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Dans la serre: Framing the greenhouse in *Le Jour se lève* (1939) and *La Règle du jeu* (1939)

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journals.sagepub.com/home/frc **Barry Nevin**

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Abstract

Beyond the year of their production, their notoriously foreboding references to contemporary national and international politics, and their shared status as canonised classics of French cinema, Marcel Carné's *Le Jour se lève* (1939) and Jean Renoir's *La Règle du jeu* (1939) both portray the romantic union of two parties within a greenhouse. This article aims to elaborate on these images in two central ways: first, it theorises glass in cinema with reference to the writings of André Bazin and Gilles Deleuze; second, it situates Carné and Renoir's greenhouses within their respective dramatic, aesthetic and political contexts. In both cases, the narrative inscribes specific socio-economic associations and a related conceptualisation of temporality in the image of the greenhouse rather than merely reducing it to an inert, physically circumscribed space. Furthermore, whereas the *mise en scène* of Carné's greenhouse concretises the dialectics of memory and recollection manifested through his film's flashbacks, Renoir's greenhouse provides a meta-filmic commentary on his own obsolete efforts to immerse himself in the foibles of the *haute bourgeoisie* and to liberate his country's ruling class from its outmoded *modus operandi*.

Keywords

class, glass, flashback, *image-temps*, meta-cinema, poetic realism, temporality.

Introduction: two filmmakers, two films, one year

The present study proposes a reading of set design in two films – *Le Jour se lève* (Marcel Carné, 1939) and *La Règle du jeu* (Jean Renoir, 1939) – whose directors each turned their cameras to the seething ideological conflicts that fractured France over the course of the 1930s. Both filmmakers, like the chosen canonised classics, have become synonymous with the cinema of the period. The first, Marcel Carné, remarked in his own autobiography that as early as 1934, 'le fascisme était "à

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nos portes”” (Carné, 1996: 54). This sombre outlook informs Carné’s work of this period, which Jonathan Driskell describes as a series of ‘dark and fatalistic, yet lyrical and stylised accounts of working-class lives’ (Driskell, 2014: 1). Carné had worked as a critic for a variety of newspapers before beginning his filmmaking career with *Nogent, El Dorado du dimanche* (1929) and as assistant director to Jacques Feyder from 1929 to 1935. *Jenny* (1936) inaugurated a famous collaboration between Carné and screenwriter-poet Jacques Prévert, which saw the production of poeticised studio-bound recreations of everyday working-class life including *Le Quai des brumes* (1938) and *Les Enfants du paradis* (1945).

Unlike Carné, Jean Renoir recollected the rise of Léon Blum’s short-lived Front populaire government in later years as ‘un moment où les Français crurent vraiment qu’ils allaient s’aimer les uns les autres’ (Renoir, 2005: 114). By the end of the 1930s, Renoir had evolved from a director of avant-garde silent films (*La Fille de l’eau*, 1925; *La Petite Marchande d’allumettes*, 1928) and prestigious adaptations (*Nana*, 1926; *Madame Bovary*, 1934) to become the left’s favourite filmmaker as well as a prolific journalist for the Communist newspaper *Ce Soir*, to which he contributed articles from 4 March 1937 to 7 October 1938 (see Renoir 2006 [1974], 132–244). Renoir’s *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (1936), *La Vie est à nous* (1936, produced in collaboration with other directors including Jacques Becker and Jean-Paul Le Chanois), *Les Bas-fonds* (1936), *La Grande Illusion* (1937) and *La Marseillaise* (1938) famously cemented his unofficial affiliation with the French left from the rise of the Front populaire to its inevitable eclipse, optimistically assessing French society’s ability to contend with increasingly intractable issues such as capitalist exploitation, Fascism and indigenous anti-Semitism.

By 1939, both directors were foreshadowing the inevitable close of the *entre-deux-guerres* through their most starkly lucid reflections of a politically gridlocked France. Carné’s *Le Jour se lève*, released on 17 July 1939, opens with the off-screen murder of Valentin (Jules Berry) by François (Jean Gabin). As police proceed to surround François’s apartment building, he barricades himself within his room and evokes the events that led to his act of violence, including his encounters with Françoise (Jacqueline Laurent) and Clara (Arletty). Convinced of the futility of any appeal to his community for understanding, François eventually shoots himself. Carné’s film was released a mere three months before France entered the Second World War and two years after the inevitable demise of the Front populaire, and Maureen Turim (2002: 63) unsurprisingly observes that critics viewed *Le Jour se lève* as a renunciation of the Front’s ideals.

Echoing Carné’s crisis of confidence, the director who had been baptised ‘le metteur en scène de génie des gauches’ by Roger Leenhardt in February 1937 (cited in Gauteur, 2005: 59) reported in January 1939 that he was directing ‘une description exacte des bourgeois de notre époque’ (cited in Bussot, 1939: 3). The scathing satire in question, *La Règle du jeu* (1939), narrates a rural excursion to La Sologne arranged by Robert (Marcel Dalio) and Christine de la Chesnaye (Nora Grégor) for their *haut bourgeois* peers. Among the invitees is famed airman André Jurieux (Roland Toutain), who has secured an invitation through his friend Octave (Renoir) with a view to eloping with Christine. Over the course of their stay, the relationships that alternately bond and antagonise the various characters both upstairs and downstairs interweave and overlap, culminating in the accidental murder of Jurieux by the La Chesnayes’ gamekeeper, Schumacher (Gaston Modot). Reviled by many at its 7 July 1939 premiere at the Aubert-Palace and Colisée cinemas, the film ranks today as Renoir’s *magnum opus* through ‘its reconstitution of a world almost inconceivably old-fashioned in a cinematic style of breathtaking modernity’ (Reader, 2010: 115).

