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EN ROUTE VERS LA TERRE PROMISE:

THE RADICAL FILM MAKING OF ALAIN TANNER

by

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ABSTRACT

A detailed analysis is presented of the five films made by the Swiss film director, Alain Tanner, during the period from 1969-76. Consideration is given to the relationship between Tanner's work and the French radical film theory of the immediate post-'68 period, and to the development by Tanner during this period of a highly individual body of film theory, which is based upon the principle of deliberately mixing avant-garde and conventional elements. The relationship also is studied between the theoretical formulations of the director and the resulting films on the screen, and a gap is shown to emerge between theory and practice, with the films exhibiting qualities underplayed by Tanner himself.

An examination is undertaken of the main areas of influence that have contributed to Tanner's film practice. Firstly, a model of nineteenth century literary realism is isolated and its transmission into film via the neo-realists and the French New Wave is discussed: Tanner's complex debt to this tradition is explored. Secondly, the relationship between Tanner's work and that of Brecht is outlined. Lastly, an overview is given of the climate of structuralist thought that serves as the immediate backcloth to Tanner's film making.

The study concludes with an examination of the development in Tanner's position and practice from Messidor (1978) to No man's land (1985), and includes a consideration of the relationship between these films and the earlier work. This analysis reveals a shift in focus from an insistence on radical film theory and a political discourse towards a new emphasis on the image, an exploration of physical reality, a different relation between audience and film, and a development in the trend to fable and allegory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

This is a study of the work of a director who has made, and continues to make, a most valuable and positive contribution to radical film making. Alain Tanner has created for himself, during the period from 1969-76, a unique position in film making, one that is aptly expressed by the circle/margin metaphor that he once used to describe the 'space' occupied by his characters in Jonas qui aura vingt-cinq ans en l'an 2000.[1] The eight characters in this film are 'marginaux de l'intérieur', that is to say they are not on the far left or outside the social system, but exist on the margins; they interact with the system yet resist the pull towards the centre, and they offer a positive challenge to it. Tanner offers neither a fully experimental, avant garde cinema nor a mainstream product. His cinema attempts an active play, a tension between the codes and methods of mainstream cinema and their deconstruction. His work is also important for the positive and realistic contribution it makes to the debate about vital social and political issues of our times in modern, urban society.

The thesis sets out in the opening chapter to examine the main areas of influence that have contributed to the stance of this highly individual director. It principally discusses the realist tradition in literature and film, and examines Tanner's debt to this tradition. It offers an examination of the relationship between Tanner's work and that of Brecht. It finally gives an overview of the climate of structuralist thought which provided the backcloth to Tanner's work in the late '60s and early '70s.

In order to examine in detail the development of Tanner's theory of film making and the results in practice, the thesis then proceeds, as its principal aim, to offer a close analysis of the five films produced between 1969 and 1976. A separate chapter is devoted to each film, and

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the relationship is highlighted between Tanner's film theory and the radical film theory that blossomed in the immediate post-'68 period.

The work concludes (Chapter 8) with a discussion of the developments in Tanner's position and practice in the period from 1976 to the present day, that is to say from Messidor in 1978 to No man's land in 1985.

CHAPTER 1 - FOOTNOTES

1.   N.   Heinic,   'Entretien avec A. Tanner',   <u>Cahiers   du   cinéma</u>,   273
     (Jan.-Feb. 1977), p. 38.

CHAPTER 2 - THE REALIST TRADITION

One of the fundamental issues in the films of Alain Tanner is that of realism. Curiously, this dimension of his work is rarely mentioned by critics. Jef Le Troquer in Téléciné is an exception; he recognises that 'l'unique question de Tanner est celle du réalisme dans la fiction'.[1] In fact the work of Tanner shows a complicated and a fairly unique stance on this issue. This chapter isolates a model of realism that was developed in the literature of nineteenth century France and discusses the transmission of that model from literature into certain key filmic movements of the twentieth century. Tanner's complex and interesting debt to this tradition is then outlined. The chapter concludes by indicating the broad lines of the modern 'challenge' to the concept of realism as a result of recent theoretic work. This climate of modern theory will be seen, to have a direct bearing on, and to illuminate other aspects of Tanner's stance on issues of theory.

The Nineteenth Century Realist Tradition

The most coherent formulation of realism was, it can be argued, reached in France in the nineteenth century where it was the dominant factor in the arts and literature from 1840 until nearly the end of the century. Early exponents of realism mistrusted the word and disliked the idea of realism being in any sense a 'school'. Edmond Duranty, who created a short lived review called Réalisme, expressed the generally held opinion at that time that realism was the opposite of a 'school', with conventions and set rules. And Champfleury, the novelist, denied that there was a 'formula' or a 'method' for prospective realists. Where the realists were united was in the polemic against romanticism and in their general aim which was to tell the truth. As Linda Nochlin defines it 'The aim of realism was to give a truthful, objective and

impartial representation of the real world based on meticulous observation of contemporary life'.[2] Sincerity and accessibility were also valued in a work of art, and questions of form were considered secondary to other considerations. The main outlook and aim of the realists was basically the same as that of the scientists of their day, to reach the truth, and facts were seen to be the basis of truth. Flaubert was compared to a doctor with a scalpel, showing human beings as they are, and offering no praise or blame in the process. Underpinning the literary and artistic developments in the last half of the nineteenth century was of course a scientific revolution, and a philosophical climate dominated by Renan, Comte and Taine. All areas of work were seen to be influenced by the scientific outlook, and the attitudes of science - impartiality, impassivity, accurate observation and notation of phenomena - were shared by the realists. The political backcloth to the rise and development of the realist aesthetic was the progressive climate of the revolution of 1848 with its radical socialist philosophy, and following this, a climate of political disillusion and the period of the Second Empire.

Whilst the picture becomes complicated when one examines the work of individual realists, it is possible to isolate the main distinguishing features of nineteenth century realism, which is what Linda Nochlin does at the outset of her book Realism.[3] The first feature is verisimilitude. The painter Constable for example placed greatest store on the observation of nature and fidelity to this in expressing what he saw. He refused therefore to be influenced by convention in his painting and, unlike the romantics, did not express natural phenomena symbolically, or as representative of a state of mind. Writers and painters set out to confront reality afresh, unimpeded by old formulae.

A second distinguishing feature is the notion of objectivity, impartiality. The realists strove to paint or write the facts and nothing beyond. In a sense, in their choice of subjects they were not impartial. They uncovered areas of society that had not been treated before and hence their work had a radical thrust, yet in their treatment of these subjects they strove for rigorous objectivity. This latter aim was not always realised of course in practice and, as Becker points out, the picture is in fact also complicated by an apparent contradiction between their aim and the climate of thought and belief which was one of scientism.[4] The trend, Becker argues, was to see the Universe and Man as subject to physical laws, to see life as having no 'outside' meaning and to see man as driven by external and internal forces that he couldn't control. In their work, the realists made implicit statements about Man and his condition.

Thirdly, the notion of contemporaneity was central to nineteenth century realism. A battle cry of the realist painters was 'Il faut être de son temps'. They meant to confront the concrete experience of their own epoch. Zola in his salon of 1868 praised the young Monet, Bazille and Renoir terming them '"Les Actualistes" ... the painters who love their times from the bottom of their artistic minds and hearts ... they do not content themselves with ridiculous trompe l'oeil; they interpret their era as men who feel it live within them ... their works are alive because they have taken them from life and they have painted them with all the love they feel for modern subjects'.[5] In 1872, the demand for contemporaneity was taken to its limits in impressionism with its aim of 'instantaneity, capturing the fleeting moment'.

A fourth distinguishing feature that is isolated by Nochlin, is the emphasis on ordinary people, everyday situations and objects. The subjects of kings, heroes, great men, were discarded in favour of what were often typical or representative ordinary people. 'Try to see'

said Taine 'men in their workshops, in their offices, in their fields with their sky, their earth ... as you do when landing in England or Italy you remark faces and gestures, roads and inns ... a workman drinking'.[6] We think of Courbet's peasants, Degas's washerwomen and dancers, Zola's workers. Claude Lantier, Zola's realist artist-hero proclaimed that 'il préférait ses tas de choux aux guenilles du moyen âge' and that he found a 'tableau tout fait' in a group of workers gulping down their soup beneath the roof of Les Halles.[7] Art and literature in effect became socially extended and a so far unknown face of society was uncovered for view. It was received as subversive and a threat to the Establishment, a threat to the re-established powers of the middle-classes (after 1848). Courbet's paintings were seen therefore as representing the socialist menace only recently defeated.

Raymond Williams in his writings[8] traces the history of realism and cites as crucial, the moment when realism developed as a whole form, as opposed to the earlier 'realistic' scenes and insertions within larger works. This occurred in eighteenth century bourgeois drama. This drama made three innovations which Williams cites as the three defining characteristics or emphases of realism. Firstly, the concentration on contemporary, everyday reality; secondly, the emphasis on the secular in that events were worked out in solely human terms without reference to a supernatural or metaphysical dimension; and thirdly, a conscious movement towards social extension. Although conventions and methods of presentation may change, these three factors are isolated as being the key factors in the realist intention. By the end of the nineteenth century these three emphases had developed into a major new form. We note that Nochlin's formulation of the emphases of realism did not stress the 'secular'; the emphasis on contemporary everyday reality is the same and Williams's third element, 'social extension', is discussed by Nochlin under the heading of 'objectivity'.

In noting the main features of nineteenth century realism, it is clear that we have not touched upon the question of style or form. There was a general notion that realism was a 'styleless', a 'transparent' style, and that it mirrored reality 'straight' as it were. The nineteenth century realists believed this could be done and propagated the idea. Realism would now be seen as no less a style than other styles, with a relationship to external reality that is equally complicated. However in nineteenth century realist texts, the role of objective investigation and truthful recording of the external world was the prime aim, and style was relegated as near as possible to a question of 'telling it straight'. In Zola's words, 'l'écran réaliste est un simple verre à vitre, très mince, très clair, et qui a la prétention d'être si parfaitement transparent que les images le transversent et se reproduisent ensuite dans leur réalité'.[9]

Gaps opened up of course between the theory of the realists and their resulting practice. But it is pertinent to note the emphases of Flaubert, for example, who is now seen and was seen in the nineteenth century as one of the key exponents of realism. For Flaubert, literature was to be based upon scrupulous observation and documentation. He insisted that the author must withdraw from the work, maintaining rigid objectivity and impassivity. He advocated the choice of ordinary subjects; Madame Bovary is the novel of the adultery of a provincial woman; full weight is given to the mundane, the everyday. The reader is made to feel the slow passage of time. Flaubert's theory of the novel is chiefly expressed in his letters, particularly those to his mistress Louise Collet and those to George Sand.[10]

Naturalism took over from realism in France as the more dominant emphasis in literature in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Raymond Williams in 'A Lecture on Realism' describes the three bases of

realism that we have mentioned as fundamental also to naturalism, and argues that in fact, for a time, realism and naturalism were interchangeable.[11] Williams goes on to point out that realism and naturalism reflected first of all changed attitudes to reality. Hence naturalism was first of all a conscious opposition to supernaturalism, and secondly, it was an attempt to describe human actions in exclusively human terms and in terms of physical and social environment. Naturalism was specifically associated with the new scientific natural history, with the naturalist as observer of natural phenomena. Its emphasis was scientific.

Taine was one of the original and most important exponents of naturalism in literature. He argued in his Histoire de la littérature anglaise in 1863 that all subjects of study should be brought into the 'scientific' phase; that everything could be understood in terms of cause and effect, whether it were a question of physical phenomena or moral ones. In literature, one could discover causes in the three conditions of 'le race, le milieu et le moment'.[12] He had celebrated the work of Balzac as being 'scientific', as providing valuable factual documents. The Goncourt brothers also p sented the novelist as a scientist, in the preface to their novel Germinie Lacerteux[13], a novel about a poor serving woman in Paris. Taine inspired the ideas for the preface to Zola's first novel Thérèse Raquin (1867) and his ideas also underlie the chief statement of naturalism which is to be found in Zola's essay 'Le Roman Expérimental'.[14] Zola is the best known exponent of naturalism in nineteenth century France, and his work was the dominant influence in literature from 1867 until the publication of the last of the Rougon-Macquart series Docteur Pascal in 1893. The gap between Zola's theory and practice is however always seen to be large (Indeed M. Raimond suggests that it is thanks to the failure of the theories of Zola, in terms of their actual application

to the novels, that Zola's work is of such quality; he suggests that the 'scientific' theory was only 'une sorte de stimulant à son génie'.[15]) It is again worth noting the statements of intention that Zola made. He announced that the goal of literature was scientific; he was undertaking in his novels a scientific study of heredity, taking account of temperament and environment. The naturalist novelist would study the human species, according to Zola, as the naturalist studied animals. Observation was a cornerstone of the method and the end product was truth. The author was to be objective and impassive, although Zola had earlier recognised that the end product, the work of art, would be 'un coin de la nature vu à travers un tempérament'[16], i.e. that the end product was to some extent transposed by the vision of the artist. He intended the novel to reach/extend to social regions previously unexplored, and considered the naturalist novel as useful and moral in the sense of promoting understanding. The question of style in the novel was played down by Zola. He advocated a style that was logical and clear. In terms of narrative form, where often in his opinion exaggerated emphasis had previously been placed, he claimed that this should be a question of the faithful setting down of life, 'Nature is sufficiently beautiful and great to provide a beginning, a middle, and an end'.[17]

The picture in nineteenth century England with regard to realism is quite different from that in France, and different from the emphases of realism that we have established. One might argue that the earliest roots of the English novel, (with Fielding, Defoe and Richardson in the early eighteenth century) were in realism, but that in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the English novel took a slightly different turn. In the work of the three early novelists mentioned above realism was a new and distinguishing feature, separating them from what had gone before. Defoe for example, a middle-class

tradesman, unaware of the old laws and cannons of literary production, knew how to create what his growing middle-class audience wanted. Plots were new, rather than being re-workings of known stories and fables and there was an emphasis on plausibility. The issues contained in the books were contemporary issues, and the central figures were particular people, with names, and not general human types. The environments of the novels were precise and detailed and events took place in ordinary daily time. These factors, together with a language that was more direct, less figurative, led to a sense of the novel reporting the truth of daily life.

If however one looks at the latter half of the nineteenth century, i.e. a period contemporary with the flowering of realism in France, one sees Dickens, with his mixture of careful social documentation and melodrama, and George Eliot with her more limited realism, limited in the sense that her work deals with a restricted range of experience. As David Cecil comments she 'makes no excursions into the uncomfortable region of the animal passions'.[18] Within her chosen range she certainly deals with the ordinary, the everyday, and in her narratives she avoids elements that do not happen or are unlikely to happen in life. In her essay 'On Realism' she outlines her intention as a novelist which is to 'tell a simple story, without trying to make things seem better than they were ... dreading nothing but falsity'. She speaks of her admiration for Dutch paintings because they are 'faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence'. She goes on to argue that in the world there are ... 'so many of these common coarse people ... it is so needful we should remember their existence'. Her account of ordinary and flawed people in say <u>Middlemarch</u>, with their foibles and their endearing qualities, is memorable but extending to the said 'common people ... your common labourer who gets his own bread and eats it vulgarly with his pocket knife', is very rare.[19]

George Eliot's realism may be most notably classified as 'limited' by the overt and active authorial presence in her novels. In the terms in which we have defined realism, this authorial presence may be seen as limiting the faithful reproduction of life, where the reader is allowed to draw conclusions for himself. In her essay 'On Realism', Eliot recognises that her reproduction of men and things is 'a faithful account as they have mirrored themselves in my mind'.[20] In Middlemarch for example we find 'pertinent' quotations introducing the chapters; the first chapter, presenting Dorothea Brooke, is introduced by a quotation from Beaumont and Fletcher's The Maids Tragedy 'Since I can do no good because a woman, reach constantly at something that is near it'.[21] We also have a constant commentary on her characters, either directly or by implication. 'Mr. Brooke's conclusions were as difficult to predict as the weather: it was only safe to say that he would act with benevolent intentions and that he would spend as little as possible in carrying them out ... for the most glutinously indefinite minds enclose some hard grains of habit'.[22] George Eliot also makes general, and often lengthy observations about life and relationships; one could cite her lengthy speculation on marriage and early wifehood, prior to a discussion of Dorothea's misery in Rome. Equally she frequently comments on and discusses the craft of fiction itself.

