is no accompanying music. But when we learn that they are going to use gas and the camera takes us up on the roof to where a specialist in the gas brigade is climbing towards Gabin's garret, the music has to accompany the action because, although Gabin can't be seen, he is again the centre of attention. The music tells us that Gabin is there under the roof. It glows around the room

like a dramatic aura, going beyond Gabin's physical surroundings. The policeman's approach is thus made much more moving. The music stops the moment the gun goes off, a fraction of a second before the bomb is thrown. The next shot shows us the muted, even 'half-hearted' grenade explosion next to Gabin's body. A slight backward tracking shot brings the side of the room into focus. The tear gas is spreading, soon to reflect the first rays of the rising sun. The alarm clock rings. Again the music breaks out, this time strong and glorious — an apotheosis. No doubt there is dramatic counterpoint here, but it is also as if the hero's 'soul' has at last been delivered up — a sort of counterpart in sound emerging from within him in the serenity of death. . . .

Thus, Carné resolved the problem of the different time scales in the action by a visual procedure — an unusually long dissolve together with Maurice Jaubert's musical accompaniment. . . .

Realism and Symbolism in the Setting.

You will have noticed in this film the part played by Gabin's cigarette — the march of time is indicated after a fashion as he chain-smokes his way through the packet. Since he has no matches, he has to keep a careful watch on how the cigarette is burning. Then when he absent-mindedly lets his cigarette go out, we are strangely shocked, as if his negligence were a climax in the unfolding of the present tragedy. It would seem that Gabin is condemned to despair when his cigarettes run out. This one last ridiculous pleasure was all that kept him alive. So he did not even take his luck as far as it would go, and perhaps this moment of inattention in which he let the cigarette go out was in fact an indication that he was giving up the struggle. . . .

The dramatic symbolism of elements in the setting is no doubt more subtle in the case of the wardrobe than in that of the readily apparent cigarette. This famous Norman wardrobe is the one Gabin pushes in front of the door, which gives rise to a sharp exchange between the police inspector and the concierge. Of course we see it only as one detail of the action which attracts us above all by its realism. It is the kind of

trivial episode we would expect to read about in a newspaper report. Actually the symbolism of this wardrobe is as necessary and rigorous as that of a Freudian symbol. The chest of drawers, the table, the bed — Gabin wouldn't have dreamt of using these to barricade his door. It had to be this great heavy Norman wardrobe which he heaves across like a slab over a tomb. The way he pushes the wardrobe, even the form of the piece of furniture itself, shows that Gabin is not barricading himself in his room — *he is walling himself in*. Even if the material result is the same, and we see no conscious difference, the dramatic tone is something else altogether.

The role of glass is subtler, almost indefinable. It appears many times in the film — the mirror, window panes. The love scene takes place in a greenhouse, an artificial place, where the 'force-grown' flowers belong to a different race to the lilac we gather in the spring. The café-music-hall scene with the frosted windows in the cloakroom and the mirror in the bar, the scene with Berry and Gabin in the café with its mirrors and windows, and finally the over-symbolic character of the blind man with dark glasses. When François goes to see Françoise, instead of the camera following him through the door, it tracks along to the window, and catches him for a moment through the glass. Although it might appear impossible to make out a case for glass having any symbolic value beyond its realistic justification in terms of the plot, it would seem unlikely that the set designer included it so often in the camera set-ups merely by chance. A transparent and reflective material, glass has three principal coexistent qualities — it is faithful, in that it lets us see through it; it is deceptive, in that it separates; and it is dramatic, in that ignoring it leads to breakages and disaster. Just by its being there, glass seems to condense the whole of François's drama — or at least there is a sort of agreement and complicity between glass and his dream, as if the latter found an echo in material objects.

We can see how Carné's realism tends towards the poetic transposition of a setting, while remaining meticulously true to life. It does not do this by modifying it in a formal and pictorial way, like German expressionism, but by releasing its inherent poetry, by constraining it to reveal its secret links with

drama. It is in this sense that we can talk of Marcel Carné's 'poetic realism', which distinguishes his work from the much more objective realism of Clément or Rouquier. In getting right away from German expressionism's tendency to visibly transpose its setting, Carné was able to integrate it perfectly with his poetic message. This is the sort of thing Fritz Lang had already succeeded in doing in *M* while at the same time, unlike Carné, he still used his lighting and setting in a symbolic way. *Le Jour se Lève* is perfect in that its symbolism never takes precedence over its realism, but rather the one complements the other.

Have a look at the suburban square as well — note the exact fidelity of the setting, the tenement stark against the sky. By rights this dingy suburban backwater ought to be ugly. In actual fact one feels that it has a paradoxically poetic atmosphere. Perhaps this setting struck most of you as real. But it is an artificial set, built entirely in a studio.

Here we touch on the important problem of the setting in films. We have said that it should be realistic and meticulously true to life. However, if one chose a square in the suburbs that looked like the one in the film and shot it directly, you would find that it would not look so real after all, that it would be less integrated into the drama, and that it would not have the bitter poetic quality of Trauner's setting. This is because to be lifelike the setting must be thought of in relation to the story. If the setting were real, there would be technical difficulties — first of all it would be impossible to get all the camera angles needed, or to light the scene the way it was intended. These reasons alone would be enough to justify a reconstruction, but there are others.