The class concerns, socio-political production context, pivotal acts of violence and treacherous romantic relationships central to both *Le Jour se lève* and *La Règle du jeu* provide sufficient grounds in themselves to justify a comparative analysis. However, my attention to these commonalities has been inflected by a particular element common to their respective set designs. Although

both films take place in geographically disparate worlds and occupy separate fictional universes – *Le Jour se lève* in an area identified by Reader (2014: 392) and Edward Baron Turk (1989: 91) as the industrial city of Amiens, *La Règle du jeu* in an anachronistic rural realm in La Sologne, emphatically distanced from the Paris metropole – the drama unfolding within both films reaches a crucial turning-point within a greenhouse.

It is worth noting that glass constitutes an important component of architecture, decor and objects in both films, signalling the fragility of the worlds inhabited by the main characters. One need only consider the scene in *Le Jour se lève* in which the camera cuts from a view of the street visible beyond François's bullet-ridden window to a close-up of François himself, looking out at the street. As his perception evokes his memory, the image freezes and fades to a view of the street as it appeared on the morning of his first encounter with Françoise. Glass also provides the focal point of a key moment in *La Règle du jeu* when Christine borrows an eyeglass belonging to Berthelin (Tony Corteggiani), which allows her to accidentally witness the farewell embrace between Robert and Geneviève (Mila Parély). Her delimited gaze decontextualises the embrace, convincing Christine that an ongoing love affair is blossoming between her husband and his one-time mistress, and catalyses Christine's own interleaving dalliances, which culminate in the accidental murder of Jurieux.

The case of the greenhouse is particularly complex because its transparent doors and walls problematise preconceived binaries such as open/closed and public/private. In *The World in a Frame* (2002 [1976]), Leo Braudy counterposes 'open' and 'closed' styles of classical filmmaking, respectively characterised in their purest forms, in Braudy's view, by the films of Renoir and Fritz Lang (*Metropolis*, 1926; *Fury*, 1936), whose narrative styles constitute the two major ways in which film imposes 'structures of perception' on the viewer (Braudy, 2002: 46). Table 1 outlines the core characteristics of each narrative style (see Braudy, 2002: 48–51). Appropriating Braudy's distinction between each director's *mise en scène*, Ben McCann has usefully suggested that '*Le Jour se lève* – and Carné – can be unequivocally placed into the "closed" film column' (McCann, 2014: 35–6; see also McCann, 2013: 140–8). These categories, although intended as a series of observations rather than theoretical frameworks for systematic analysis, point to the value of considering how glass problematises such a dichotomisation of Carné and Renoir's respective bodies of work.

André Bazin hints at the problematic nature of such binaries and of simplifying our interpretation of glass in his landmark analysis of *Le Jour se lève*, in which he views glass as '[une] matière transparente et réfléchissante, à la fois loyale, puisqu'elle laisse voir au travers et trompeuse, puisque cependant elle sépare, et dramatique puisque l'ignorer la brise et promet au malheur'

Table 1. Leo Braudy's description of 'open' and 'closed' worlds in film.

The 'open' / Renoir style	The 'closed' / Lang style
Realistic and theatrical origins	Expressionistic and novelistic origins
Pictorial	Architectural
Frame as window to ongoing reality	Screen defines the world
Importance of character	Importance of architecture
Reflexive references to filmmaking	Illusion of sufficiency of film
Camera explores scene	Camera orders scene
Impartial camera	Camera is omniscient or identifies with character
Audience as invitee	Audience as victim
Irresolvable relationships and stories	False summary or 'happy ending'
Frame within narrative as refuge	Emphasis on inescapable limits of world

(Bazin, 1998b [1951]: 91). Bazin elsewhere proceeds further, hinting at the metafilmic properties of glass by describing the screen itself as ‘la fenêtre de l’écran’ (Bazin, 2008 [1951]: 161). How each director’s distinctive narrative style, exercised on the eve of war, inscribes a particular set of socio-economic associations and a related conceptualisation of temporality in the image of the glasshouse are the core concerns of this article. This analysis further proposes that whereas the *mise en scène* of Carné’s greenhouse concretises the dialectics of memory and recollection signalled on a formal level through his film’s flashbacks, Renoir’s greenhouse provides as a meta-filmic commentary on his own obsolete efforts to redeem France’s ruling class.

‘Tu es avec moi, tout ça va changer’: François’s dreamscape

The greenhouse designed by Alexandre Trauner for *Le Jour se lève* represents a particularly interesting case-study because Bazin, noting the prominence of glass throughout the film, observes that ‘une sorte d’accord et de complicité existe entre le verre et le drame de cet homme, comme s’il trouvait une sorte d’écho dans les choses’ (Bazin, 1998b: 91). Building on Bazin, I wish to examine how the greenhouse recollected by François simultaneously operates as a signifier of François’s own destiny and enters into dialectic with other aspects of decor, including the window in François’s room. The greenhouse in question adjoins a house owned by the Briquets, local horticulturists for whom Françoise works. We first see the greenhouse framed by a long-shot during the narrative’s first flashback as François cycles to Françoise’s home for the first time, and a short time later as François conceals himself outside it with his bicycle in an effort to determine the nature of Françoise’s meeting that evening at a local café-concert. The greenhouse features once again, more prominently, after a meeting between Valentin and François at a local bar during the second flashback, where the former claims to be Françoise’s father (Figure 1).