The Transmission of Nineteenth Century Literary Realism into Film

This chapter in no way pretends to discuss the development of realism into the twentieth century, the extended and particular kind of realism of Henry James, or of Joyce, or Proust, nor the particular manifestations of the present moment. Rather we shall turn from the basic model of nineteenth century literary realism that has been outlined, to the issue of its transmission into film. It is obviously very difficult to compare nineteenth century literary realism with

realism in another medium at least half a century later. There have been several important 'eras' for realism in film, not all of which bear any direct comparison with the literary model. Russian film of the 1920s and '30s based itself upon the notion of 'realism', though Eisenstein's art is manifestly non-naturalistic and reality overtly manipulated. Technical resources, in particular editing, are used to propel film from the 'real world' towards 'art'. Eisenstein's idea of a realist cinema is fundamentally the representation of the correct ideological position. Such a perspective is clearly foreign to the nineteenth century realist model we have cited, since it imposes a system of values upon reality.

The British Documentary movement of the 1930s founded by John Grierson was based upon the primary notion of realism. Although non-fictional, its aims were close in certain senses to those of the nineteenth century literary realists. Grierson for example, criticised the studio films for their acted stories and artificial backgrounds. Documentary for him was out to photograph 'the living scene, and the living story',[23] i.e. materials and 'stories' were to be taken from the 'raw'. He used location shooting, and worked with ordinary people not actors. He was ardently opposed to entertainment cinema, believing in a cinema of social purpose. His form of documentary, and that of the people he gathered around him, was based upon the notion that the camera does not lie and that it gives a politically neutral and true picture of the world. Rossellini, one of the key figurs of the neo-realist movement served his apprenticeship in documentary. The principles formulated by Grierson in the 1930s, are echoed in the post-war Italian situation.

The Italian neo-realist school of film makers (1940-55) has perhaps the closest and most vital link with the nineteenth century literary realists. The basic aims have to be 'translated' into a different

medium of course, and new issues arise in that 'translation' that are particular to film. But the neo-realists transmit the realist tradition in that they show certain basic similarities in their aesthetic position to that of the earlier writers. This, despite the fact that Bazin had argued that in previous realist movements and particularly the naturalism of the nineteenth century, psychological analysis and the moral conceptions of the author had played too important a role to compare them to the movement in Italy. He argued for literary parallels to be seen rather in the 'contemporary' American novel.[24] Lockerbie argues that although this may sometimes have been so in practice, the aim of the aesthetic was different. 'A côté des qualités analytiques citées par Bazin, on sait qu'on y retrouve une ambition non moins sensible de faire de la littérature narrative, une représentation parfaitement exacte de la réalité, et donc d'aborder le réel dans un mouvement de sympathie qui mérite d'être comparé à celui du néo-réalisme'.[25]

The statements of Zavattini, who was the chief theoretician and spokesman for the movement, point to the essential similarity between the literary model and the Italian film makers. He insisted that the cinema should be about contemporary issues and argued that one could take apparently ordinary situations (he in fact cites as an example a woman buying a pair of shoes) and 'open them up', discovering their many interesting facets. 'Banality disappears because each moment is really charged with responsibility. Every moment is infinitely rich. Banality never really existed.'[26] Invented stories are hence seen as false, and unnecessary. There was no need for the spectacular when everyday reality was rich. Zavattini expressed a dream of his which was to make 'a continuous film of ninety minutes of the life of a man to whom nothing happens'. Characters, according to Zavattini, were to be real, living people, not invented ones. 'I am bored to death with

heroes more or less imaginary. I want to meet the protagonist of everyday life, I want to see how he is made, if he has a moustache or not ... I want to see his eyes ... to speak to him.'[27] In these characters, an audience could recognise themselves, rather than identifying with the heroes or exceptional figures of previous films. For Zavattini, a character should have his own first and last name and yet also be representative of the people. The question of aesthetics is barely touched upon in Zavattini's 'manifesto'. As far as possible the aim was to have no gap between life and what was on the screen. A style had to be devised that best suited this purpose, each director choosing his own way. Zavattini in fact held that 'the contents always engender their own expression, their own technique'.[28] This was a socially important cinema in its depictions of Italian life - most notably that of the poor - but the neo-realist directors offered no solutions, no prejudged ideas about their material. Zavattini defended the movement against its critics on this score saying 'as for solutions, it is not up to the artist to examine them; it is enough for him to make the need urgently felt'.[29] Minimal intervention with the raw reality was required. The films were political in the sense that they were socially extended and they treated social problems, not in advancing a political 'programme'; politics was not their prime aim.

The two most notable writers to have elucidated the qualities of Italian neo-realism are André Bazin and Amédée Ayfre. Bazin in particular was also active in practically promoting the work of the Italians, arranging for Rossellini to come to Paris, and also promoting the work further afield. Bazin's essay 'Une Esthétique de la réalité: Le néo-réalisme' draws attention to the main qualities of neo-realism, the aim to seize reality 'raw' as it were, the avoidance of an a priori point of view, the refusal to explain, to rationalise what it reported, the rendering of time. 'Il s'agit de rendre spectaculaire et

dramatique le temps même de la vie, la durée naturelle d'un être auquel n'arrive rien de particulier.'[30] Ayfre's essay 'Du premier au second néo-réalisme' suggested the term 'phenomenological realism' to describe these films; 'l'analyste ... avait l'impression de travailler sur des événements bruts, massifs, non encore rendus abstraitement intelligibles par un travail préalable du réalisateur; autrement dit, il avait l'impression de se trouver devant la réalité même dont il était le premier à dégager le sens'.[31] Ayfre argues that this was a chief characteristic of neo-realism; different methods could be used to achieve it, some with more, some with less success. The reality chosen to be described did not matter, it was the approach that mattered. Ayfre also argued that it was not so much a question of whether an artist intervened or not, but it was a question of rubbing out the traces of this, so that reality appeared to be 'raw' reality. Ayfre's definition of neo-realism means that it can remain as an aesthetic option for other arts, other epochs, other countries. 'Le réalisme phénoménologique qui en constitue le coeur pourra fort bien animer ailleurs et plus tard d'autres oeuvres d'orientation, de genre et de style extrêmement divers.'[32] The central idea was that truth was in appearances.

The Italian neo-realist movement had grown out of a basic drive for truth and realism during a period in Italian history when it was felt that truth had been covered up and that lies had in fact contributed to Italy's downfall. Hopes for reform from the government of Mussolini had been dashed and in the early '30s a strict censorship of all works that criticised the regime was practiced. Films of the period reflected an artificial image of prosperity. Italy was of course taken into the war by Mussolini and after the defeat and the following War of Liberation, a coalition government was formed. The neo-realist movement was born in effect during the War of Liberation; the emphasis

was on exploring the lies of the Fascist period and confronting the real social reality of the present. The director Pasolini said 'Neo-Realism is the product of a cultural and democratic reation to the standstill of the spirit during the fascist period'.[33] Neo-realism had also an Italian realist tradition in its background, in the verism of the late nineteenth century which had used the dialect of the people rather than the Tuscan of the bourgeoisie and had attempted to describe working-class life. The work of Giovanni Verga represented the best of Italian realism, in a cycle of novels whose aim was the presentation of every level of Italian society, an enterprise modelled upon Zola and Balzac in France.

Having established a basic similarity in the essential aesthetic principles of the neo-realists and the French nineteenth century realists, one might now usefully consider a few neo-realist films to see the consequences/results of the basic aesthetic in practice. Such an approach will also serve to underline the comparison in more detail.

Rossellini is one of the best known of the neo-realist directors and his film practice was largely faithful to his expression of neo-realist film theory. He claimed that 'modern man feels the need to speak of things as they are, to be aware of reality in an absolutely concrete manner, to see men as they are with humility, without resorting to stratagems in order to invent the extraordinary. For me neo-realism is nothing other than the artistic form of truth'.[34] Rossellini goes on to list the characteristics of realist films as opposed to what he terms 'entertainment' films, 'the object is not telling a story but the object is the world'. He makes the point however that neo-realism 'does not remain on the surface but seeks out the most subtle aspects of the soul'.[35] Such a film poses questions, asks the audience to think rather than 'entertaining' them in the traditional sense.

His film <u>Viaggio in Italia</u>, made in 1953, obviously treats a different subject from the well known early films like <u>Roma città aperta</u> and <u>Paisà</u>, but Rossellini in an interview with Mario Verdone in 1952 argues that he has been faithful to his conception of realism in all of his films, despite frequent charges that he gradually over the years betrayed the neo-realist aesthetic. <u>Viaggio in Italia</u> is interesting in the present context as an example of neo-realist film which bears comparison with the bases of nineteenth century realist thinking. Shot on location in Naples and the surrounding countryside, it is a narrative where nothing, in the sense of nothing dramatic, actually happens. Rossellini sets up a basic situation; a middle-class couple come to Italy to dispose of a property, and finding themselves alone together are forced to face the fact that their marriage is stale and rapidly, and painfully disintegrating. Nothing then happens and Rossellini depicts the monotony and weariness of the days. Days come and go; she visits, in indifferent fashion, the sights of Naples. Insignificant events are given equal weight with more important moments. She plays Patience, alone, and scenes such as this are mixed with the discovery at Pompei of a new grave where a man and woman are revealed with their arms around each other just as when they were buried. The modern couple have just decided they will divorce and the sense of loss on seeing this sight is unbearable for them. The narrative of <u>Viaggio</u> moves at a slow pace, there are no large jumps between scenes and the small, linear narrative steps are painstakingly followed. Most important, this is a narrative where we are made to feel the weight of time. The characters of the film are ordinary, unexceptional, middle-class people, and we observe them from the outside; they are not 'explained', their psychologies are not explored, and Rossellini does not offer any analysis of their situation. Although obviously individuals, they merge into a crowd at the end of

the film, suggesting perhaps the universality of their feelings and experiences. Indeed the greatest merit of this film is the obvious truth of the portrayal of a relationship in crisis and the pain and emptiness attendent on the experience. The film maker clearly has manipulated reality but the overriding feeling is that of being presented with blocks of reality 'straight' or 'raw' and being left to deal with it as we may. There is no rhetoric to tell us what to think.

De Sica's Ladri di biciclette is one of the best known films of the neo-realist era, made in 1948. It was inspired by a novel which Zavattini had adapted. 'My scope' said De Sica 'is to trace the dramatic in everyday situations, the wonderful in small events ... my film is dedicated to the suffering of the humble'.[36] Although De Sica traces a simple story of one man's struggle against poverty, he in fact is describing a general social problem among Italy's poor. The poor are shown to be hopelessly trapped in their condition and the films' central idea, which is not spelled out directly but emerges from events, is that to survive, the poor have to steal from, and trick each other. The police can offer them no help in their situation, the church - whether it be the chattering young priests or the do-good middle-class ladies - is irrelevant and fortune tellers to whom the poor turn in desperation, are charlatans. De Sica describes a social situation but offers no direct comment and no remedies.

The narrative is linear, unsensational. Logical small steps are followed; for example, faced with urgent need for money, the wife takes the sheets off the bed; the couple go to the pawn shop, agree a price and we watch the sheets being put in store; we see them then going to buy the needed bicycle. We watch all the small steps. There are 'unmotivated' elements in the narrative, that crop up as in life - for example a man tries to buy the boy a bell whilst they are searching the market for the stolen bike. The 'dead' moments are also included,

where nothing really is happening at all. The editing, between the small narrative steps, is unexceptional. The whole effect of the narrative is slow paced; long takes and the travelling camera are principal features, and actions are shown taking their full time. There is in general a lack of artifice, a sobriety in the shots that is very marked. Having said this, there are one or two sequences, or shots, that are strikingly beautiful the way they are filmed. The bike market is one such example - there are remarkable patterns made by the wheels, spokes, bells. The bike being polished at home the morning before work is another such example: a precious object, the patterns of its spokes are cast in gigantic shadows round the room. We also have the scene of the chattering seminarists with their round hats and bobbing heads, a delightful pattern of circles in movement.

De Sica's characters are flat, social types. The film is the story of one worker who is singled out from a crowd at the beginning of the film and is re-absorbed into it at the end. His tragic situation is only one representation of the social problem. The majority of the scenes in the film are noticeably, crowded with people, all struggling against poverty. These people are filmed in their natural settings - the poor streets and alleyways of Rome, and occasionally one sees the bare interiors of their homes.

Umberto D was De Sica's own favourite among his films and it is this film that is often chosen as the key example of neo-realism, and closest to the tenets of Zavattini. De Sica said of the film 'J'ai essayé avec lui, de ne pas faire de compromis en représentant des caractères et des faits authentiques'.[37] There is a story, a narrative progression, yet there are scenes that are totally superfluous to it, for example, the waking and getting up of the maid. This scene, shot with its proper duration and showing small details has been often cited as an 'ideal' moment of neo-realist film practice. As

Karel Reisz points out it is not there for the social facts its reveals, or for any relevance to the narrative, 'elle est là pour elle-même, pour - selon le mot de Zavattini - "l'amour de la réalité", pour la joie et la douleur d'observer les êtres humains tels qu'ils sont'.[38] Bazin also celebrated this scene 'il s'agit là de rendre spectaculaire et dramatique le temps même de la vie, la durée naturelle d'un être auquel n'arrive rien de particulier'.[39] Again with this film, the characters are both individual yet typical. This is reflected in the name Umberto D. They represent 'types' of people and they represent some of the fundamental problems of human nature. What is perhaps inconsistent with neo-realist theory is the spelling out by De Sica (admittedly three years after the shooting) of the message of the film, 'montrer à l'écran le drame de l'impossibilité éprouvée par l'homme à communiquer avec son prochain'. (1955)[40]

If one takes as a specific point of comparison De Sica's films and Flaubert's main work L'Education sentimentale, despite the difference in medium and the passage of time of eighty or so years, one can trace the basic similarities in their conception of, and approach to, realism. Both aim to reflect reality as clearly and as limpidly as is possible, both are concerned with true depictions of ordinary people and contemporary life. Certain similarities in narrative form are clear; the linear chronology, the apparent lack of selectivity in the choice of narrative elements - 'insignificant' events from a narrative point of view being given equal weighting with ones of narrative importance; the dead moments are portrayed. The tempo of both novel and films is slow and there is a sense of duration, of time as it is lived everyday. Neither films nor novel do away with 'story'. Ladri di bicvclette depicts an event/a short period in the life of its worker, whereas Flaubert depicts more or less a whole life with its running themes and endeavours. However there is in neither a

conventional dramatic 'pattern' and neither show spectacular or 'dramatic' action. As Lockerbie points out, in Flaubert's novel the narrative of a life-span is by definition more condensed, more concentrated, using résumés and a far greater use of ellipsis than in a neo-realist film. He goes on to argue that these ellipses are in fact 'masked' via rhythmic effects in the prose, use of the imperfect etc., which 'tie-up' passages that on scrutiny are apparently disjointed in time and space. The whole effect is of daily reality, and the impression gained is one of real time. Such jumps, revealed by scrutiny of Flaubert's prose, would not be tolerated in a neo-realist film, where 'jumps' would emerge as more dramatic, as holes left in the narrative and thus altogether more apparent.[41]

Both films and novel exhibit the authorial impassivity fundamental to realism. We have seen that Flaubert strove hard to remove traces of himself from his work. Bazin argued, as we have already noted, that the differences between the nineteenth century literary realists and the twentieth century film makers of the neo-realist school, were that psychological analysis and the moral conceptions of the author played too large a part to merit a comparison. It is perhaps only in the former of these two qualities that any real difference between Flaubert's work and De Sica's can be detected. Flaubert's approach to character is different. Frédérick is shown as ordinary, unexceptional and to an extent representative of the problems of young men of his generation, yet his character is rounded and well developed, and indeed is the focus of the book. Most important in this respect is the use of interior monologue and descriptions of the outside world - people and events - through the consciousness of Frédérick. De Sica's characters are typical rather than individual, and his character and the events and settings of the film are viewed from the outside. Another difference of emphasis between novel and films is the greater artifice

of Flaubert's style, and his almost obsessive concentration on style, which is a foreign notion to a neo-realist director.