Trauner designed this small suburban square the way a painter composes his canvas. While remaining faithful to the exigencies of reality, he succeeded in giving it a delicately poetic interpretation, so that it appears not as a reproduction of reality, but as a work of art dependent on the artistic economy of the film as a whole. . . .

Who is Gabin?

. . . The story goes that before signing a film contract,

Gabin used to make sure that the script included a violent scene in which he killed someone. In fact we can confirm that in most of his pre-war films Gabin embodies a character who is driven by anger to murder (*La Bandera*, *Quai des Brumes*, *La Bête Humaine*, *Le Jour se Lève*). No doubt the story was made up, but it deserves to be true. It is not just another film star's caprice, but the result of conscious reflection on his personality.

In reality Gabin is not an actor who gets asked to play the hero in a story — the story is always built around him as a person. Gabin would not recognise any script but one which incorporates his own destiny — a fit of anger, murder, leading to his own death.

In *Le Jour se Lève* François has gritted his teeth and struggled bravely, day after day, against the bad luck which has seemed to dog him. He was born with a sort of social stigma (a state-supported orphan) and ever since he has kicked against the sacred cows of modern society, resisting them all the way (machines, factory work, sand, red lead and even the full bus which leaves you stranded in the rain). Now thirty years old, he might think he has worn out their evil pursuit of him, he might think his courage and, in the old sense of the word, his virtue, has foiled his destiny. Now he is to meet the woman who will rescue him from his solitude and consecrate his victory over life. It would seem that Gabin always has to be saved by a woman (Michèle Morgan in *Quai des Brumes*) — nearly all his films are the story of how this salvation is an illusion. So Françoise and François meet on their saint's day. This perhaps is a sign — she has been predestined for him. François can still have an affair with Clara (Arletty) without deceiving Françoise, for Clara belongs to François's world, while Françoise manifestly belongs 'somewhere else'. The flowering of their love will enable him to disentangle himself. François will escape from Clara while escaping from himself, and will find Françoise. He keeps the affair going with Clara only until he is sure of François's love. . . .

. . . Gabin is the only French actor, or nearly the only actor in the world (except for Chaplin) who can play parts

where the public expects a sad ending. Even the most romantic young typist would feel cheated if Gabin got married at the end of the film to Jacqueline Laurent or Michèle Morgan.

So Gabin was quite right in demanding of his script writers a crisis scene of homicidal fury. It constitutes the significant moment in a rigid destiny where the spectator recognises the same hero in film after film — a hero of the sprawling metropolis, a suburban, working-class Thebes where the gods take the form of the blind but equally transcendant imperatives of society.

Conclusion.

Thus an analysis of the François-Gabin character clearly defines the profound nature of this film. In spite of its structure and realist appearance, *Le Jour se Lève* is nothing less than a 'psychological' or even 'social' drama. As in tragedy, the essential quality of this story and its characters is purely metaphysical. The realism of the direction, characters, plot, setting, dialogue, is only the pretext and, as it were, the modern incarnation of an action which would no doubt be difficult to define in terms outside its contemporary frame of reference, but which essentially goes beyond it. And yet this action is worthwhile and convincing precisely to the extent that it is realistic. Whether it be psychological (the personalities of Berry, Françoise and Clara) or material (the setting, cigarettes, wardrobe), the art of Carné and his colleagues is to make reality fulfil itself in terms of reality, before insinuating symbolic values. As if poetry only began to glow precisely when the action appears to be identified with the most life-like details.

One thing is clear, then: the realism of *Le Jour se Lève* is as rigorous as that of a poem. It is all written in verse or at least in prose which is invisibly poetic . . .

While at the same time it is never really possible in the film to dissociate 'technique' from 'scenario', 'form' from 'content', 'subject' from 'style'. And that is the mark of good cinema.

CREDITS:

Original script by	Jacques Viot
Adaptation and dialogue by	Jacques Prévert
Directed by	Marcel Carné
Produced by	Brachet
Production company	VOG Sigma (Paris, 1939)
Music composed by	Maurice Jaubert
Director of photography	Curt Courant
Cameramen	Philippe Agostini, André Bac, Viguier
Assistants to the director	Pierre Blondy, Jean Fazy
Sound recordist	Armand Petitjean
Editor	René le Henaff
Production manager	Paul Madeux
Décor	Alexandre Trauner
Costumes by	Boris Bilinksy
Script-girl	Jeanne Witta
Studio	Paris Studios Cinéma (Billancourt)
Process	Black and white
Running time	1 hour 25 minutes

CAST:

François	Jean Gabin
M. Valentin	Jules Berry
Françoise	Jacqueline Laurent
Clara	Arletty
Concierge	René Génin
Concierge's wife	Mady Berry
Gaston	Bernard Blier
Paulo	Marcel Pérès
The inspector	Jacques Baumer
The café proprietor	René Bergeron
The woman on the stairs	Gabrielle Fontan
M. Gerbois	Arthur Devère
The blind man	Georges Douking