On the one hand, the greenhouse appears to operate as a space of productive revelation, positively framing the trajectory of François and Françoise’s relationship by effacing any misgiving that François or the spectator may have held regarding her liaison with Valentin. After they have entered the greenhouse, Françoise reveals that, contrary to what Valentin has claimed in a previous discussion with François, Valentin is not her father, and unbegrudgingly states that ‘il aime bien raconter des histoires’. Evidently observing François’s disgust as she endeavours to defend Valentin’s generosity in times gone by, she calmly states: ‘Mais si vous voulez, je ne le reverrai plus’. Françoise’s understated delivery suggests that neither François nor the spectator has any reason to doubt the candour of her offer. A new beginning is also implied by the grammatical register of their conversation: whereas François and Françoise have respectively persisted in employing the *tu* and *vous* forms since their first meeting at the factory, the latter finally employs the *tu* form in her last line in this scene when, after granting François her brooch, she declares ‘je t’aime’. The sense of unity between the two characters is reinforced by the positioning of Françoise whose gaze, in McCann’s analysis, is ‘one of empathy, of understanding, and not just one of restless physical yearning’ (McCann, 2014: 79).

Interestingly, the greenhouse – a setting that had previously featured in Carné’s *Drôle de drame* (1937) – is devoid of visual references to milieu. Such an absence is surprising in the work of a filmmaker who famously emphasised popular locales as a fecund source of cinema in his 1933 article, ‘Quand le cinéma descendra-t-il dans la rue?’ which promoted cinema aiming ‘[de] décrire la vie simple des petites gens, rendre l’atmosphère d’humanité laborieuse qu’est la leur!’ (Carné, 1933: 14). This absence of lower-class signifiers differentiates the greenhouse from other settings such as the local café-concert, François’s and Clara’s respective apartments, and the anonymous streets that stimulate François’s memory. This contrast suggests that his and Françoise’s entry into the greenhouse is an ideal move towards plotting a new future, divested of the pre-existing

Figure 1. François and Françoise in the greenhouse.

socio-economic shackles made manifest by the debilitating sandblasting factory where he works, and by Valentin who, as Turk observes, ‘flaunts magnified bourgeois values’, drinking a *fine à l’eau* in François’s company and wearing a tailored suit (Turk, 1989: 163).

The utopic qualities of the greenhouse are emphasised by their contrast with François’s workplace, suggesting the possibility of escaping this occupation that mutely isolates him from his co-workers within an insulated suit, and provokes him to cough uncontrollably on occasion. As he directs Françoise to Mme Lagardier’s office, he describes Mme Lagardier’s quarters as a little house with an adjoining garden, and their joint relegation to off-screen space underscores the alienation of François’s stratum from these middle-class standards of everyday living. Before leaving, Françoise’s new bouquet of flowers has already wilted, demonstrating the impossibility of supporting organic life within his workplace. Tellingly, François later recollects ‘la première fois que je t’ai vue avec tes fleurs. Tout d’un coup, j’ai eu envie d’être heureux.’ For François, Françoise essentially metaphorises difference within the enclosed, male-dominated industrial production-line. The greenhouse provides a locus that productively accommodates this difference and allows their relationship to flourish. The flowers in bloom behind François and the light passing through the four panes of glass visible behind him appear to support his reassuring assertion that ‘maintenant, tu es avec moi, tout ça va changer’ (Figure 2).

Conversely, a Bazinian view would consider the fragility of the glass that adorns their romance. Such a perspective is evoked prior to the first flashback as rooftop snipers perforate the windows that seal François’s insular room from mainstream society. Bazin himself describes the greenhouse as ‘[un] lieu artificiel, factice, où les fleurs “poussées” sont d’une autre race que les lilas qu’on cueille au printemps’ (Bazin, 1998b: 91). In a similar vein, Turk views the greenhouse as a ‘grandiose projection’ of François’s obsession with Françoise’s *femme-fleur* image, proposing that the musical score and painterly composition of this scene emphasise François’s ‘immersion in illusion’ (Turk, 1989: 168). Likewise, McCann (2014: 80) and Driskell (2014: 49) observe that the greenhouse’s emphasis on artificial confinement marks it as a temporary, illusory haven for the materialisation of the desires of the two characters.

Figure 2. 'Maintenant tu es avec moi, tout ça va changer.'

These views of the greenhouse as a reflexively critical locus are further justified by the redundant hopes and dreams projected by the Front populaire. The Matignon Agreements, signed on 7 June 1936 in the wake of a massive general strike, granted workers the legal right to strike, full entitlement to trade union organisation and a general wage increase. Other major developments ensued, including the introduction of *congés payés*, the 40-hour working week and the right to collective bargaining. Furthermore, the Front populaire placed unprecedented emphasis on redistributing time towards what Benigno Cacérès dubs France's 'redressement moral et physique': Blum's minister, Léo Lagrange, who promoted sport as an affordable means of combatting widespread alcoholism and tuberculosis (Cacérès, 1981: 77); and Blum himself, on trial in March 1942 by the collaborationist Vichy government, recalled his government's desire to convince the French public that 'le loisir et le repos après le travail sont aussi comme une réconciliation avec la vie naturelle dont le travailleur est trop souvent séparé et frustré' (cited in Cacérès, 1981: 34).