Lockerbie, in the article previously cited, points to the fact that Un Coeur simple, a short tale written by Flaubert in 1876, provides an even closer comparison with the neo-realist film makers. The challenge to Flaubert in this short story lay in the fact that the tale of a poor serving woman was undramatic and 'ordinary'; her character and her life were unexceptional, the episodic structure reflects this. One is reminded of the words of Zavattini about the fundamental interest in the unexceptional, if one looked closely enough. In this short story Flaubert offers no depiction of the interior life of Félicité, no psychological analysis; she is viewed entirely from the outside. Flaubert offers no analysis, no explanations in the story as a whole; one has the same sense as in De Sica's films, of being close to reality.

The work of André Bazin, which has already been briefly cited in reference to the Italian neo-realists, cannot be ignored in the wider discussion of filmic realism. His work still represents the most powerful championing of realism in film. His theoretic and critical writings are necessarily part of the background of modern film makers. In one of his earliest essays 'The Ontology of the Photographic Image',[42] Bazin wrote about the objective nature of photography and its credibility therefore over other forms of picture making. He argues that we are forced to accept as real, the existence of the object reproduced on the photograph, although the photograph is not the thing itself but rather its 'tracing'. The photograph is nearer the original object than a painting, as there is something of the object actually on the paper. Bazin prefers to stress the relative absence of man, of the photographer, rather than his presence, which is stronger in other arts. Bazin's main concern is with the moving pictures of the cinema and their link to reality, and he goes on to argue that the

cinema has a unique and special rapport with reality, likening the film image to a 'deathmask' or 'fingerprint'. He condemns filmakers who betray this special quality of cinema, a quality that allows an audience to directly experience the world. Those who betray this special quality, offer a cinema of 'opinions', manipulating the world and giving in effect a version of experience. In his essay 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema'[43] Bazin distinguishes two kinds of cinema, two broad trends; firstly the cinema where the director puts his faith in the image (like Renoir), and secondly, the cinema where the director adds to reality via the technique of film. It is clear that a director has to select the reality he will show but he need not transform it via the idiosyncrasies of the medium. For the early Russians, and particularly Eisenstein, films attained the quality of art via shaping and transformation of the material, chiefly achieved by editing techniques but also by light, composition, stylised images and so on.

In an essay 'The Virtues and Limitations of Montage'[44] Bazin discusses two films from the point of view of montage: one, Une Fée pas comme les autres, a film about animals, is, he argues, entirely fabricated, by montage, 'that abstract creator of meaning'. The apparent action and the meaning the audience attributes to it do not exist prior to the assembling of the film. The second film is Le Ballon rouge and it owes nothing to montage. The red balloon's antics are a trick of course, but the trick does not belong to cinema. 'Essential cinema' for Bazin is to be found in straightforward respect for the unity of space. Each case he points out, has to be argued on its own merits, but what is important is the respect for the spatial unity of an event.

Bazin opposed both the montage of the Pudovkin kind, where meaning was created by montage and the 'psychological' montage which broke an

event into fragments which are meant to replicate our changes of attention, for example the champ contre champ pattern used in dialogue. Whilst it could be argued that the champ contre champ pattern is similar to what a spectator's attention in fact does, time and space are not respected in the process. Hence this procedure is an illusion; reality exists in continuous space, and in Hollywood editing, perfected in the '30s, the 'wholeness of reality' has been destroyed. In the Hollywood editing system, this process of chopping up reality works for the strict logic of the narrative, limiting thereby spectator freedom to draw from reality on the screen what he chooses.

The core of Bazin's theoretical writing is his belief in the intrinsic value of unadorned reality, and the goal of film for him was to give the spectator knowledge of empirical reality. He made it perfectly clear that film did this via artifice but advocated all technical developments that made screen perception closer to natural perception. Bazin particularly singled out for praise Toland's lens in Citizen Kane, a lens that gave an angle of vision similar to normal vision, and gave deep focus - where the foreground, back and mid ground of the shot could be seen with equal clarity, thus preserving spatial reality and allowing normal vision[45]. According to Bazin, depth of focus forces the spectator to make use of that freedom of his attention and enables him to feel the ambivalence of reality. This depth of field technique, together with the long take which allows the action to develop over time and space, are key points in Bazin's praise of the work of such directors as Wyler and Wells. (It should be pointed out that he saw Kane as flawed by instances of grossly interpretive montage, for example the five year breakfast scene.) There are great differences between the two directors of course. In the case of Wyler, Bazin also praised his use of static camera, (a camera that set out to 'modify' reality as little as possible), his minimal mise en scène,

neutral lighting, an attitude towards sets and costumes that also tended towards neutrality, and the very quality of self effacement of the director[46].

In a sense, Bazin re-wrote the history of cinema, selecting for praise those directors who in his terms best expressed the link between cinema and reality according to the technological means available to them. In his essay 'In Defence of Mixed Cinema'[47] he propounded the view that cinematic art is always evolving towards greater states of purity and maturity. Looking backwards, he praised the work of Stroheim, Murneau and Flaherty, whose creative documentary he very much admired, despite the fact that Flaherty fabricated events, for example the hunting of the basking sharks in Man of Arran. In this film, only the actors and the locale were 'true', yet Bazin argued that Flaherty arrived at the truths of life that were beyond immediate appearances. Nearer his own day, Bazin selected for praise Renoir, Wells and Wyler, marking 1940 as the date of a new stage in cinematic development with the release of Kane and La Règle du jeu. For Bazin, 1940 marke he breaking in effect of the 'official style' of Hollywood of the '30s. 'The way is now open for multiple styles exposing and expressing multiple aspects of reality.' As his friend Alexandre Astruc claimed in his essay 'Le Caméra Style'[48], Bazin also saw that the filmmaker could now be considered the equivalent of the novelist, letting his style be dictated by the necessities of the material, each film finding its own proper style. The prime aim was a respect for reality, for the subject. Among his contemporaries Bazin also celebrated the Italian neo-realists as we have said, for their attempt to reflect the world as purely as possible in film, with minimal interference.

The Impact of the Realist Tradition on the French New Wave

The nineteenth century realist tradition that we have been tracing was transmitted via the neo-realists in film. The neo-realists'

practice had, in its turn, an impact on the directors of the French New Wave, and one of the key links between the neo-realists and the emergent young French directors was Bazin himself. Bazin set up Cahiers du cinéma with Doniol-Valcroze in 1951. The magazine became a forum for the young critics Truffaut, Godard, Rohmer and Chabrol. The early interests of the magazine were in American film, Italian neo-realism and French cinema. The philosophy of the journal and the films it celebrated were drawn mainly from the inspiration of Bazin, whose essay 'The Evolution of the Language of Cinema' could be seen as the anchor point of the New Wave critics. Bazin's close personal relationship with Truffaut is well known and although Bazin was more in the background by 1957, when the first New Wave films were appearing, his influence was enormous. (This is not to say of course that there were not divergences of opinion; Bazin for example, mistrusted what he considered to be the sometimes blind attention and praise given to some of the Hollywood directors.)

It was Bazin who originally brought Rossellini to Paris, and in 1955 the new would-be directors selected Rossellini as a teacher. Truffaut was Rossellini's assistant for three years and was particularly influenced by his approach. He related in his later book The Films of My Life[49], the essence of this approach. Amongst other things, he recounts how Rossellini would take a person in a particular situation and use at first an almost documentary approach, then having done this, would thrust the man into something different. 'In some of my films' says Truffaut 'I've tried to follow a single character simply and honestly, in an almost documentary manner and I owe this method to Rossellini.'[50] Truffaut also notes in the book Rossellini's refusal to in any way copy American films, as being far too elaborate and expensive, and to make 'outlines' or 'drafts' if need be instead. The young director adds that it was Rossellini who in fact tempered his

'complacent enthusiasm for American films'. Truffaut cites Jacques Flaud as terming Rossellini the 'father of the New Wave'[51] and the Italian director actually discussed the first scripts with Rouche, Godard, Rivette and Truffaut.

Amedée Ayfre recognised and outlined the link between the Italian neo-realists and the French New Wave in his article 'Du Premier au second néo-réalisme'[52]. He cited the refusal of causal explanation, of rational analysis and of logical composition, and the respect for appearances which the New Wave, the Free Cinema and Cinema Vérité had in common with the neo-realists. This 'phenomenological realism', he pointed out, could apply to other arts and other epochs. There would be different personal styles and different contents of course, but a common 'écriture moderne', born in the cinema, with the neo realists in Italy.

Ayfre had referred to a '"cinéma de papa", laborieusement mis en scène avec toutes les recettes de la psychologie et de la sociologie traditionnelles et avec toutes les ressources de la construction dramatique la plus éprouvée', the antithesis of the 'écriture moderne'. An early article by Truffaut, published by Bazin in Cahiers, reflected the emergence of a new spirit in French film making and a rejection of the established mode of post-war cinema[53]. Vituperative, and seminal, this essay criticised the latter cinema, which was anti-bourgeois and non-conformist, with its polished photography, complicated lighting effects and scholarly framing, a cinema dependent on plot and dialogue, a cinema of so called 'quality'. He was scathing about the literary scripts, the 'pithy' dialogue, the air of misanthropy and pessimism and the fact that all of these films emerged looking exactly the same. What Truffaut wanted was a cinema that was direct, bold and spontaneous, a spirit of generosity and optimism, ambiguity and realism; a cinema also that had a closeness to personal

experience. He praised the cinéma d'auteurs i.e. the directors who wrote their own scripts, invented what they shot, like for example, Renoir, who also showed ordinary experience, daily language and common emotions.

Despite differences for example in political perspectives, in emphases on formal questions, and on the personal, the links between the New Wave and the neo-realists are strong. Both cinemas were young, independent, and functioned without studios, making a virtue out of their situation. They hence did location shooting, and at the start, used non-professional actors or little known actors (the charismatic personalities of such as Belmondo, Moreau etc. became famous as the work of the New Wave progressed). They drew on daily experience for subjects. Truffaut's first film Les Quatre Cent Coups bears , for example, direct comparison with the earlier neo-realists. When it came out, Rivette praised it for a 'spirit of poverty', for 'taking risks ... and filming whatever turns up'[54] Hoveyda wrote a now well known article in Cahiers on 17th July of the same year about the film entitled 'The First Person Plural', an article that as J. Hillier points out, is not dissimilar from Bazin's own account of Ladri di biciclette. Hillier goes on to say 'It is as if Les Quatre Cent Coups came along to confirm, ten years after De Sica's film, the same realist and humanist avocation of cinema, with a renewed set of realist conventions'[55]. In effect he argues that Truffaut's film is the triumph in the French cinema of the realist aesthetic which Bazin had celebrated in the neo-realists, appropriately created by Bazin's friend Truffaut. Hoveyda notes among the film's features, the depiction of a world that has the illusion of being 'direct', untampered with, the impression for example of a hidden camera following the boy who does not seem to know he is being filmed. He also notes that Truffaut has systematically drained the story of any too heavy emphasis and is

scrupulous as an observer of reality. The shots are rich and interesting in themselves and do not have the function of preparing for the next shot.

Les Quatre Cent Coups is in Truffaut's words 'a chronicle of the thirteenth year'; it is both autobiographical, relating the story of Truffaut's own disturbed youth, and yet universal. It depicts a difficult period in life, one often later endowed with virtues it did not have. The child is on the verge of becoming an adult and those with responsibility around him fail to comprehend his feelings. Antoine's misdemeanors are in fact relatively small when compared with the insensitive behaviour of adults towards him. The authenticity of this portrayal of adolesence, of the home environment, of the school and the reform school is very striking.

One can look at other Truffaut films and see that they compare in a less straightforward manner with the neo-realists. Tirez sur le pianiste, the director's second film, is a genre film. It operates, unlike Les Quatre Cent Coups, on two levels of meaning, the obvious narrative level of character, story, atmosphere, and the material level, namely the undercurrent which is concerned with cinematic/aesthetic matters. Truffaut refused to respond to the popular success of Les Quatre Cent Coups '. I turned my back on what everyone wanted and waited for and took my pleasure as the only rule of conduct'. He chose a detective thriller 'above all I was looking for the explosion of a genre by mixing genres ... I know the public detests nothing more than changes in tone but I've always had a passion for changing tone'[56].

Tirez sur le pianiste moves easily from crime thriller to love story to comedy. Truffaut in fact mixes several different stories, and injects a good deal of humour and what might best be described as 'gags'. Throughout the film there are self-conscious allusions to other films e.g. to film noir, to Chaplin. These are elements that are

obviously foreign to the neo-realist aesthetic; also foreign to the latter is the treatment of character. The neo-realists tended to use flat characters/social types, whereas Truffaut's central interest in this film is the character of Charlie, the development of his character, his split personality, albeit that this character is only revealed gradually and in bits. The film begins with a shot of Charlie's hands playing his piano and ends on a shot of his sad and enigmatic face. He is highly individualised and does not merge into the crowd at the end of the film as neo-realist characters tend to do. The fact that Truffaut destroys linear chronology at times with flashbacks, is also foreign to neo-realist practice. These flashbacks render moments/aspects of the mental life of the protagonist. Similarly we have the occasional use of experimental editing e.g. when Charlie hesitates by Smeel's doorbell unable to bring himself to ring it. Truffaut gives a quick series of shots of his finger approaching the bell and this gives a sense of the long agonising moment of indecision.

Other elements that obviously do recall the neo-realists are the location shooting, the rather rough and ready 'draft' look, the long takes, and most particularly certain features of the narrative. Weight is given for example by the neo-realists to what might be termed the 'dead moments' where not much happens. In a way that bears comparison, the New Wave directors give weight to the trivial incidents of life and the 'digressions'. In one such digression, Charlie sleeps with Clarisse, the prostitute next door, and she spends some time telling him (and us) stories about her past. We also have the digression on marriage by the man who has picked up Chico from the pavement, when the latter has run into a lampost. Such incidents are mixed with the important moments. There is no tight plot. Above all, the film is full

of human warmth and understanding of people's idiosyncrasies and problems, in a way that is reminiscent of Rossellini.

All Truffaut's later films - with the exception of Antoine et Collette in 1962 and L'Enfant sauvage in 1967, two films that are straightforwardly realistic and have a documentary quality about them - have a constant emphasis/interest in the material nature of film. This central interest runs alongside Truffaut's ordinary everyday realism, his warm exploration of people, situations, problems. The mixture of the two strains in the work was not necessarily popular of course and did not lead to commercial success in all cases, but it must be seen to stem from a drive to be open with his audience in terms of a consciousness of, and a questioning of, the medium. La Nuit américaine could be said to be a high point of this strain of Truffaut's work. It is a demystifying film about film making. The material nature of film and the facts and 'tricks' of the film making process are foregrounded. We see reels of film in a bin, frame counters, we hear discussions of the shooting 'day-for-night', we see cranes, rails, cameras in operation; and we see the electric candle, the trick that makes the fire in the fireplace and so on. It is also a film about the end of the studio system. Alexandre, the eldery star, is killed during the shooting, symbolically pointing an end to this kind of film making and, one supposes, indicating the dawn of a new realism in the cinema. This film, with its trivial story, its expensive sets, its neurotic and awkward stars, the 'cinéma de papa' as Truffaut terms it, marks the end of an era. La Nuit américaine also sums up some of Truffaut's main concerns and themes of the preceding years; it is a drama about people, most particularly the relationships between men and women, about the 'magical' nature of women and it is about the relationship between art and life.

Some of Truffaut's films have, as we have seen, an overt link with the neo-realist tradition; with most of his films the echo is there, but is less overt; it is there in the sense of their 'caractère phénoménologique', their 'écriture moderne' as Ayfre terms it. Where he leaves the tradition is in his more complex speculation with regard to the film medium, his questing about the nature of film and its relationship to life, a feature that is fundamental to the New Wave.