François mocks these obsolete goals during his first encounter with Françoise, declaring 'en somme, le travail, c'est la liberté, et puis la santé. C'est vrai, c'est tout ce qu'il y a de sain ici!' His work, one of the many jobs that he describes during an extended monologue within the greenhouse as 'des boulots, jamais les mêmes, toujours pareils' conforms to 'les conditions de travail modernes, qui tendent à éliminer l'effort proprement physique au profit des gestes automatiques' which, according to a radio broadcast made by Lagrange on 10 June 1936, 'sont de nature, s'ils n'ont pas de contrepartie active, à provoquer une nette dégénérescence de l'être humain' (cited in Gaboriau, 1995: 95). The contradictions inherent to François's very act of projecting his dreams within the greenhouse and, indeed, of recollecting this moment within his bedroom, are best summarised by Françoise herself, who remarks 'ici, c'est des fleurs enfermées ... c'est pas la campagne'.

Glass, window-frames and other elements of interior architecture within François's room and apartment building, like the many objects analysed by Bazin and Turim, such as François's brooch and teddy-bear (Bazin, 1998b: 87–96; Turim, 2002: 65–8; see also Turim, 1989: 46–8), link François's perception in the present day to his memories, becoming what Turim describes as

Figure 3. Projecting the window-frame as a prison rather than a means of liberation.

'associative memory objects' whose meaning is charged with signification by the film's double temporality (Turim, 2002: 65–6). Although Turim neglects the visible influence of the protagonist's navigation of his bedroom in the present day on the visual composition of his recollections, François's recollection of the greenhouse is clearly conditioned by his perception of his domestic interiors and the staircase directly outside his bedroom door, which he views briefly after murdering Valentin. Through the film's flashback structure, these objects become conduits to the machinations of François's recollection of the greenhouse: for example, light from the streets projects a shadow of the window-frame against his bedroom walls during our first view of his bedroom window and again in the moments prior to the second flashback, after he has read the departure dates in his newspaper, signalling the potential of windows to imply entrapment rather than liberation at an early stage in the narrative (Figure 3).

This expressive interplay between lighting and set design evokes Gilles Deleuze's fatalistic description of light in Carné's films as '[un] gris lumineux qui passe par toutes les nuances atmosphériques et constitue le grand circuit du soleil et de la lune' (Deleuze, 1985: 68) and recalls Trauner's assertion in later years that *mise en scène* required set designers 'so that the spectator has an immediate grasp of the character's psychology' (Trauner, 1982: 34). Furthermore, the balustrade on the spiral staircase in François's building resembles prison bars, thus providing a point of reference for the metal framework of the greenhouse that circumscribes the spatial and temporal limits of François's dreams, and lending additional resonance to Bazin's description of the stairwell as 'la cage de l'escalier de l'hôtel' (Bazin, 1998b: 90).

The impossibility of crystallising the dreams articulated by François in the greenhouse is underscored in the scene that follows his conversation with Françoise. In this scene, Clara reveals to François, while holding a tray of brooches identical to the one given to him by Françoise, that this token is granted by Valentin 'à chaque femme qui couche avec lui' (a statement whose implications regarding Françoise are never entirely clarified). The brooch, once a signifier of the shared love expressed in the greenhouse, now operates as a conduit to memories of deception, and François's

Figure 4. Lazare Meerson's glass rooftop in *Pension Mimosas* (Jacques Feyder, 1935).

defenestration of the brooch through a pane of splintered glass in a fit of rage hours after murdering Valentin underscores the unfeasibility of the desires he once projected in the greenhouse.

McCann suggests that Carné may have been influenced by the *serre chaude* that features in Émile Zola's *La Curée*, in which the tropical atmosphere affects Renée, Maxime and the plants it hosts in equal measure as the lovers consummate their relationship, and where, in Susan Harrow's analysis, 'normal space and time criteria are abolished and sense perception transformed by the hallucination which grips the lovers' (Harrow, 1998: 83). The greenhouse may also constitute an intertextual reference to *Pension Mimosas* (1935), on which Carné served as assistant director for the third time to his mentor, Jacques Feyder. Much of the action in Feyder's film unfolds within the titular boarding-house located in the Côte d'Azur. The upper floor of Lazare Meerson's remarkable set incorporates a glass-house structure that ensures Louise's ability to survey the boarding-house but which later challenges her efforts to subliminally express her romantic desires for her adopted son (Figure 4). The blossoms that adorn the greenhouse in *Le Jour se lève* also recall the flowers that Louise places throughout the boarding-house, which signify her own developing romantic inclinations towards her son and poignantly underscore the inevitable transience of her faded youth. Interestingly, discussing Valentin's travels abroad, Françoise mentions that mimosas blossom throughout winter on the Côte d'Azur, recalling both the name and location of Feyder's titular boarding-house. Clara similarly evokes *Pension Mimosas* when, speaking of Valentin during her first encounter with François, recollects that 'il m'a eue avec des mimosas'.

Writing on François's room, Carné said that 'je voulais un décor absolument clos afin de donner l'impression d'un home muré en quelque sorte dans cette chambre, où il passait sa dernière nuit, à l'image d'un condamné à mort dans sa cellule' (Carné, 1996: 125). Discussing Trauner's approach to set design, Jill Forbes (2011: 282) writes that his sets 'were intended to carry a powerful emotional charge' and McCann (2013: 115), echoing Forbes, writes that 'the final decor not only determined mood and feeling, but also became the narrative's organizing image, the "figure" standing for the narrative itself'. Carné, Forbes and McCann's comments are equally pertinent in the case of the greenhouse, which clearly constitutes a composite of François's recollection of the past and his

perception of his bedroom in the present day, justifying Bazin's assertion that 'le verre semble condenser par sa présence tout le drame de François' (Bazin, 1998b: 91). By extension, its *mise en scène* at once dramatically foreshadows his enclosure within his apartment and testifies to his own ongoing reflection on the futility of attempting to forge his own future in pre-war France.