The other chief exponent of the phenomenon of the New Wave, Godard, has a different balance in his work of basically the same elements as Truffaut; both have a 'dual voice'. Godard's main focus however, and it is a focus that develops in weight during his career, is on the question of film language; indeed one might say 'language' generally. This element might be seen as the subtext of Truffaut, and the centre or maintext of Godard. Although from very different social backgrounds, both directors shared the same influences as far as film was concerned; basically this was a love of American film and the influence of the work of André Bazin. Godard shared Bazin's view that realism was the foundation of cinema and that apart from being a question of aesthetic principles, this was an ethical position and system as well. For Godard, even from his earliest films, there is the central notion that, to be honest, a film must first and foremost explain its language; that one cannot arrive at the truth of an object without first understanding how our system of signs works. Godard's short film Le Grand Escroc made in 1963, significantly tells the story of a Cinéma Vérité reporter who discovers a man who is cheating poor people and giving them fake money. This man rounds on the film maker and accuses her of also selling something 'false'. Her films, in his estimation, pretend to show reality direct but in fact cannot do so. Godard's films are darker and more self-conscious than those of Truffaut (and hence less popular), despite the common heritage of the

two men, and despite similarities of subjects and raw materials. His films demand a great deal of audiences in terms of intellectual participation; they ask questions rather than providing answers, they are 'essais' in Godard's own words, 'tries', not finished products. This fact is often announced in the titles of the films deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle for example.

Godard's enterprise is basically then a realist enterprise in its own terms, coming at the end of the realist tradition that we have been isolating in this chapter, related to it and theoretically more advanced than it. Film has the central 'problem' of being apparently very close to reality, often indistinguishable from it; the signifier and the signified look identical. It is fairly easy to forget that a film is a discourse. Bazin had speculated on the relationship between film and reality and this closeness, and whilst always recognising that the medium mediated external reality, praised those films that best, and most directly, expressed external reality using the technical means available at the time. Metz, in his work in describing the phenomenon of film makes an important distinction between the reality of the substance of a film and the reality of the language in which the substance is expressed. In his essay On The Impression of Reality in the Cinema he draws a distinction between 'the impression of reality, on the one hand and on the other hand, the perception of reality'.[57] Godard's form of realism is concerned, as is Truffaut's, with both substance and language. The relative emphasis in his 'dual voice' of course changes and develops over his career and one is very aware of this in talking about Godard. One is also aware of his rapid rate of change. Most critics divide his work into broad phases in order to deal with it. The earliest period up to 1968, together with the isolated Tout va bien in 1972, is the period one would choose to sketch in something of the nature of the relationship or debt that Godard has

to the earlier realist tradition, his predecessors.

Godard started off as a critic, and two of his earliest pieces, prior to his first well known film A bout de souffle, were concerned with Bazin's central notion of realism. These articles were entitled 'Défense et illustration du découpage classique'[58] and 'Montage mon beau souci'[59]. Bazin had privileged mise en scène over montage, setting up an opposition between the two and arguing that montage served those film makers who were out to create an image of reality, to manipulate rather than capture the event itself, i.e. montage was an abuse of power on the part of the film maker. Godard appears to argue against an opposition of montage and mise en scène and for a synthesis of the two, where plastic reality is still undoubtedly better served by mise en scène but psychological reality may be better served by montage. Both have a part to play. Mise en scène he argues can be just as manipulative as montage if the director uses it consciously to distort reality. In effect Godard moves on from Bazin's position.

Godard's first full length feature, A bout de souffle, was released in 1960 and it exhibited the elements that have come to be seen as hallmarks of the New Wave. It was technically fresh and exciting (e.g. the celebrated jump cuts) and was shot on location using a hand held camera. There is an air of spontaneity about the film. It is allusive, for example, the persona of Kovacs/Poiccard being modelled on the persona of Bogart, and in a sense it is 'about' film noir; it is a self-conscious genre study, changing the laws of the genre in order to explore them. This film begins a career of exploration of film language, and an exploration of the other 'languages' that surround us - adverts, magazines etc. The dual voice of A bout de souffle also of course means that it explores many other issues besides, e.g. the situation and motivations of women, the lack of real contact between human beings, to mention but two. Critics in fact very often relay a

list when dealing with the films of Godard, which perhaps indicates the density of these films. The realism of what, to use Metz's term, is the 'substance' of the film, lies in the exploration of these 'modern' issues, the portrayal of modern life and the psychological realism of the characters, notably Poiccard. He is a study of how a person creates a persona for himself and how he expresses it - in this case a character from popular journalism and a mimicry of the image of Bogart. This film's realism is unlike that of the neo-realists who tended to have flat characters, and who insisted on the reality of appearances. Godard's realism is altogether denser, more complicated. It has to be seen via the veil of the medium, and when it is seen it is multi-layered. Godard was always very fond of citing Brecht as saying that realism did no consist in reproducing reality, but in showing how things really are.

We have sketched, when talking about Truffaut, how the tradition of the neo-realists hooks into that of the emergent New Wave, and how certain elements from the earlier tradition are adopted and translated by the later film makers. It is interesting to note Godard's comments about his film Une femme et une femme (1960). 'I conceived this theme within the context of a neo-realist musical. It's a complete contradiction, but this is precisely what interested me in the film, it may be an error but its an attractive one ... and it matches the theme which deals with a woman who wants a baby in an absurd manner whereas its the most natural thing in the world'[60]. The director terms it a 'realist musical comedy'. It is realist in the sense of dealing with a basic human situation - a triangle - a three-way relationship. The other axis of its dual voice is in the study of the musical genre it uses, via the muted distancing from the genre.

The dual voice is equally evident in Vivre sa vie, shot in early 1962. The substance of the film concerns the role of women in society,

in particular it is concerned with the life of Nana, a prostitute.   The
choice of name locates the cultural background of the film in Zola's
novel and in the realist tradition. The determinist tone of the film
recalls that of Zola and the naturalists. As Truffaut remarked 'there
is a girl, she is in a fixed situation, desperate straits, from the
beginning.   At the end of the road lies death'[61].   Godard's modern
Nana is however entirely a victim, (unlike her nineteenth century
predecessor) despite her struggles. She attempts to make a career for
herself, fending off the scoffing of her husband, struggling with the
loss of her child. She argues with her husband for respect to be given
to each unique person, and later in the film she argues that she is
responsible for what she does. It is a pitiful and losing struggle to
be responsible for her own destiny. Nana watches Dreyer's Joan of Arc,
on film; she is portrayed also as a woman with a special sense of her
own uniqueness and destiny, and she is cut down by a male controlled
society   which   curtails   and   denies   her   aspirations   and   her
individuality.   Godard shows the process whereby Nana is gradually
relegated to roles masculine society demands of her ... a photographic
model, a shop assistant, finally a prostitute. The latter role is the
ultimate denial of her dignity and her individuality. Men in the film
are most often shown as black blots on the screen, shot from the back,
faceless, in contrast with the close-ups of the face of Nana. There is
one lovely shot where a black coated man blocks off, sometimes
partially, sometimes totally, our view of Nana's face. The cycle is
broken by a young man who loves her, who respects her individuality,
and whose face we see. He offers her a way out of her situation.
Godard leads us, via the reading of the Oval Portrait to question
whether even he, Luigi, will continue to respect her individuality,
lost in her beauty as an art work as he is. He may see her as an
object for different reasons, it is suggested. The film maker and the

audience have also gazed endlessly at Nana's face, in close-up. The problem of a woman's individuality and its relation to sexuality is a problem posed by the film. However, before any trial of the new life is made, Nana is sold to another pimp and she is shot in the ensuing gun battle over the fee.

Whilst it is clear that Vivre resembles neo-realist practice in no obvious way, the relationship that may be discerned lies in the fact that Godard does wish to capture life - the everyday - as it passes. The film is an experiment in direct sound for example. Only the music was mixed into the soundtrack after the shooting. The first scene used only one microphone to capture the dialogue and the café noises, including the juke box. The film uses natural lighting and was shot on location. In the scene where Nana sells herself to the first man, everyday objects and the setting are noted - the streets, curtains, a bar of soap, a sound of a lorry as it passes the window. The film can be said to have a documentary quality about it, which also links it with the realist tradition; facts and figures are related about prostitution and we observe the transactions, the settings.

Yet the final film is clearly far from merely a neo-realist presentation of a 'slice of life'. The film analyses, challenges, asks questions it does not answer; it grapples in effect with the issues it presents. For example, we have the scene where Nana watches Joan of Arc. The director uses editing to raise questions about the relationship between Nana and the filmic character. The relationship between film and audience is quite different from any envisaged by the neo-realists. The work on film language in this film is geared to changing this relationship, chiefly via the adaption of Brechtian distancing devices to film. The audience are distanced via the arrangement of the narrative (twelve 'Brechtian' tableaux, each commencing with summaries of the action to be seen, thus dispensing

with any suspense), the factual commentary done in voice over, the persistent use of long shot, obtrusive and unusual camera work, erratically timed music and so on. Whether this distancing is entirely effective is another matter, but the film is a sustained effort in this direction. Apart from altering the relationship between viewer and film, conventional expectations with regard to film language are thereby challenged and awareness of the film process is heightened.

Based on the justification derived from Godard's own frequent quoting of Cocteau, James Monaco draws a link between Godard's cinema and Cocteau's poetry. Cocteau saw poetry as an 'unveiling', a 'stripping bare'; habit and indifference should be stripped away so that things could be revealed for the first time as it were. This method, the poet argued, should be applied not to far away or exotic objects but to what we see everyday, 'put a commonplace in place, clean it, rub it, light it so that it will give forth with it youth and freshness the same purity it had at the beginning, and you will be doing the work of a poet'[62]. Godard, as Monaco points out, is driven to show what we can see everyday, but in a fresh light, to show but also to analyse modern life. He is out to capture the everyday, the ordinary, as were the neo-realists but unlike the latter he goes on to explore, to explain and to analyse.

The fable <u>Alphaville</u> is an attempt to capture and to analyse elements of modern life. The science fiction story of <u>Alphaville</u> is apparently set in the future but we are left in no doubt that we are in the present and that Lemmy Caution comes in fact from the 'past', a different world. He drives into a perfectly recognisable city, and finds a logical society where the prime force is the computer; people are given strict roles, and act 'logically'. Those who show wrong tendencies and are hence dangerous are shot as subversives. Caution shoots the mastermind behind this society, destroys the computer and

rescues Natasha Von Braun via love, taking her back to his world. It is perfectly clear in what senses Alphaville is a reflection on modern life, perhaps even clearer now in the '80s than it was in the '60s. The film is also an exploration of the science fiction genre.

Monaco uses the image of weaving to express the dual voice of Godard at this stage of his career; art as the 'warp' of his work, life the 'woof', in the close weave fabric of the film. The 'woof' of Masculin-féminin focusses on an analysis of sexual relationships, depicts Paris in the winter of 1965, and depicts the emergence of the youth culture. Weekend gives a portrait of an absurd Americanised society, a bourgeois universe whose guiding principles are sex and consumerism, a society which is civilised on the surface yet crude, violent and barbaric in reality.

By 1967 however, with films such as Le Gai Savoir, the representation of life, the everyday, has receded and this film comprises purely discourse. The film was proposed as an adaption for TV of Rousseau's Emile and whilst there is nothing direct about the link between Godard's film and the book, the film can be said to be in the spirit of Rousseau's text, in that it sets out the problem of education in the twentieth century and propounds an ideal curriculum for understanding the inputs that bombard us. In the film two people hold a series of dialogues on the subject of the relationship between poetics and film, i.e. on film language. The discussions are held at night so that the barrage of inputs of modern life are stilled. Emile expresses the view that it is necessary to be careful not to fall into the ideology of being true to life, a trap not always avoided by important film makers. The notion of the dual voice no longer describes Godard at this point; this film does not deal with the tangible world but with film and the ways it is used. Godard states at the end of the film that he has not wished to, cannot wish to, explain

the cinema, nor even become the goal it seeks, but more modestly to offer a few effective methods for reaching it. This is not the film which must be made, but shows how, if one is making a film, that film must follow some of the paths indicated here. Le Gai Savoir prefigures for Godard a period between 1968-73 where films deal with political issues, but the more important question that is discussed is how to make a film politically. After May '68 Godard helped to form the Dziga-Vertov collective which tried to develop a new cinema language appropriate to new political values. In 1970 Godard stated 'bourgeois film makers focus on the reflection of reality. We focus on the reality of the reflection'[63].

Tout va bien is the film that in fact marks the end of this period, a film that is 'about' reality again - a Brechtian realism - the way things really are. It is Godard's attempt to create a film that is more accessible than the films of the preceding years, and yet a film that raises important issues. Godard says at this period 'I passed through a time of disrespect for the public in order now to respect them better. To respect them better means no longer to treat them as the public but as man or woman, there where they are, with their specific problems. It means to be able to make films in which one no longer speaks about the film itself. The fact of talking about the film returns each person to their specific problems'[64]. In this film the director uses the conventional elements of cinema and he points the film at a large audience. In fact the film lets us know that it is a film, (filmic issues are explored) but does not stop at that knowledge. It explores the political reality of contemporary France and investigates the effects of 1968 on politics in France. It asks questions about the relationship between intellectuals and the revolution. The similarities between this film and Jonas qui aura 25 ans en l'an 2000, made four years later, make it worthwhile dwelling,

if only briefly, on details. There is a strike at the Salumni sausage factory (shades of La Salamandre) and documentary type scenes indicate the inhumanity of the work. Jacques, a film maker who has retreated into making commercials after 1968 - i.e. evading the real issues as far as his work is concerned, finds himself in a state of impasse, wondering what to do next (Max in Jonas is just such another disillusioned revolutionary wasting his skills in the post-'68 climate). Susan, a radio correspondent, is also blocked, although faced with making a broadcast about the strike, assuming a knowledge and a perspective about events that she does not in fact possess. Godard paints, in Susan and Jacques, a portrait of two representative intellectuals after '68. They both witness the strike, yet faced with a multiplicity of points of view, do not reach an understanding. To see 'reality' here is not to understand. We are a long way from the phenomenological realism of the post-war neo-realists. In addition to these questions/issues, both characters are also forced to reflect on the question of repression in their own personal lives, on the character of their own relationship, the micro-politics as it were. Finally in the film they discuss and reflect on the global implications for France four years after 1968. Alain Tanner's parallel reflection on the situation eight years after '68, in Jonas, is more optimistic than Godard's film. The 'micro-politics' are particularly important in Tanner's films Retour d'Afrique and Le Milieu du monde.

The Godard films that have been isolated for discussion are ones where the dual voice is in evidence; apart from Tout va bien they are 'early' films in Godard's career. They engage with the issues of modern life as well as with the issues raised by the medium. Godard's distant debt to the realist tradition lies in the fundamental realist aim of presenting reality as faithfully as possible, as an ethical necessity; it lies also in the moments in his films where we see life 'raw',

'fresh' as it were, objects, moments, people captured out of the flow of life. We have cited instances of this in <u>Vivre sa vie</u>. There is also the quality of documentary in some Godard films (e.g. instances in <u>Tout va bien</u>) which forms a link between the director and his roots. Godard does not stop at the presentation of life but, unlike the neo-realists, goes further in his intellectual grappling with it, in his refusal to let external reality speak for itself, and in his challenging stance with regard to his audience. His analysis of the film medium, in common and the other New Wave Directors, also leads him away from the basic realist tradition towards a more fundamental realism as he sees it.

The Relation Between Alain Tanner and the Realist Tradition

Alain Tanner, as Godard, must be seen to exist in direct relation (although nearer than Godard) to the realist tradition that has been isolated in this chapter, a tradition that was best expressed in film by the neo-realists and was used and assimilated by the New Wave and Cinéma Vérité. In pursuit now of the threads of Tanner's debt to this tradition, it will be instructive to begin with an overview of his early career in film making which will reveal the roots of the connection.