'Jamais plus au château': l'eau gelée of Renoir–Octave's film set

A greenhouse designed by Eugène Lourié provides one of only four interior settings that accommodate the drama of *La Règle du jeu*, the others including the Paris residences owned by the La Chesnays and Geneviève, and the La Chesnays' château based in La Colinière. As in *Le Jour se lève*, the greenhouse hosts a romantic meeting, in this case between Octave and Christine. The film also shares the preoccupation with the co-existence of the present with an embodied past, which is exhibited by the flashback structure of *Le Jour se lève*. This tension, which is similarly crucial to our interpretation of the greenhouse that features in *La Règle du jeu*, has been most consistently conceptualised by Deleuze in his landmark study of temporality in cinema (1985).

To be understood, Deleuze's discussion of temporality in Renoir's work must be located within his Bergsonian understanding of time. Deleuze asserts that because the past is formed at the same time as the present, time must ceaselessly split into two dissymmetrical jets, one oriented towards the future and continuously allowing the present to pass, the other falling ceaselessly into the past, where it is permanently stored in a virtual realm of memory. This scission constitutes 'l'opération la plus fondamentale du temps' (1985: 108). Examining Renoir's lucid dissection of history, theatricality and class in *La Règle du jeu*, Deleuze remarks that Renoir's films constitute a crystal of time that ceaselessly juxtaposes the virtual and the actual, framing an irreducible concatenation of interpenetrating reflections of servants and their masters, living beings and automata, theatricality and reality (Deleuze, 1985: 105–11).

Deleuze posits that the ongoing exchange between the actual and the virtual also has the effect of conditioning the spectator's vision of the passage of time, specifically the constant tension between the embodied past and the ongoing present, and their shared influence on the openness of the future. As noted earlier, the co-existence of each is already visible through the flashback structure of *Le Jour se lève*. However, whereas Carné's film juxtaposes the actual, ongoing present with François's virtual memories of the past in dilated circuits (cf. Deleuze, 1985: 92), Renoir's work displays the relationship between the past and the present through deep staging, even within individual shots (1985: 113–14). He proposes that Renoir's films portray a vision of the world as a doomed theatre of 'rôles gelés, figés, tout faits, trop conformes' (1985: 116) but observes that Renoir's crystal contains 'une faille, un point de fuite, un "crapaud"' made manifest by Renoir's signature deep staging, and that characters are therefore in a position to shed the stultifying theatrical roles imposed by the crystal and to enter 'une réalité décaillée' (1985: 113–14).

Focusing on Renoir's framing of Christine and Octave's interaction with the greenhouse, I particularly wish to elaborate on the possibility for characters to envision a potential transition from the emphatically theatrical world of the La Chesnays' château to a sphere where their impulsive emotions can be directed towards a mutually amorous relationship, liberated from the outmoded *règles* that condemn them to inhabit *rôles morts*. Given the centrality of the greenhouse to this analysis, it is worth noting that Deleuze relates his concept of a cracked crystal to images of glass in Renoir's work. Observing that rivers liberate Boudu and Harriet from their respective roles of tramp confined to the house and naïve adolescent in *Boudu sauvé des eaux* (1932) and *The River* (1951), Deleuze asserts that Renoir's *mise en scène* of 'l'eau gelée de la vitre, du miroir plan ou du cristal profond' (Deleuze, 1985: 116) portrays the scission of time, implying that glass itself can operate as a key signifier of the tension between the virtual and the actual and, by extension,

between the embodied past and the ongoing present, and within a *point de fuite* towards a genuinely new future.

Prior to the scenes set in the greenhouse, Christine is pursued by Saint-Aubin (Pierre Nay) and Jurieux, and these relationships develop simultaneously with other adulterous relationships including those between Geneviève and Robert, and Lisette (Paulette Dubost) and Marceau (Carette). However, of these various relationships, Octave and Christine's shared history is the most closely detailed, often through comments provided by various characters. Octave, who represents but one of Christine's extra-marital dalliances, is now a failed musician, and studied music under the tutelage of Christine's father (now deceased) in Salzburg. Saint-Aubin remarks during his first appearance that Christine was suddenly obliged to move to France, and Octave admits that he is currently being sustained by the La Chesnayses, though whether or not Octave and Christine's paths diverged before her arrival is not entirely clear.

Although many of Octave's scenes link him with reckless Jurieux after he has secured the latter's invitation to La Colinière, Octave and Christine's relationship develops significantly during the *bal masqué*. After Robert discovers Jurieux making advances towards Christine, she flees the château with Octave. Following a series of cross-cuttings between Octave and Christine's conversations, Robert's revelation of the Limonaire orchestrion and Schumacher's violent rampage, Lisette gives Christine her cloak, and Christine and Octave continue to converse, proceeding to the greenhouse, which is located beyond a bridge that leads from the château to the estate's hunting-grounds. Octave suggests that they re-enter the château, but Christine declares 'Non, pas au château. Jamais plus au château!' to which Octave responds 'Alors ici, dans la petite serre?' Octave opens the greenhouse and turns on the light, setting a scene for the emergence of their shared romantic desires:

CHRISTINE: Toi, par exemple, tu es un type très bien.

OCTAVE: Moi, je suis un raté.

CHRISTINE: Non, tu n'est pas un raté. Tu as seulement besoin qu'on s'occupe de toi. Je vais m'occuper de toi.

CHRISTINE: Idiot ... Tu sais ... c'est toi que j'aime. Et toi ... tu m'aimes?

OCTAVE: Oui Christine, je t'aime.

CHRISTINE: Alors, embrasse-moi ... Non, sur la bouche, comme un amoureux.

Octave quite willingly acquiesces to Christine's request in what represents her most unlikely romantic conquest of the evening. As in the case of *Le Jour se lève*, the greenhouse initially appears to offer salvation for both characters. More specifically, it provides a space where the mutually complementary nature of each character's unconventional sexuality becomes apparent to both parties: Burch and Sellier (2014: 77) observe that Octave demonstrates a lack of sexual differentiation through his role as confidant for André, Christine and Robert, and that this 'is underlined by his chubby physique and his easygoing and childlike manners'. These attributes productively correspond with Christine's own desire for what Serceau describes as 'une forme d'amour en apparence totalement déssexualisée' (Serceau, 1981: 142–3). Indeed, although Christine is evidently unable to discern the emotional nature of her own rapports with her many suitors, she is, as Sesonkske convincingly argues, 'most responsive and alive when with Octave – whether love or shared nostalgia, we feel a warmth in their encounters that she has not shown for either André or St Aubin' (Sesonkske, 1980: 407). Furthermore, Olivier Curchod and Christopher Faulkner's analysis of the film's genesis reveals that Renoir originally intended to include a scene in which Octave and Christine consume copious amounts of whiskey, but later removed this scene, and with it any sense that their statements in the greenhouse are motivated by drunkenness (Curchod and Faulkner, 1999: 362).

Furthermore, apart from representing a betrayal of both Robert's and Jurieux's interests, this moment quite astoundingly resolves two major social obstacles that should definitively preclude a sexual relationship between Octave and Christine. The first is their respective class affiliations within their rigorously stratified society. Whereas Christine is firmly anchored within the *haute bourgeoisie*, Octave remains, by his own admission, a marginal, parasitic figure, and cannot accommodate Christine's *haut bourgeois* demands, which are emphasised by Robert during his conversation with Jurieux in the following scene. Christine herself indicates the impact of Octave's social station on his potential relationships when, discussing the topic of male lovers with her maid Lisette, during their first appearance, she presumptuously declares 'Si, tu en as, Octave, par exemple.' The dramatic nature of this resolution is underscored in the greenhouse by its inversion of Octave's earlier protective declaration to Jurieux that since Christine's father is now dead, 'moi, je peux m'occuper de sa fille, et je m'en occuperai'. Christine's offer of support testifies that his lowly position is not only acceptable to her, but even buttresses their relationship.

The greenhouse also provides a space where issues pertaining to age may be transcended. As Octave describes himself as a failure and remarks that he is no longer young enough to alter the trajectory of his life and career, he picks a flower and plucks its petals, emphasising his own ageing body, the transience of the childhood years he spent with Christine, and his unhappily enlightened position. A disapproving Lisette echoes this concern in the following scene, stating 'moi, je crois qu'il faut laisser les jeunes avec les jeunes, et les vieux avec les vieux' as Octave prepares to leave with Christine. However, Christine's aforementioned assumption of responsibility towards Octave also negates this concern.

Lourié himself provides no details on the greenhouse in his autobiographical writings, *My Work in Films* (1985). However, Curchod reveals that Renoir originally intended to film this scene within the stables attached to the Château de la Ferté-Saint-Aubin, but eventually opted for the greenhouse setting, which was constructed in-studio (Curchod, 1999: 252). This suggests that the greenhouse potentially plays an important role in relation to the resolution of the contradictions in Octave and Christine's romance and to the broader examination of theatricality at the heart of the film's *mise en scène*. When Octave and Christine proceed to the greenhouse, they crucially reject the world of the theatre by entering a sphere that is devoid of the weapons, stuffed animals and colonial antiques that anchor Geneviève's apartment and the La Chesnayes' Paris residence historically, which confines the *haute bourgeoisie* to the *rôles morts* conceptualised by Deleuze. The greenhouse also isolates them from the Limonaire, one of Robert's many automata which, according to Faulkner, during the eighteenth century and European Enlightenment, 'gave evidence of the superiority and privilege of human reason to the mastery of oneself and one's world in all its aspects' (Faulkner, 2011: 7) and, in the case of Robert's own appropriation of such instruments, 'is correlated to his control over his emotional world' (2011: 10), even if such regulation ultimately proves impossible.

The entrance to the greenhouse represents the final stage in each character's attempt to liberate themselves of the stratification effected by the *haute bourgeoisie*. Christine's vow against returning to the château signifies a rejection of the pervasive influence of the perilously archaic etiquette performed by her husband and peers, earlier verbalised as she declares 'J'en ai assez de ce théâtre' to Octave while fleeing the performance of the *danse macabre* with Saint-Aubin. As for Octave, numerous scholars have already argued that Octave's body language differentiates him from the stultifying formalities enforced by other members of the party throughout the film: Braudy refers to the 'wildly gesturing Octave' (1977: 176) and Sesonke (1980: 421) proposes that Octave's 'overstated gestures' serve to 'define the authenticity of Octave'. Even Jurieux himself asks Octave during the first night in their shared bedroom at La Colinière, 'Tu as fini de gesticuler comme ça?'

Figure 5. Christine and Octave leave the château while Robert and Jurieux fight for her hand.

All three echo Jacques Joly, who insightfully argues that Octave mobilises ‘a freedom of expression, including even redundancy and exaggeration, which belongs to him alone, whereas the other characters in the film remain the tributaries, even in expressing their personal feelings, of a certain “language” appropriate to their social position’ (Joly 1967: 7).