Tanner came first to London in 1955, with a general notion of working in cinema, feeling that in Switzerland there were no possibilities to fulfil his basic ambition. It is significant that one of his earliest published articles was on the subject of <u>La Terra trema</u>[65]. It was written while he was working for the B.F.I. and indicates his early love of Italian neo-realism, illustrating his later claim that this movement was the first influence on his own cinema. In this early article he states that the themes and methods of neo-realism are as relevant in 1957 as when the film was made in 1948. He praises the film for its closeness to reality, due to location shooting, lack of

actors, natural soundtrack and slow pace. The intention of Visconti is to capture the slow movement of life itself, allowing the spectator full time to explore situations. Deep focus allows freedom to explore the whole scene and actions are not chopped up in the cutting room. In the article, Tanner celebrates the realism and truth that Bazin praised in the whole neo-realist movement. It is interesting to note also that Tanner praises the film as a close analysis of how society will react to those who try to resist its laws, a theme which becomes very much part of his own later work.

Another article written by Tanner during this period also indicates his early love of realism in the form of documentary, and this is an article that deals with film making in Africa[66]. He attacks the cinema's attitude to Africa as exploitive, emphasising the exotic and with no concern and real interest in the Africans themselves. He celebrates three film makers who he sees as prepared to investigate the reality, having a genuine concern for their subject. Jean Rouch's film Les Fils de l'eau is examined by Tanner; this film is a group of connected shorts made by Rouch in the French Nigerian territories. Jean Rouch was the acknowledged leader in France of the Cinéma Vérité movement. Though this film was intended primarily for research, Tanner considers the documentary to penetrate the essence of the people and to reach fundamental truths about them. It does not impose a Western viewpoint on the material. Tanner also cites Jaguar, another of Rouch's films about three men's search for work, and links the approach of this film to the approach to, and respect for reality of Zavattini. Rouch's documentaries, unlike those of Tanner himself and the Free Cinema movement, were not out to express a point of view on their material. It is interesting to note here that Tanner upholds the notion, at this stage of his career, that it is possible to record reality 'direct', without artifice and without point of view.

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1957 was actually the date of Tanner's own first film, made in collaboration with Goretta and financed by the B.F.I. from its Experimental Film Fund. The intellectual climate in England was dominated in 1957 by Osborne, Wesker and the exponents of the New Novel, with both theatre and novel opening up previously unexplored areas of English provincial life and culture. A new spirit of realism had been kindled and new truths were being voiced. Richard Hoggart's Uses of Literacy[67] offered a description of this working-class culture. The Free Cinema was the cinema's response to the new climate in England and Tanner's own first film formed part of this Free Cinema. The Free Cinema was also a response to the New Wave in France and used the technology that had made the departures of the New Wave possible.

It is worthwhile dwelling briefly on this movement in cinema since not only does it illuminate Tanner's early ideas, but it provides strains of thought that in fact run right through his later work. The spearheads of the Free Cinema movement were Anderson, Richardson and Reisz, men who were in fact middle-class in origin. They hence did not portray working-class life from the inside as did some of the exponents of the novel and the theatre. Despite this fact however, they were keen to 'open up' cinema to the presentation of ordinary people, real people talking, everyday events, what they called the submerged sector of English life, a sector that had not been shown in film before. Reisz made We Are the Lambeth Boys about a youth club, Anderson a film called Dreamland, about the Margate amusement world and so on. All the directors of Free Cinema expressed their critical opinions in the journal Sight and Sound. The aims of the group were expressed best by Anderson who said 'no film can be too personal. The image speaks, sound amplifies and comments, size is irrelevant. Performance is not an aim. An attitude means a style. A style means an attitude. Implicit in our attitude is a belief in freedom, in the importance of

people and in the significance of the everyday'$^{(68)}$. There is then in

these films a thrust towards greater realism but it must be stressed

that these films are personal expressions, and also were meant to be

poetic, poetry being seen as a supreme quality in a film. There is no

hint of objectivity at all. They offerred no solutions and created no

new cinematic forms.

Nice Time is a short film about Picadilly Circus. Tanner and

Goretta stated their aims with regard to the film in the notes that

accompanied the first showing.

> In Nice Time we have attempted to catch and
> interpret the responses of the crowd to the fare it
> is offerred. At the heart of this multitude we
> have felt the presence of conflicts and contrasts
> which we have tried to express by sparking off
> against each other the many disparate elements of
> sound and picture; we have tried to crystallise
> their special significance as we saw it - to
> present what Vigo called 'un point de vue
> documente'.$^{(69)}$

So the film is realist in intention, searching for the truths of place,

situation and people.

Nice Time is a realist work in the sense that it can be seen to be

firmly rooted in a known location, and it gives a detailed account of

the aspects of this place, with its barrow sellers, hoardings, strip

clubs and myriad types of people. Little touches or details give it a

quality of authenticity; one thinks of the fleeting glimpse of the

evangelist's placard 'Think of the wrath to come'. We get fleeting

impressions of a whole range of fare, offered in Picadilly at night.

The observation, though swift, is sharp and pointed. People's

reactions are also captured very realistically. There is a naturalness

and spontaneity in their behaviour which in no way suggests the

knowledge that they are being filmed. The centre of interest is

ordinary people. There are many close-ups, many faces are carefully

scrutinised, a whole spectrum of human types is observed. In the

1980s, the film serves as an interesting document almost, of the style and look of the '50s. Equally it must be said that Tanner realistically captures, via the resources of cinematic rhythm, editing, and sound, the ebb and flow of enthusiasm and energy of the crowd over the time span of an evening. From jerky, almost neurotic, pleasure-seeking we move to the slower pace of the tail end of the evening and the quietening of the streets. The film is in three sections, corresponding to the three phases of the night.

The director first of all portrays a crowd, neurotically pursuing pleasure, with couples meeting, kissing, holding hands, dominating the opening section. Tanner then proceeds to sketch what is on offer for them and in fact cuts from a couple to two men gazing up at a huge hoarding displaying nude women, i.e. he has moved to men without women. He sets up a basic pattern in this central section, first the object is shown, the 'fare', then the reaction shot on the face of a consumer. The fare offered, though captured with pleasant touches of humour, is shown to be cheap, unreal, glossy and fake. The theme is built up in the images of the discrepancy between the desired ideals and the real, ordinary people and life as it is; the magnificent creatures of the cinema screen are balanced against, for example, the drab prostitutes and the ordinary men picking them up. The discrepancy between the artificial world and the real is particularly developed in the sequence dealing with cinema. We see people expectantly queuing up for tickets. Shots of huge hoardings and bits of screen material are cut in to this scene and also typical movie music and soundtrack. The screen's larger-than-life quality is emphasised by the director putting his camera so close up to the hoardings that we can hardly make out the titles, they are so enormous. We have the soundtrack of an idealised love scene of the Hollywood type played over visuals of the faces of the ordinary people waiting for tickets, and similarly the soundtrack

of war scenes with gunfire and sounds of conflict played over a shot of
an old man with a completely disfigured face, perhaps a war injury. The
cinema is shown to be dangerously untrue to life, an escapist paradise,
and the audiences are shown to be willing dupes of its domination.

In the third section of this short film, Tanner chooses to portray
the tail end of the evening, which is even more overtly sordid. From
mad gaiety we go to empty streets, prostitutes, police and criminals as
the crowds take the last trains home. There is a feeling of sadness,
loss and disillusion, generated in the choice of images and music. A
sort of reality is returned to after the excitement and fakeness.
Tanner ends the film with a shot of Eros, the statue having presided
over the activities of the evening.

The most important aspect of the film is perhaps the director's
messages, the themes explored and the insights and judgements that are
imposed on us by the organisation and the filming of the raw material.
This is no uninterrupted slice of reality such as Bazin or Zavattini
might have admired, such as an audience could watch and judge for
themselves, quite the opposite. There are certain main observable
methods for the expression of the ideas of the film. The chief among
these is montage. There is a meaningful, often ironic juxtaposition of
shots. There is an enormous amount of cutting and it is very fast and
compelling; we are in fact bombarded with so many disparate elements of
material that a collage-like effect is achieved. The messages are also
achieved via the juxtaposition and interaction of sound and music
throughout the film. The soundtrack is in no way realistic in the
conventional sense of the word and straightforward diegetic sound is
almost entirely absent. Occasionally we hear murmurings of
conversation but we cannot hear it properly and it is quickly lost in
the overall soundtrack. Sometimes the juxtaposition of sound and
picture is ironic: e.g. the National Anthem played over a vast Coke

sign, symbol of consumerism. Sometimes the sound sharpens the point of the visuals, for example the rapid skiffle of 'She's my baby' echoing the almost neurotic go-getting pleasure-seeking couples pairing off at the beginning of the film, or the sad lament of the folk song at the end about the dead lover visiting the one left alive, over the emptying streets and the remaining lonely figures. The folk song aids, in fact, the whole feeling of a sense of loss and sadness, and pleasure not actually captured, but missed.

The end product in <u>Nice Time</u> is a poetic and personal view of a particular place at a particular time. Despite a sharp eye for human weakness and an attack on its exploitation, it should be stressed that Tanner shows enormous interest in and fondness for people, and does not appear wholly unsympathetic to their failings. There is a good deal of humour in the film and a lightness of touch. The qualities of poetry, realism and humour are of course staple qualities in all the later films of Tanner.

So, it is clear that Tanner's roots are firmly based in the realist aesthetic both in his earlist influences in film and in his first actual film production. He left England in 1956, his work permit having run out, and in 1959 and 1960 he worked in Paris. In ideological terms it is clear that he was more in sympathy at that time with the English New Left and the Free Cinema than with the French directors of the New Wave[70]. However, Jim Leach contends that what Tanner did particularly admire in the French Cinema at that point was the more theoretical approach, the work of Bazin being the theoretic base. It was the French directors who were more directly concerned with questions of form[71].

His career actually continued in documentary and in 1961, when he went back to Switzerland, he was concerned with getting film going along the lines of the Free Cinema. The only one of these projects to

get off the ground was <u>Les Apprentis</u> 1964, funded by a group of industrialists. It was a documentary looking at the lives of a group of apprentices both in terms of their work and their private lives. The men dream of another life, whilst suffering under a very harsh régime, a theme not dissimilar to that of <u>Retour</u> nine years later. The documentary is again a 'creative interpretation' of reality, as was <u>Nice Time</u>. In so far as it was heavily interfered with by the sponsors, Tanner regarded it as a compromise. He has not since however, renounced it entirely, considering that it has some good things in it. He amplifies on its failure in an interview with L. Bonnard for <u>Positif</u> and says:

> à l'origine je voulais suivre un petit groupe d'apprentis genevois dans leur vie quotidienne et découvrir ainsi de jeunes suisses urbains, mais à mesure que le projet prenait de l'ampleur, le thème s'est modifié pour devenir complètement hybride. Un échec par manque de maturité politique aussi, face au problème posé par ces apprentis, et un échec technique puisque le film a été tournée en 35 mm alors que toute évidence c'était le 16 mm qui convenait à ce genre d'expérience.[72]

It was a short step for Tanner from poetic, interpretive documentary, to fiction and this transition took place via his television work between 1964 and 1969[73]. The need to reach the truth and to express his point of view finally did not assort with documentary film making. There is a gradual development of a revolt against the attempt to project 'reality' objectively, both in the sense of the impossibility of this per se - the attempt must be doomed to fail - and in the sense of Tanner's realisation of the actual undesirability of the attempt for objectivity/impartiality. Tanner rebelled against what he termed 'l'aspect neutre du simple reportage'[74]. In 1964 he began work on a TV series called <u>Continents sans visa</u> and he quickly came up against the problem of objectivity. 'Pour le réalisateur la neutralité, l'objectivité s'accorde parfois

assez mal avec l'expression qui est son travail. L'objectivité peut-être aussi un paravent qui permet d'éviter une véritable analyse de la réalité'[75]. In documentary, information is gathered, all points of view are put, and whilst there is only one truth, this one truth has in fact in Tanner's opinion, no chance of being given any precedence over other interpretations. In the face of stolid Swiss conservatism, Tanner found that 'l'objectivité finit statitisquement par donner la primauté à la majorité silencieuse qui, comme son nom indique, n'a justement rien à dire'[76]. (We must think here of the fine cut from the full length shot of Paul and Pierre in La Salamandre, lost in a wood, to the close-up of the wellington boots plodding in the squelchy mud and the voice over commentary 'une majorité silencieuse est composée de gens comme vous et moi qui, séparés de leurs camarades, vôtent pour des cuistres et des canailles'[77].) So what Tanner saw as wanted was vision, not just a reflection of stagnation. 'Il me semble plus intérressant de savoir ce que les choses devraient être plutôt ce qu'elles sont'[78]. The next stage for the director was reached with a TV series called Aujourd'hui where he actually selected to portray people he liked to start with and whose views accorded with his own, thus introducing a committed aspect to the work. The film maker could in a sense declare himself whilst not in fact departing from 'reality' into fiction. Tanner was now aware that the stage after this was necessarily to invent characters and to create fictions. 'Quand on se trouve devant la réalité, il faut la regarder, la respecter, la faire parler, l'organiser. Avec la fiction rien n'existe, il faut tout, faire et on retombe dans sa propre subjectivité'[79].

Continuing to trace Tanner's roots in the realist tradition, it is important to note the aims of Group 5 when it was founded in 1968/9. Tanner produced his first work of fiction in 1969, Charles mort ou vif and it was the first of the Group 5 productions, that is to say a

collaborative arrangement with Swiss TV. The five directors concerned, Soutter, Roy, Goretta, Yersin and Tanner, announced that they were primarily concerned with exploring and presenting Swiss reality[80]. Up till that time according to Tanner, the 'reality escapers' had held sway. The community spirit in Group 5, with its shared aims, was just as important as the financial arrangements. The films produced were fiction films but the aims were similar to those expressed about <u>Nice Time</u> and there are parallels between the developing cinema of Anderson and Reisz in England after the Free Cinema movement, and that of Group 5 directors during the same period of years. The collective editorial of <u>Travelling</u>, a new Swiss revue of cinema, echoed the aspirations of the Swiss directors, 'Il n'y a pas actuellement d'analyse de la situation économique, politique, sociale et culturelle de notre pays. L'une des tâches du cinéma suisse pourrait être de collaborer à son exploration'[81]. The editorial notes the problems of Switzerland, for example the Jura, foreign workers, youth riots in Zurich, and the ostrich-like attitude of the Establishment to them, which claimed that officially there were no national problems of urgency. The cinema the editorial proposes is a cinema of 'films témoignages', a cinema that will offer analysis of Swiss society.

This editorial and the expressed aims of Tanner and Group 5 on the subject of the real presentation of Swiss reality are obviously in a sense reminiscent, though in a situation more tempered, of the emphasis for film makers in post-war Italy. The film makers in Italy were concerned to confront the lies of the Fascist period, to confront the real social reality of the present. Similarly, Group 5 intended to end an era of reality 'escapers'. The word 'analysis' used in the <u>Travelling</u> article would however not be in keeping with neo-realist aims. The realist tradition as a whole has always been associated with political reformism, but more by virtue of its presentation of the

facts, not by its direct authorial analysis of them or offering of ideas/solutions. Tanner goes further. He arguably both presents and offers an analysis of Swiss society in his films and he suggests 'possibilities' of contention/possible solutions. In <u>Charles</u> the dominant perspective on Swiss reality in the film is that of Charles himself. His family express different perspectives ranging from the traditional/conformist to the actively revolutionary. Charles's perspective is sympathetically endorsed by the director. Generally <u>Charles mort ou vif</u> could not be termed an example of 'phenomenological realism' where we are left with 'raw' reality to draw our own conclusions. Appearances are explained and the lies and the hidden awfulness that lie beneath them are exposed and expounded. Jim Leach in his book on Tanner, pertinently titled <u>A Possible Cinema: The Films of Alain Tanner</u> actually suggests a link between Tanner's cinema and Raymond Williams's idea of a 'subjunctive mode' of Realism elucidated in <u>The Long Revolution</u> and <u>Politics and Letters</u>[82]. For Williams, the 'subjunctive mode' of realism includes the possible or the desirable, as well as the <u>actual</u> outcomes of situations. Therefore this 'subjunctive' realism can for Williams go beyond the experience of deadlock by suggesting possibilities suppressed by the actual situation. Leach suggests that the utopian black and white inserts of <u>Jonas</u> would provide a good example of this. The strain of utopianism can certainly be seen as a recurring element in Tanner's work.