Indeed, Christine and Octave’s joint repudiation of the closely governed theatrical world regulated by Robert is already suggested by a rarely discussed shot of a window that physically isolates them from Robert and Jurieux as they fight for possession of Christine (Figure 5) long before they proceed to enter the greenhouse. Christine and Octave’s joint rejection of the theatricality that characterises the *haute bourgeoisie*’s *modus operandi* opens their trajectory to the possibility of entering ‘une nouvelle réalité qui ne préexistait pas’ (Deleuze, 1985: 116). This possibility is held in tension by two other elements, specifically the vividly extra-textual substance of both Octave and the greenhouse.

Discussing the former in an interview published in *Ce Soir* on 8 July 1939, Renoir stated that his role ‘[lui] correspondait presque exactement, physiquement comme moralement’ (cited in Gauteur, 2005: 154). Of the many analyses that have since examined this extra-textual relationship in further detail, two that implicitly elaborate on Octave’s own channelling of Renoir’s directorial prowess are worth noting: Cauliez writes that ‘Octave est un agent de liaison, un *auteur-acteur* en service commandé, un intermédiaire du cœur, un *entremetteur* en scène’ (Cauliez, 1962: 95, italics added). Echoing Cauliez, and evoking the barriers between Christine and Octave addressed earlier in this section, Serceau refers to Octave’s ‘rôle d’*entremetteur*’ among the narrative’s web of relationships, observing that ‘Amoureux de Christine, il ne peut ni *réaliser* ni même avouer sa passion tant sa position de classe le lui interdit’ (Serceau, 1981: 142, italics added). These extra-textual readings are most transparently justified when Octave, walking on the château’s terrace with Christine, recalls an event at which her father conducted an orchestra. Imitating Christine’s father, Octave faces the camera, bows to it and turns towards the facade as music plays within the mansion, only to let his arms slump moments later as he recognises his own failure as a creative artist. Simultaneously evoking Renoir’s own inability to control the relationships among the

characters participating in the *fête* and his own failure to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War through the pacifist message of *La Grande Illusion* (recollected in Renoir, 1989: 93), Octave declares:

Ah! Le contact avec le public, tu vois, c'est...c'est ce truc-là que j'aurais voulu connaître. Ça ... ça doit être, ça doit être bouleversant, hein ... Tu sais, là-bas, sur le perron, tout à l'heure, hein, j'ai bien cru que c'était arrivé! Oh, là là!

Deleuze (1985: 97) tantalisingly relates the tension between a performer's on-screen character and off-screen identity to his conceptualisation of the crystal, stating that 'le cristal est une scène' within which the actor 'rend actuelle l'image virtuelle du rôle, qui devient visible et lumineux'. In doing so, Deleuze indirectly extends discussions regarding the virtual and the actual in Renoir's *cristal fêlé* to how Renoir's ineffaceable presence within the guise of Octave exposes a *fêlure* within the world viewed.

The precise nature of this *fêlure* only becomes apparent if, building on the connection forged by Deleuze between glass objects and temporality in Renoir's work, one further extends Deleuze's discussion of on-screen and off-screen identities to the greenhouse itself which, appropriated by the film's director within the narrative, arguably plays as intrinsically meta-filmic a role as Renoir–Octave himself. For the greenhouse at La Colinière not only recalls Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *La Serre* (1867), but also visually resembles another structure intimately associated with French cinema, specifically the film studio built by Georges Méliès (who died one year before the film was released) in May 1897. Méliès's studio incorporated a glass roof and glass walls following the example set by large photographic studios of the era and, in Barry Salt's analysis, became the new standard for film studios and film lighting in its time (Salt, 2009 [1983]: 35). The wall located behind the shooting-stage within the studio was equipped with shutters to prevent unnecessary light from entering and the glass structure was fitted with moveable square frames containing stretched cotton cloth that could diffuse direct sunlight on sunny days, reproducing the effect of soft light that exists naturally on lightly overcast days (Ezra, 2000: 14; Salt, 2009: 34–5).

Lighting standards had changed by 1939, as film production had undergone major developments such as the widespread adoption of panchromatic film stock in the late 1920s, the introduction of concentrated light sources, and the deployment of freestanding spotlights, all of which enabled filmmakers to differentiate actors from the backgrounds, to incorporate painterly elements of tone and texture, and to mobilise chiaroscuro in a sustained manner (McCann, 2013: 46–8; see also Salt, 2009: 221–6), exemplified by the brooding cinematography in poetic realist classics including Carné's *Le Jour se lève* (as made evident by the preceding analysis), Julien Duvivier's *Pépé le Moko* (1937) and Renoir's own *La Bête humaine* (1938), the latter described by Dudley Andrew (1995: 304) as 'the apogée of poetic realism'. Interestingly, with the exception of the garish lights boasted by Robert's Limonaire, much of the lighting in *La Règle du jeu* is characterised by a restrained style primarily directed towards the staging of multiple adjoining rooms or interior and exterior spaces in depth. However, the lighting of the greenhouse uniquely contrasts with this design, casting a diffuse directional light from the right-hand side of the frame on Christine and Octave's faces (Figure 6). The resulting soft blend of light and shadow that features in this shot, more than any other scene in the film, evokes the cinematographic aesthetic described by McCann and underscores the tension between the petrified theatricality of the world viewed and the audacious cinematographic style that informs Renoir's *mise en scène*, recalling Méliès's own description of his studio as 'la réunion de l'atelier photographique (dans des proportions géantes) à la scène de théâtre' (Méliès, 2008 [1907]: 103, italics in original).

Figure 6. Christine and Octave declare their love for one another in the greenhouse.