Having pointed out that <u>Charles Mort ou vif</u> could not generally be termed an example of phenomenological realism, one can nevertheless detect that in particular instances, in specific scenes, there is a simple presentation of appearances and of ordinary trivial incidents of the everyday, that does recall the neo-realists. We observe Charles wandering aimlessly around the streets after his TV denunciation of the system, lying in an anonymous hotel room, holding desultory

conversations with the maid, cooking a meal in Paul's house or hanging out washing. (This simple presentation of the small, undramatic events of life does not include of course other episodes which are intended as symbolic e.g. Charles and the bonfire. Also alien to a neo-realist presentation is the drift towards fantasy in some scenes, for example the scene with two male nurses at the end of the film.) The narrative of <u>Charles</u> mixes important and trivial events and in no way is tightly structured. One notices also that, again in common with a neo-realist approach, the narrative is linear and has no large time jumps. The editing is unexceptional and the tempo of the film is slow. The other evident link with the neo-realists is the location shooting; Tanner shows us the villas of the rich, cafés, the dull flat countryside in winter, the bohemian house. The lighting used is flat, unartistic. Indeed the surface appearance of the film is rather poor, sombre.

With regard to Tanner's conception of character in <u>Charles</u>, one can see both similarities and differences from the neo-realist conception of character, which tended to be flat, social types. Charles himself is developed and rounded as a character; we learn of his past history, which partly explains his present situation; we are privy to his inner thoughts, we watch the development of his character over time. Also unlike the neo-realists, Tanner admits of his character that he is totally fictional, an invention with no base in social reality. The other characters of the film <u>are</u> however social types rather than rounded characters e.g. Marianne, who is no more than a cypher for the Revolutionary Youth Movement. One notes however that Tanner tends to overblow these characters, to slightly parody, a factor which is alien to his neo-realist predecessors.

Over and above Tanner's debt to the realist tradition of course, is the beginning, in <u>Charles</u>, of the work on film language which is the central focus of Tanner's films. This is examined in detail in Chapter

3. Though there is none of the allusiveness in Charles of the New Wave, and very little of the humour (except for isolated instances, e.g. the detective is reminiscent of say those in Tirez sur le pianiste, or of Antoine in Baisers volés, i.e. a detective playing the part of being a detective), the beginnings of what may be termed Tanner's 'dual voice' may be seen in Charles and this is a hallmark of the New Wave.

Individual aspects e.g. narrative, characterisation etc. are discussed in detail for each film in the chapters devoted to them. Suffice to say here that the slow pace of La Salamandre and the sprawling narrative (for detailed analysis see Chapter 4) has a link with the narrative practices of the neo-realists and the characterisation again bears a relation to the latter. The relation is a different one from that shown in Charles. The flat characters are the same, stereotyped collections of attitudes e.g. the uncle. The two men Pierre and Paul however are both rounded as characters yet also schematic in that they stand for two different basic attitudes. Rosemonde is both rounded yet also a representative of a social type that Tanner had observed and wished to portray. The neo-realists, it has been noted, were fond of using non actors e.g. a factory worker plays the chief part in Ladri di biciclette; it is interesting to note that Bulle Ogier was taken for a real factory girl playing the part, the end product was considered to be so realistic. The central theme of the film is the quest for truth (for a script); a fact gathering, researched approach (bearing only a resemblance at the first level to the tradition of Zola whose end product was a highly imaginative work) versus an intuitive, artistic approach. Neither of the approaches simply rests upon appearances, neither in fact represent a phenomenological realism.

One can obviously cite plenty of attributes of La Salamandre which distance it from the realist tradition, the veering off from everyday

reality, the trend to allegory, the voice over commentary, the use of editing for dramatic effects and so on. A stronger connection that must be made for this film is actually the connection between it and the New Wave. La Salamandre looks very much like an early New Wave film and indeed one could draw specific similarities between it and an early Truffaut film like Tirez sur le pianiste. Both films are based upon enigmatic characters; Rosemonde and Charlie are gradually revealed. We see close-ups of their faces at the beginnings of the films and at the ends. In the interim, after 'enquiry' they are revealed to us. Both films exhibit a self-conscious genre play, a mixing of tones. Obviously the thriller element is more pronounced in the Truffaut film, but Tirez is a love story and comedy as well. The quality of allusiveness to other films is also more pronounced in Truffaut's film but is present also in La Salamandre. Both are lively in their editing procedures and, to some extent, experimental in this respect. In terms of narrative, both films are 'loose' and 'sprawling', containing a rich variety of material. In La Salamandre we digress to Paul, his painting job, his wife. We have anecdotes, humorous asides that are very reminiscent of Truffaut; the little Red Book episode, Vladimir etc., are to be compared with Truffaut's cameo digressions on marriage, or the shot of the vast wife and miniature husband, and so on. Both films are rich in their inclusiveness. Both end with a close-up of the face of the protagonist, they end with a question about the future. There is a spontaneity about Tanner's film that merits comparison with Truffaut, and a great sense of human warmth that is a hallmark of both directors. One could say of Tanner's characters and the spirit of the film that 'les gens sont formidables!' in the words of Fabienne Tabard's father in Baisers volés. Both Truffaut's and Tanner's films engage the audience in the same way, making a direct approach to the spectator. They are not oppressive

films, and invite contribution and participation. The differences
between the two may be seen to lie in the sharper elements of social
criticism in Tanner, whose film has more bite in that sense. Tanner
also has a greater sense of working on traditional filmic procedures
than Truffaut in _Tirez_ and has an inherent tendency to cross over the
boundary of realism.

The close examination of _Retour d'Afrique_ in Chapter 5, will serve
to specify in detail the points of relationship between this film and
the realist tradition. However it is worth emphasising some of the most
striking points of contact here. Harking back to the neo-realists, one
sees in _Retour_ a basic respect for appearances. The wider setting of
Geneva is carefully documented, the places of work of Vincent and
Françoise, the cafés, offices and so on. The flat of course is bare,
but this is explained by the narrative. Shot in black and white with
flat lighting, the film has the sober surface appearance that one
associates with the neo-realists. There is a similarity at the level
of narrative; daily activities are portrayed, small repetitive actions
not very significant in themselves are punctuated by moments of some
importance. One could say of this narrative, that on the whole it is
one where 'nothing' happens. Vincent and Françoise, once settled in
their empty flat, wait for a letter. They eat, sleep, make love, and
discuss their situation and that of the outside world. One thinks of
the ideal of Zavattini which was to make a film about twenty four hours
in the life of a man to whom nothing happens. In _Retour_ we feel the
weight of time in its slow passing, and we could be reminded of Bazin's
word à propos of the neo-realists, 'Il s'agit là de rendre
spectaculaire et dramatique le temps même de la vie, la durée naturelle
d'un être auquel n'arrive rien de particulier'[83]. Yet at this point
the similarities end; we see in _Retour_ an inventiveness with regard to
narrative strategies, changes of narrative 'tactics' at different

points of the film. Clearly the narrative is very fragmented and enormous emphasis put upon editing. Tanner's very mobile camera and frequent use of long takes might, on the surface, reflect a link with the practice of the neo-realists, but on inspection the link is tenuous and the camera is most often used obtrusively and experimentally. The camerawork often recalls Godard in fact, for example the lateral pans over cityscapes of Une Femme mariée or those of Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle or the conversations done in swinging lateral movements of Vivre sa vie and other films. There are other facets of Retour that recall the New Wave; the dual voice of the substance of life/the exploration of the medium, and the digressions and extraneous material in the narrative. Although Tanner removed the humour from Retour, traces remain which remind us of Truffaut; Emilio describes the gigantic nail in his telephone conversation with Victor while a man fumes outside the box, kept waiting by this trivia. The use of the voice over commentary also recalls Truffaut from the period of Jules et Jim, and Godard. In Truffaut we have the same emphasis on micro-politics, the politics of the couple, as being the real starting point for change.

The focus of Le Milieu du monde (see Chapter 6) is firmly situated in work on the language of film and so the points of contact with the realist tradition are more limited. The debt is still in evidence, the locations look very real and are carefully documented e.g. Adriana's room, the café, the streets and the countryside of the middle of the world. Having said this, Tanner of course uses the shots of the countryside to punctuate the narrative in a non-naturalistic way that is quite foreign to a neo-realist presentation. But there is a sense of ordinary everyday life, small events; we watch a group of workers on a train, Adriana leisurely eating an orange, sitting on her bed, moving around her room. Again, at moments, there is a sense of the weight of

time that is reminiscent of the Italian directors. Bazin celebrated the long take, as a factor best serving the cause of realism in his time, allowing as it did natural time and space within the shot. The plan séquence is a key feature of Milieu but Tanner argues that in 1974 it in fact serves the opposite purpose, in that it looks artificial and is thus distancing in its effect, although one would expect the opposite. It should be noted that the long take of the neo-realists also must have had an element of distanciation in its effect upon an audience since it subverted the then conventional editing practice. How an audience responds to cinematic figures changes with time. It might be argued that Tanner's use of the long take is less distancing than he intends since the background of this cinematic procedure, in 1974, was not only the Hollywood editing practice but also the pioneering work of the neo-realists.

The realism of the film is constantly undercut by foregrounding of, and work on the language, for example, in camerawork. We watch Adriana in her room; the setting is realistically documented, time and space are respected in the plan séquence, yet the camera is not at the service of the actor and performs complicated arabesques of its own. Bazin also singled out the technique of deep focus as an asset in the realist cause; one is often aware of depth in Tanner's shots and there is even a hinted quote from Citizen Kane, when the shot of a tray of food is unusually foregrounded and Paul and Adriana are to be seen in the background. One thinks of Susan's pills with Susan in the background in Kane. However, in other instances, via camera movement, Tanner flattens out the space of the frame e.g. via the lateral pan. In terms of characterisation, Milieu still bears some small remaining resemblance to its neo-realist predecessors; Adriana and Paul may be rounded characters, developing over time, but there is a level in each of these that is also representative of a type and a class. Having

said this, it is unusual that in this film the smaller characters, although not very well developed, are not the schemas of stereotyped attitudes that Tanner has created in his supporting characters in other films. The recipe for characterisation is different again in <u>Jonas qui aura 25 ans en l'an 2000</u>. The eight are described by Tanner as 'two-legged metaphors', representative of types. However, by the injection of odd quirks and a few character traits, Tanner gives each some individuality. Ironically this characterisation is nearer to a Neo-Realist conception yet is situated in a film that transcends neo-realist roots. Even in <u>Jonas</u>, Tanner still very much claims to be depicting Swiss reality yet he asserts that this cannot be done 'straight' as it were. His settings are real, his depiction of small daily actions is notable, from planting onions to peeling carrots, yet all this is overlaid by his use of, and exploration of the medium. The end product of <u>Jonas</u> is a highly wrought artefact.

Other Major Influences on Tanner's Filmmaking

Looking outside the main realist tradition, to which Tanner has been shown to stand in complex but evident relation, one goes on to note other major influences in his filmmaking. The work of Brecht is an important background for Tanner, as for Godard. Brecht's work was widely endorsed by the left-wing modernist movement in art. <u>Cahiers du cinéma</u> in their issue on Brecht in 1960 set out to evaluate the importance of Brechtian theory for cinema[84]. Tanner says 'Brecht's work belongs in my bood. It is somewhere in a corner and cannot really be missed'[85]. In fact Brecht is one of the cornerstones of Tanner's aesthetic background, and in some senses Tanner's realism can be described as a Brechtian realism. Tanner has not tried to make a specifically Brechtian film but Brecht's ideas on distanciation, the relationship with the audience, and the relationship between form and content are important for Tanner. In later Chapters (3-7) where a

detailed analysis of Tanner's films from <u>Charles Mort ou vif</u> (1969) to <u>Jonas qui aura 25 ans en l'an 2000</u> (1976) is undertaken, we will see how the debt is worked out in filmic practice and where the differences lie.

Brecht was a realist, not as we have defined realism but in the sense that the aim of Brecht's epic theatre was to reveal or expose reality, so that thus revealed, it could be changed. A concise setting out of Brecht's ideas on theatre is to be found in <u>The Modern Theatre and the Epic Theatre</u>, Brecht's notes to his opera <u>The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny</u>[86]. The cornerstone of Brecht's theatre was the 'V' effect, or the 'Verfremdung' effect, the aim of which was the creation of an objective audience who actively used its powers of mind. Among the features of the 'V' effect on stage were the setting of the text in the past, the advocating of a rhetorical language, the construction of plays in the form of a story (epic) not in the form of an individual emotional crisis, the refusal of suspense, and switches in tone. The narrative was fragmented into short self-contained scenes. The theatre itself was to be demystified, so that the total illusion of naturalistic theatre was impossible. Brecht's scenes are realistic, indeed scrupulously so in the details, but it is always made quite apparent that this is a realism of the stage. For Brecht, nineteenth century naturalistic theatre, the theatre that he labelled 'dramatic', a theatre of total illusion, presented the world as a set of givens, unalterable. The audience lost itself in the illusion created and identified with the characters. According to Brecht, what the audience was lost in was a bourgeois account of the world, which such theatre in no way allowed them to either recognise or challenge. 'Real' social relations were obscured in such presentations. Brecht also advocated a new use of the actor in the theatre and a new idea of characterisation. For the actor he favoured the use of what he termed

the social 'gest' which was a gestural expression which would indicate the social relationships between people at a given time. The social 'gest' was not necessarily a realistic one but one that would show the operations of society. On the question of characterisation, Brecht favoured the use of typed characters that would be seen as representative of their class. This sort of characterisation could lead to a generalised discourse about the issues. Brecht believed in the ethical necessity of art giving a correct account of the real world, but claimed that new forms and conventions in art were necessary in each era, for this purpose. He wanted a mass audience and claimed that the working-class were not inherently hostile to artistic experiment, despite the fact that the new forms would be strange and unfamiliar to them. It is by no means clear of course that Brecht's work did appeal to the German working-class,and the central problem of the lack of popularity of avant-garde art forms, the inability to reach a wide audience,is faced in cinema by such directors as Godard.

Brecht's intention of 'showing things as they really are' is of course undertaken from a Marxist point of view. He defines 'realistic' in this way 'realistic means discovering the causal complexes of society, unmasking the prevailing view of things as the view of those who are in power, writing from the standpoint of the class which offers the broadest solutions for the pressing difficulties in which human society is caught up'[87]. Brecht and Georg Lukacs were both intent on describing what a socialist work of art should be, but the crux of a celebrated debate between them centered on the forms that were adequate and suitable to the task. Lukacs claimed that the conventions of realism developed by the nineteenth century realists (e.g. Balzac and Tolstoy) could be seen as a guide to the socialist writers of the twentieth century. They were of easy access to all, unlike avant-garde literature e.g. Joyce, which was of limited access. Lukacs argued that

the great realist novels, which were essentially bourgeois creations, had come from a period when in fact the bourgeoisie were in a progressive phase i.e. pre 1848. Balzac had been a royalist but Lukacs argued that Balzac was above all, a seeker of the truth, despite his overt position.

In his essays on Lukacs, Brecht developed the idea that the techniques and rules of nineteenth century narrative interfered with the creation of knowledge about society and prevented its proper transmission to an audience. Brecht called approaches to art that stuck to given conventions, 'formalist'.

> Whether a work is realistic or not cannot be
> determined merely by checking whether or not it is
> like existing works which are said to be realist,
> or were realistic in their time. In each case one
> must compare the depiction of life in a work of art
> with the life itself that is being depicted,
> instead of comparing it with another depiction.

Forms, he said, had to change,

> Methods become exhausted, stimuli no longer work.
> New problems appear and demand new methods.
> Reality changes; in order to represent it, modes of
> representation must also change(88).

It is Brecht's stance that has won wide agreement and has been very influential with the Marxist left in the post-'68 period.