The metafilmic and extra-textual resonance of the greenhouse and Octave enter into dialectic with one another, elevating the structure from a mere physical space inhabited by Octave and Christine to Renoir's own film set. The greenhouse, mobilised by Renoir–Octave as a studio, provides a metaphorical *point de fuite* where Renoir may immerse himself in the foibles of two of his characters (Octave and Christine) and allow them both to productively resist the stringent *règles* that structure *haut bourgeois* society, transcending theatrical space and orchestrating a genuinely new future based on their fantasies rather than on their capacity to sublimate their emotions through the performance of theatrical etiquette.

It is worth noting that in Deleuze's view, *La Règle du jeu* is an uncharacteristically pessimistic example of Renoir's output because the crystal, in this instance, is cracked through Schumacher's violence, rather than the potentially liberating capacity of certain theatrical roles available within the metaphorical crystal of time (Deleuze, 1985: 114). The present analysis implies that a textual space capable of constantly accommodating deviations from societal strictures exists beyond the disruptive violence of Schumacher's shotgun, even in this world where, according to Martin O'Shaughnessy, 'the future is already charted' (O'Shaughnessy, 2013: 30; see also O'Shaughnessy, 2015). To cite Deleuze, Renoir, even in his most pessimistic film, 'parie pour un gain' (Deleuze, 1985: 115).

Within the context of Renoir's fictional narrative, one could also read the lighting of this scene as a reference to the poetic realist films released in the years prior to the release of *La Règle du jeu* (particularly Carné's *Le Quai des brumes* and *Hôtel du nord* (1938)) and the fatalistic trajectories that they inscribed, partly through a complex interplay between characters, lighting and decor (cf. McCann, 2013: 47–8). The foreboding atmosphere evoked by this intertextual connection is justified by the fatal relationship between observer and observed on either side of the glasshouse in Renoir's film. After Octave closes the door of the greenhouse, Schumacher and Marceau – who have joined forces following their joint dismissal by Robert – unexpectedly enter the left-hand side of the frame and watch them, mistaking Christine – now wearing a cloak gifted by Schumacher to Lisette – for Lisette herself (Figure 7). The camera's

Figure 7. Marceau and Schumacher: spectators of Octave and Christine's fantasy.

frame positions Schumacher and Marceau in relation to the film's spectators as they conspire against Octave and Christine, emphasising the poacher and the gamekeeper's intimate involvement in the machinations of the drama. The framing of Schumacher and Marceau as spectators emphasises the greenhouse's ultimately ineffaceable imbrication within the pervasive theatrical space that confines the *haute bourgeoisie* to the crystal of time, reminding us that theatricality involves not only a mode of behaviour but also an active spectator. If, as Serceau (1981: 133) asserts, 'la vision de Schumacher n'a rien à voir avec la réalité', it is not merely because Schumacher and Marceau mistake the drama unfolding before them for an illicit affair between Lisette and Octave. It is because, justifying Octave's earlier assertion that 'tout le monde ment ... la radio, le cinéma, les journaux', the relationship developing between Christine and Octave is only possible in a space that, like a film set, provisionally sustains their fantasies.

Conclusion: pre-war projections

By the end of *Le Jour se lève*, François lies dead on his apartment floor, surrounded by the mist of tear-gas that invades his room mere seconds after he has taken his own life. His fate is inscribed not only in narrative's most deceptively utopic meeting between François and Françoise in the greenhouse, but also through the greenhouse's interconnections with scenes unfolding in the present. The greenhouse is intimately connected with the narrative's exposition of the machinations of François's memory, lending credence to McCann's description of Carné's 'closed' style and to Bazin's assertion that 'sans doute n'y a-t-il pas dans tout le cinéma de film qui soit plus intimement hanté que *Le Jour se lève*, où le hasard ait moins de part' (1998a: 112). Conversely, we must resist the temptation to reduce Renoir's greenhouse to a commentary on the rigidity of *la règle du jeu* or the ineluctability of the *haute bourgeoisie*'s destiny, even if each informs Renoir's *mise en scène* of this turning-point in Octave and Christine's relationship. Like the greenhouse scene in *Le Jour se lève*, described by Turk (1989: 78) as 'perhaps the most romantic in Carné's entire oeuvre', this

shot, although not necessarily the most romantic in Renoir's work, approaches authentic interpersonal communication more closely than any other scene within a film in which enduring human relationships hold so little currency. Yet the compelling temptation of spectatorship that motivates Schumacher and Marceau to gaze upon Renoir–Octave's film set inadvertently re-establishes a theatrical space that dooms the *haute bourgeoisie* existing both within and beyond the world viewed to extinction. Thus, the greenhouse provides a counterpoint to the Renoirian “surcroît de théâtralité” ... que seul le cinéma peut donner au théâtre’ (Deleuze, 1985: 112, citing Bazin 2008 [1951]: 148) and which fascinates Bazin and Deleuze, and also provides a textually rich reflexive point of access towards the film's own constructedness.

In both *Le Jour se lève* and *La Règle du jeu*, the greenhouse operates as a dramatic catalyst and a complex symbolic signifier, intrinsic to our understanding of characterisation, setting and narrative progression, as well as other elements of *mise en scène*, particularly lighting and framing, that are mobilised over the course of each narrative. In both films, the camera links characters with the greenhouse in comparison as well as contrast, visually invoking the notion of *serrer* (to lock), which is inextricably associated with the etymology of *serre chaude*. In doing so, the greenhouse holds notions of an ‘open’ and ‘closed’ *mise en scène* in tension, simultaneously promoting the development of romantic affairs between characters and signifying the impossibility of pursuing such relationships amid the fateful social forces operating within and beyond the stalemated societies presented in each film.

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