It is clear that the work of a film director like Alain Tanner shows a mixture of influences, debts and perspectives, and that his cinema is forged as a result of the tensions between these perspectives. This chapter has been principally concerned with isolating the basic model of nineteenth century realism and its transmission into film in the twentieth century. Tanner owes a debt to this tradition which is important and complicated. It is clear also that Tanner goes beyond realism and in doing so offers an analysis of social structures and cinematic structures. His work is also influenced by Brecht. As is shown in the detailed chapters devoted to

close analysis of particular films, it is also clear that the background climate of ideas in the post-'68 period is also important in Tanner's work.   In many ways the nature of the debates about realism have shifted in modern theory.   Structuralist theories have undermined realism and Tanner also shows a level of structuralist perspective in his work.   The basic idea that literature/films tell the truth about the world and express an author's perception about that world i.e. 'expressive realism' as Catherine Belsey terms it[89], is put in question by structuralism which has as its base the linguistic theories of Saussure.   Structuralism was the dominant influence in the climate of ideas from the second half of the '60s and through the '70s.

Structuralism originated as a method of analysis in linguistics; it presupposes that language is not a question of the relationship between the word (the signifier) and the thing referred to (the signified) but is autonomous and self-referential.   The relationship of the signifier to the signified is a purely arbitrary one. It advances the idea that language is not transparent, not just a transmission agent but that language itself 'constructs' the world.   Language for Saussure did not name things that already existed, but preceded the existence of things. He observed that different languages divide and articulate the world in different ways.   From Saussure's work, it has been argued that ideologies are naturally inscribed within the language, and once language is seen as not transparent and can be detected as such, it can then be argued that there can be no unmediated experience of the world. Structuralist thought, by definition, tends to decentre and reduçe the status of the human subject.

Claude Lévi-Strauss was the first French advocate of a structuralist approach to humanistic studies.   In his studies of the myths of primitive societies, his emphasis was placed upon an analysis of a system of signs as they operated in such societies, not upon the

human individual. He advanced the idea that the structure of that
system was not consciously devised by anyone, and that its users were
not conscious of its operation. The structures however could be
discovered by the scientific observer.

Louis Althusser, a political philosopher whose work had important
repercussions on radical film theory in the post-'68 period, offered a
new interpretation of Marx, based upon structuralist principles.
Althusser basically called into question the relationship between
superstructure (the spheres of social, political, intellectual,
aesthetic, political activity) and base (the mode of material
production) as it had been envisaged by Marx. Marx had advanced the
idea that the superstructure reflected the base. Cultural production
therefore was determined by the base; ruling ideas i.e. those that
reflected a capitalist mode of production succeeded in appearing as
'natural' and 'obvious'. An allotted (but limited) space for
oppositional views was included in the overall picture. Althusser
developed a theory of ideology that was more complex than that outlined
by Marx. Ideology for Marx was a question of showing false things to
people, an 'inadequate' knowledge. He argued that once people
appreciated how things really are, i.e. the deep structures underlying
capitalism, then they would see through ideology and the latter would
disappear. Althusser saw ideology and economics as in process and did
not advance the view that ideology could be ended - i.e. it would not
disappear with the advent of socialism. Ideology, he argued, could not
easily be uncovered by the materialist philosopher, was not an easily
seen through lie, but had a reality of its own. Althusser argued
furthermore that ideology could not be explained as a device employed
by one class against another, but was to be seen more as the air that
is breathed, not consciously noticed, all pervasive, indeed essential
in human societies, emanating from schools, family, media etc. It

worked to adapt people to the conditions of their existence, 'in a class society ideology is the relay whereby, and the element in which, the relation between men and the conditions of their existence is settled to the profit of the ruling class'[90]. Ideology could not so much be called a question of 'lies' but rather a complicated system of representations. He argued that ideology can however be known and analysed and hence 'redeployed' in the service of changing society. This was of fundamental interest to those Marxists engaging in cultural production e.g. in film, in the post-'68 period. Also of interest were the ideas about the superstructure and the base and their relationship. In other words, a path to 'useful' work in radical aesthetic practice could be seen.

Ideology for Althusser not only reproduces the social order but also in a sense 'creates' subjects. He argues that the individual human being does not create the world and society but is rather a product of psycho-social processes. It is in this respect that Althusser's thought draws upon the work of Lacan in psycho-analysis[91]. Lacan developed the idea of the primacy of language over subjectivity. Lacan's 'homelette' is a young child (pre-linguistic) with no sense of identity. It then recognises itself as a unit, distinct from the outside world. Only when it enters language however, does it become a 'subject'. It enters the signifying system of language. The child learns to speak of 'I' and recognises itself in 'he', 'boy' etc. His subjectivity, Lacan argues, is constructed linguistically. Yet there exists a repository of repressed and pre-linguistic signifiers i.e. an unconscious. The entry into language means that the child can live in society but it divides the self, leaves 'behind' the unconscious part and, in effect, creates a contradiction in the subject and hence a source of possible change. Lacan also argues that the self is not a fixed entity but is in

process, contradictory and changing. Literature has to be very important since, as language, it influences the way people think about themselves. An author however, in this perspective, cannot express a unique subjectivity (his own); he can only construct texts by mixing the 'given' materials. There can now, in such theory, be no one single reading of a text, no single authority for the meaning, the reading changes over time, and between readers who produce the meaning.

We have noted that the nature of the debate about realism has shifted when looked at from structuralist perspectives; the concept of realism, in the sense of the straightforward view that art reflects the world with a minimum of distortion from the presence of the artist and the materials, is no longer viable in this perspective. Realism is often seen as a conservative form that effaces its own textuality, i.e. that offers itself as transparent, as a 'window' on the world. The critique of realism that comes from what is termed 'conventionalist' Marxism stems from such a perspective. Marxist conventionalism argues that realism does or claims to do what cannot be done; it gives the illusion that it shows things as they really are, which it is argued is a dangerous illusion. This theory points out that art does not mirror reality but it is a construct. As Terry Lovell indicates however, the exponents of realism do not actually deny this; the realist artists were aware of form, construction, materials, conventions,but their focus was not on the latter questions but upon achieving a truth to reality[92]. The conventionalists argue furthermore, that language cannot by definition represent the world; we have no access to independent reality except via language. In effect we have only discourse. A critical approach to a text will therefore be concerned only with discourse, not the outside world. Such a viewpoint would be consistent with the idea that elements of the superstructure can have no effect upon the base. Lovell goes on to point out that, taken to its

extreme and logical conclusions, such an insistence seems absurd and cannot be sustained. The question of reference (to things in the world) cannot be escaped. 'Although we can only talk about, or represent, those real things within some signifying practice or another, what is said within those practices depends for its validity not on the signifying practice alone, but on properties and qualities of the things referred to or represented'[93].

Colin MacCabe's critique of realism, or of what he terms the 'Classic Realist Text'[94] is allied to the conventionalist Marxist perspective. It is to George Eliot that MacCabe turns to illustrate the theory. It should be noted that this formulation of the 'Classic realist text' is to be distinguished in several important respects from the realist tradition elucidated in this chapter. In terms of narrative, form, and conception of character, it is different. The realist tradition as we have discussed it, attempts to strip away artifice, struggles to uncover the truth, to get at objective facts. Thus the realist authors made strenuous attempts to remove/efface the traces of themselves from their work.

MacCabe uses the formulation 'Classic Realist Text' to describe what he identifies as the dominant mode not only in the literature of the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century, but also in film and TV drama. He uses the example of _Middlemarch_ and the film _Klute_ to demonstrate the principles of the 'Classic Realist Text'. Such texts create, he argues, an effect or illusion that what is narrated is 'really' happening. The 'Classic Realist Text' in this formulation comprises a 'metalanguage', the narrative prose, and an 'object language', i.e. other discourses of the text that are held in inverted commas. MacCabe says of the metalanguage, 'it is not regarded as material; it is dematerialised to achieve perfect representation - to let the identity of things shine through the window of words'. It

is not open to interpretation. 'The narrative discourse simply allows reality to appear and denies its own status as articulation'[95]. Hence the author, via direct intrusion or impersonal narration, invites the reader to share the understanding, the 'truths' of the text. These 'truths' are established in effect by the interaction between a hierarchy of discourses. Other characteristics of the 'Classic Realist Text' as defined by MacCabe, are narrative closure (i.e. the re-establishment of order) and the assumption of rounded, unified and coherent characters as the source of action. In the light of present theories of language and subjectivity, such an idea can be seen as false. Lacan's argument for a contradiction in the subject is not, MacCabe points out, represented in the 'Classic Realist Text', in the interest of social stability. He points out that unity and consistency of character is not necessarily to be seen in Renaissance texts and that Brecht also argues against the myth of the continuity of the ego. The 'Classic Realist Text' performs the work of ideology, it is argued, as it presents subject positions as unchangeable within a given system.

In opposition to the dominant form of the 'Classic Realist Text', Belsey identifies the 'Interrogative text', which 'disrupts the unity of the reader by discouraging identification with a unified subject of the enunciation'[96]. If the position of the author can be located at all, it is found to be contradictory or questioning. Such a text then raises questions and invites the reader to produce answers. The interrogative text also draws attention to its own textuality. Brecht's texts obviously belong in the category of 'interrogative' texts. Such a text, would allow a reader to form a critique of the ideology in which it is held. The reader/viewer is an active participater in the production of meaning rather than a 'passive' consumer demanded by a 'Classic Realist Text'.

It is this structuralist climate of thought that underlies the developments in radical film theory that took place in the post-'68 period. May '68 gave a sharp edge of urgency to the debates about art and politics. The influence of these debates on Alain Tanner's work will be further explored in Chapter 4. In fact Tanner may be termed a structuralist in that he highlights the structures of films and the ideological significance of these structures, and in his exploration of social structures as well. But there are other important aspects to his work, amongst others a realist legacy, and it is clear that in his intention to explore and to change both cinematic structures and social structures, he avoids any extremist structuralist positions. In the detailed analyses of his films (Ch. 3-7) the limits of the structuralist perspective are seen and explored in practice.

CHAPTER 2 - FOOTNOTES

1. J. Le Troquer, 'Des outils pour la collectivité', Téléciné, 177 (1973).

2. L. Nochlin, Realism (Pelican, 1971), p. 13.

3. Nochlin, Ch. 1.

4. G. J. Becker, ed., Documents of Modern Literary Realism. (Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 34.

5. E. Zola quoted in Nochlin, p. 28.

6. H. Taine quoted in Nochlin, p. 23.

7. E. Zola, Le Ventre de Paris, fifth edition (Charpentier, 1880), p. 27.

8. R. Williams, 'A lecture on Realism', Screen, 18 (Spring 1977), p. 62; and 'Realism and Non Naturalism', E.I.F.F. Programme (1977) p. 30.

9. E. Zola quoted in D. Grant, Realism (Methuen, 1970), p. 28.

10. These letters are reprinted in Becker ed., Documents of Modern Literary Realism, p. 89.

11. R. Williams, 'A lecture on Realism', Screen, 18:1 (Spring 1977).

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CHAPTER 3 - CHARLES MORT OU VIF

Chapter 2 examined the main areas of influence that underlie Alain Tanner's film making. We now turn to the detailed examination of the development of his film theory and practice, beginning with the first fiction film Charles mort ou vif, made in 1969.

The events of May 1968 lie in the background of all Alain Tanner's films of the 1969-76 period; these films discuss the repercussions of the events, which Tanner saw as more important than the actual events themselves; they are about keeping the spirit of May alive. Charles mort ou vif (1969) is a direct reflection of this revolutionary period. P. Haudiquet goes so far in fact as to term it 'le plus bel enfant cinématographique du mois de mai'.[1] The maxims that form an important element of Tanner's film such as 'si tu veux la paix, prépare la guerre civile - Manifeste Surréaliste' or 'la liberté d'autrui étend la mienne - Bakounine', are highly reminiscent of the slogans of May. Many of the latter were surrealist inspired, deliberately provocative and utopian. They advocated the throwing off of old repressive structures, free action and self expression. In Tanner's film they are taught by Marianne, a member of a revolutionary student group, to Paul the painter, in an attempt to create in him some awareness of his own situation and of the general struggle for freedom. They are a challenge also to the spectator who has to work out their significance in the film and also in his own life situation.

Whilst Tanner was obviously a good deal older than the students, he conceded the impression left upon him by events. 'Mai a réveillé des tas de choses. Même chez des gens qui avaient enterré des sentiments libertaires. Moi aussi j'avais enfoui des choses qui sont remontées à la surface.'[2] Here of course is the germ of the idea for Charles mort ou vif. In Switzerland, he points out youth was not

aware, not mobilised, except in tiny ineffectual groups and in his film the struggle for freedom is centred on a middle-aged man Charles Dé. His son Paul is the spearhead of the reactionary forces that defeat this attempt. This is a thought provoking reversal of the usual pattern and Tanner wryly quotes Brassens, 'il y a les jeunes cons et les vieux cons'.[3]

Charles mort ou vif is an extremely moving and thought provoking story of Charles Dé, an apparently successful director/owner of a watch making factory (therefore a highly respected member of Swiss society) who makes a bid for personal freedom at the age of fifty, resuscitating ideas that had been half formulated at the age of twenty but had been suppressed. The film is an urgent plea to live according to one's deepest convictions and to relate to others in a more honest, open and spontaneous way. As Tanner says in the interview with J. Collet 'même si on se sent coincé il faut bien rester humain'. Ironically this is exactly what the 'Tops' advert that Charles reads out says, 'Jouissez pleinement de la vie' but Charles refuses the terms of happiness offered by bourgeois consumer society. The title of the film of course raises the question of whether Charles Dé is 'dead or alive'. From age twenty to fifty he was perhaps alive but spiritually dead or dying. At fifty he comes alive, throws off his past existence. When 'reclaimed' by society the question is opened again. We presume optimistically that he will remain 'alive', albeit a prisoner.

When we first see a close-up of the face of Charles Dé, right at the outset of the film we see a face that is severe, removed, ill at ease. It is clear at once that his situation is distressing to him. An apprentice, on the occcasion of the one hundredth anniversary of the enterprise intones a fulsome, rehearsed speech; platitudes about a caring business, a shared 'family' spirit that we later learn was Charles's desire once to actually create in reality. This speech sends

him escaping to the toilets, trying to revive himself for the ordeal by splashing cold water over his face. Then, interviewed by the TV for the occasion he responds to the smooth questions of the interviewer with impatience, evasion, and a certain aggression. His son scolds him like a child for the lost opportunity for advertising, and chides him for his lack of interest in the business. Charles in his turn accuses Paul 'la seule chose qui t'intéresse c'est de gagner de l'argent et tu en gagnes'.

The first abortive interview is the first stage that Tanner shows in the unveiling of Charles's long suppressed desires. The TV interview pretends to capture 'truth' but Tanner suggests that the interviewer is only bent on drawing out the 'official version'. Charles is roused by his failure to fit into the pattern of responses that is expected of him. Afterwards, he gazes at himself in his bathroom mirror. 'Moi, je suis un zombi, mon âme voyage dans un monde futur et mon corps est fendu en deux, dans le sens de la longueur. Le côté gauche là où se trouve le coeur, se liquéfie et se putréfie. L'autre côté gagne honnêtement sa vie.'[4] On a chance contact with the TV interviewer a few days later, Charles unexpectedly announces that in fact he has a lot of things to say and he is invited to take part in a series called Les gens sont comme ça. There are hints in this title of an 'official version' again, and Marianne tartly states to Charles that people are not 'like that'. One notes the irony of the title when it is related to the interview that Charles next gives, when repressed words and ideas come spilling out of him, heedless of any consequences in practical or in personal terms. He faces the camera, without glasses. In a rather obvious symbolism, Tanner has him break them prior to the interview as part of the plot that made him see less clearly. (We have noticed that he already takes them off when he is speaking to Marianne.) This interview is a full account of his reading

of the history of his family and his own history; the young man unable
to escape the family business, not clearly knowing what he does want
but sensing that he is in a false position. 'Je savais que les
rapports entre les gens me semblaient faux, dominés essentiellement par
l'argent, le conformisme, le respect des conventions et les idées
toutes faites, le sens de la hiérarchie et de l'autorité. Bref si vous
voulez on s'emmerdait chez moi.' Once sucked in he at least tried to
better human relations in his factory but failed and by then, having a
family to support, was finally trapped 'dans un bain de coton, sans
angoisse véritable, sans espoir, enfermé dans le confort et la
sécurité'.[5] It is a story of the gradual deadening of all hope, a
story of a man's acceptance of the social model, indeed of the 'self'
that was offered to him.

Having fled his family and his factory and retreated into the
anonymity of a hotel, Tanner suggests that life and experience are
impinging on Charles in a new way - whether it be the raw noises of a
quarrel in the street at night or the street workers and their drills
or the Arab music on the radio. There is a new 'openness' and
attention on Charles's face. There is a scene that is very reminiscent
of Retour; Charles lies on his bed in a bare room, having 'left' his
previous life, and yet not having embarked on anything new. He listens
to Arab music on the radio, interspersed with bulletins about youth
subversion and a police flash about his own disappearance. His
relationship with Paul and Adeline whom he meets in a café is
immediately different in the sense that all three say what they think,
directly and spontaneously. A strong friendship grows up at once, and
at their poor and bohemian apartment in the winter gloom of the
countryside round Geneva, Charles announces happily 'la seule chose qui
me reste à faire c'est bien me défaire'.[6] He lives their bohemian
lifestyle with pleasure and contentment, reads, learns, thinks. Michel

Simon's acting expresses wonderfully Charles's re-discovered joy in life, in simple things. Charles finds he can stay in bed or work, he can be flippant or serious, he can enjoy his relationships in an open and spontaneous way. The face shows a scarcely believed joy, a vague surprise at itself. The 'family' bond becomes a bond of four - since Charles's daughter becomes a frequent visitor and despite Charles's realisation of the serious shortcomings of Paul's life and philosophy, the friendship remains strong. Charles gradually and sadly, however, realises that the net of the conforming world is closing in on him. His freedom is ebbing away, and finally the hired detective finds him, and his son sends the minions of a psychiatric clinic to put him away in an asylum. But even in the ambulance, Charles is trying to share an important discovery of his with the zombie male nurses; he quotes St Just:

> L'idée de bonheur était neuve en France et dans le monde. On pourrait en dire autant de l'idée du malheur. La conscience du malheur suppose la possibilité d'autre chose ... d'une vie autre que l'existence malheureuse. Peut-être aujourd'hui le conflit "bonheur-malheur" (ou plutôt conscience du bonheur possible et conscience du malheur réel) remplace-t-il et supplante-t-il l'antique idée de destin. Ne serait ce pas là le secret du malaise généralisé?[7]

The male nurse's response is to put on the ambulance siren to shut the madman up. Tanner leaves us with the proverb - a printed title on a black screen - 'Rira bien qui rira le dernier: vendredi'. It is left for the audience to speculate whether Charles will retain his new found integrity. One remembers that the May events in France were a failure in the absolute sense; they did not precipitate the fall of de Gaulle's government, they did not lead to revolution; May '68 had however brought people to a new consciousness; society had changed and would move on from the new point. New movements and developments had been made possible.

If Charles mort ou vif is reminiscent of the issues and the spirit of May '68 it should be said that the film does not overtly draw upon the explosion of film theory that burgeoned in the wake of May and June '68 in France. The body of film theory that was developed in 1969 onwards, chiefly in the editorials of Cahiers and Cinéthique, and which lies behind Tanner's own later theory of his films was of course being produced at the same time as the actual shooting of Charles in Geneva. It has a more overt influence on La Salamandre (1971). However despite this it is interesting to note in Charles certain aspects and certain moments in the film that very much prefigure the work of the future.

The formal work of the film is relatively unselfconscious. It has the basic ingredients of a cinéma verité film, hand held camera, direct sound, 16mm. Tanner comments however 'la caméra 16 est utilisée comme une caméra 35, pas sur ce qu'on croit être "l'esprit" du 16: mouvements, mobilité, agitation, zoom'.[8] Economic reasons dictated such choices. Tanner goes on to add, significantly, 'Je ne pense pas que la caméra détermine tellement en définitive le style du film'. When one looks at the camera - work of the film one sees a minimal use of a travelling camera. One sees a camera that is most often entirely static. Two or three times we have a very awkward fast slide between two people who are talking. This perhaps slightly breaks up the champ contre champ patterns that are continually used. Another feature that is very noticeable is the enormous number of close-ups.

There are however two or three moments in the film where the camera is of interest in the sense that there are hints of later. ideas and predilections. One notes a scene where the four friends Paul, Adeline, Charles and Marianne are sitting at the table after a meal. Charles alerts them to listen, fearing reprisals against himself. The small, threatened community sits and attends to some noises outside. The camera slides round the backs of the four, in a three-quarter

circle and then back again. It is a very effective movement in the sense that it underlines their sense of community, drawing a three-quarter ring round them. It also has the effect of suggesting someone watching from the outside (i.e. a threat). We are also reminded of our position as spectator of the film. This figure of the camera is of course a hallmark of Tanner's later camera usage. The difference here, from similar scenes in Le Milieu du monde or Jonas, is that although the camera moves across backs, i.e. the view is obscured at times, it always shows us the person who is at that moment actually speaking.

The other scene that might be isolated as of interest in terms of camerawork is the scene where Charles and the interviewer are being recorded for TV in Charles's garden. As they stroll about, the camera and sound man follow them, getting in the way sometimes of Tanner's camera. This must be seen to be a direct 'reminder' of the medium, of the cinematic process. It is a direct reminder that the camera is a heavy and cumbersome object and that it is wielded by someone.

The camerawork is also interesting in the occasional 'theatrical' air (and potential loss of realism) that it creates at times during the film; for example at the beginning, a static camera shows a factory floor and then Charles slides into the frame in a most awkward fashion from the left as if from theatre wings. The shot is a close-up and we are given at the outset a chance to scrutinize the face of Charles Dé; the issues behind this face are gradually revealed as the film progresses. (Ironically this close shot with its neutral expression is reminiscent of a police shot of a fuigitive criminal, wanted 'dead or alive'.) Elsewhere in the film people exit from the frame as from a stage, the camera remaining on the empty stage/set.

The editing within scenes in Charles is largely based upon the conventional champ contre champ pattern and between scenes the editing

takes us through a series of small steps in the narrative flow. There is none of the creative 'rub' that Tanner wishes to achieve via editing in later films, with the one possible exception of a tiny group of scenes where Charles watches himself on the TV. Tanner cuts between this, the family watching him and the man in the pub watching him; we have created, very effectively, a sense of revelation; Charles is facing what he has done; his family are struggling to assess the consequences of what he has done and the audience are looking from the outside and possibly relating this revelation to their own situation.

The narrative structure of Charles is equally fairly conventional; it follows a pattern of rising and falling action, from Charles at the beginning with a problem, irritable and withdrawn, through revelation, then a peiod of joy and discovery. Threats are gradually observed and then Charles is taken away and incarcerated. The narrative structure is unusual only in the sense of its open ending.

The music of the film is by contrast surprising by virtue of its lack of conventionality. In terms of pure sound it is very similar to that of Milieu du monde, in that it consists of what might best be described as electronic wails and percussion notes. We hear for example, as Charles escapes the anniversary speech and splashes his face with water in the toilets to revive himself, a grating, whining music that could be said to effectively express mental trauma and pain. There are numerous other instances of where the music 'assists' the visuals in a conventional fashion (despite the fact that the quality of the music itself is surprising and bizarre). However there are other occasions where the music appears to be quite independent of the visuals; one thinks of the bizarre music as Charles walks with his two new friends towards their house, Paul having pushed the car off a cliff. His rapport with these two is very good, he has already cast off some of his old modes of behaviour and, conventionally speaking,

we might have expected a music that expressed this. In addition to this disparity between the quality of the visuals and the music used, we note also that the music stops and starts in an entirely erratic fashion. These procedures are of course important in Tanner's later films. Another such procedure that relates to Tanner's later work is the use of music as a 'red herring'. For example as Charles paces the streets of Geneva after his revelation, afraid to be recognised, the music is that of a detective thriller.

Whilst the film is spontaneous and conventional in many respects, it is interesting to see that despite this, certain natural predilections of the director are already there. In embryonic form we have trends which are later developed into a general theory of film language and how to work upon it. In 1969 it is clear that Tanner had a natural disposition for distanciation and a refusal of straight realism. At this stage he admits that Brecht is very much in his background but says he was not aiming to consciously create Brechtian cinema. The Cahiers interviewers point out the echoes of Brecht in the name Charles Dé i.e. Monsieur Untel ... i.e. everyone.[9] We note also that Charles's second name, M. Swartz, is anonymous in the sense of being a very common name. His third name Carlo is individual and reflects his struggle to regain his individuality. Tanner does say in this interview:

> Je me suis senti dans une espèce d'incapacité à
> entrer vraiment dans la réalité suisse, à décrire
> le comportement psychologique des gens, cette
> espèce de grisaille, de sensation d'étouffement,
> cette satisfaction. Je n'arrivais pas à mettre sur
> le papier, et à imaginer de filmer ensuite des
> personnages réalistes, des choses réelles. Alors
> que j'aurais pu être tenté de le faire puisque
> c'était en fait mon premier film et que je ne
> savais pas très bien où j'allais, et comme j'avais
> une assez longue expérience du reportage et du
> documentaire, j'aurais pu être tenté de rester au
> niveau de la réalité. Dès le début j'ai vu qu'il
> fallait prendre du recul, démonter, s'amuser un peu
> avec ça, mais ne pas entrer là-dedans, ce n'était
> pas possible. C'était comme une nécessité
> biologique.

He goes on to add:

> si on veut embrasser vraiment cet espèce de fromage
> dans lequel on vit, et en parler, ce n'est pas
> possible de l'aborder par le chemin de la
> réalité. [10]

There are several respects in which the spectator is distanced
from this film. First of all, a key feature is the acting style of
Michel Simon. Whilst it is extremely effective, one can see that he
remains a little distanced from the part he plays. Tanner wanted him
to 'jouer un peu à facettes, se regarder un peu jouer'. Despite the
fact that Simon was not naturally an actor of this sort it worked, and
he retained a distance from his part. He used to say to Tanner 'c'est
trop triste ton film, tu vas faire chialer tout le monde'. [11] Because
Simon was never on the same 'wavelength' as the film, the film in fact
benefitted. The main actors are all in fact, somewhat distanced from
the parts they play. Whilst the spectators are probably sympathetic to
the characters, they are discouraged from identification with them,
both by this feature of the acting and by the fact that the limitations
of all are clearly shown. Paul and Adeline are naive and simple, their
horizons are shown to be limited and they are basically bourgeois;
Marianne, the representative of contesting youth, is often shown in an
unsympathetic light - whether it be her glib trotting out of slogans,
her pocketing Charles's money unashamedly for her rent, or her spitting
peel all over the dinner table; Charles himself, a fragile looking man
of fifty with a worn face and thinning hair and by no means a
conventional hero figure, often appears pathetic or ridiculous.

Humour is an important ingredient of the film and, as it is used,
is conducive to a detached tone. Sometimes it is on the level of a
play on words - e.g. le docteur Flicmann (the psychiatrist who is put
in charge of Charles), or the number of the Federal police 22.22.22. Or
we have the detective who consciously plays for himself the part of a

TV detective, involved in serious and dangerous matters. He does all
his business in his car in a very 'cloak and dagger' fashion.   He is
preposterously ugly - a '69 version of Kojak, and ironically he sings
constantly this song: 'il est de retour, le joli mois de mai/amis, quel
beau jour, tout sourit tout est gai/la verte prairie se couvre des
fleurs/Tatatatata l-atalalaire ...' The portrait of Switzerland in
this film may be devastating, but humour at the situation is still
there.   We hear on the radio about the blocking of the autoroute by
young protesters of the Légitime Défense group. The commentator on the
radio adds (as a final outrage) that 'even young ladies were taking
part'.   An example of a 'normal' conventional young lady is briefly
shown in the gym as the lawyer and Pierre try to cook up a way of
legally divesting Charles of the business. She sits between them,
immaculately made up, totally expressionless and vacuous.

The tendency to literary quotation, though far less overt than in
some of Tanner's later films, is found in Charles and is distancing in
the sense that it seeks, in some instances anyway, to disrupt the
fictional illusion.   Cillette quotes a poem that she is apparently
learning at school. We do not see Cillette otherwise in the film and
it is clear her presence is an excuse for this poem. (It is of course
hardly likely that in a Swiss school such a thing would be taught.)
She quotes 'La Suise est un désert/où chaque jour les mots/comme des
eaux se perdent/un puits secret les garde/c'est leur tombeau
d'oubli/Celui qui les profère/se défait, on l'enterre/ça ne fait pas un
pli/et le silence luit/sur ce pays prospère'. This is an overt
statement about the fate of Charles. The other quotations are in the
forms of Paul's maxims. There is more justification for their presence
in the text, in terms of the story itself; Paul is being 'taught' by
Charles's daughter. However, having said this, quite a number of these
quotations are spoken direct to camera and hence disrupt the fictional

illusion, offering a direct challenge to the spectator. It is interesting to note also that the radio is used (as in _Retour_ and _Milieu_) as the vehicle for relevant comments about Switzerland and this is only thinly disguised in the fiction. The radio and the quotations are of course the forerunners for Tanner of the voice over which is openly used in later films. Having said that the quotes distance the spectator somewhat from the fiction, they could be said to involve him on an intellectual level in the issues. But Tanner is not seeking gut reactions on the level of identification but the spectator's intellectual engagement with the issues.

One is also distanced from the film via the 'côté fable' as Tanner terms it - the loss of realism in certain aspects. The film looks in most respects real, yet is not. The director comments that it would be possible in principle for him to tell a story in a more realistic way, 'dans le mesure où on la détache de toute autre ambition. Ça doit être possible pour une histoire d'amour, qu'elle se passe au bord du lac de Genève ou n'importe où'.[12] The germ of _Milieu_ is here. The settings of _Charles_ look real, the wintry countryside round Geneva, the café in the village and so on. The characterisation is as it is in later Tanner films; main characters are drawn in detail, with great realism, the smaller characters are parodies of types of people observed. But as Tanner points out, as far as he knows there is no big factory owner in Switzerland who has ever done what Charles Dé does. Nor is the final fate of Charles at all likely in Switzerland or in any other western country. Audiences in Geneva were quick to point out that politer solutions would be found. The final scene of the film for example is entirely unreal. Two male nurses, made by Tanner into outrageously rough and crude zombies bang on the door of Paul's house, in search of Charles. The smaller man repeats everything that the big man says. There is throughout a bitter humour: A) 'Vous allez le

faire crever, oui' (to Paul); B) 'Ouais ... vous allez le faire crever'. They seize hold of the frail figure of Charles, as if he was a dangerous criminal, bundle him into an ambulance and set the sirens going when he tries to read to them. The scene makes its point very well, but in an unrealistic and overblown fashion; in Switzerland those who do not follow conventional patterns of behaviour are to be seen as a threat and as far as possible are subtly neutralised (this theme of course looks directly forward to Messidor). Precedents within the history of the Dé family have already been quoted; Charles's anarchist grandfather came to Geneva when he gave up hope for social changes. He set up in business we are told and died of a broken heart. Over the generations, a strain of radicalism in the family has alternated with ruthless capitalism.

It is most important to note that even in '68/9 Tanner has a natural predilection for creating an active relationship with his spectator, both at the level of film language (although this aspect is better developed by the director in the later films) and at the level of the issues raised. During the film for example, the spectator is invited to consider/speculate on the effect of the TV process on both individuals who take part in them as subjects, and on the viewer. In the case of Charles Dé, a man who was already fundamentally ill at ease in his role, the filming process sharpens this malaise to the point of crisis. (It is noticeable that the television presence largely accounts for the total discomfiture of the apprentice reading his fulsome speech about the Dé enterprise.) Then, in an interview situation, Charles finds himself incapable of making conventionally acceptable answers; he has been forced to face publicly the gap between his hopes and actuality. He then uses the television almost as therapy, as a vehicle for self-revelation. At this point in the film Tanner no longer shows Charles staring at his image in mirrors; indeed

he now tranquilly watches his image on the television screen, having spoken the truth, having revealed the self buried for thirty years. The basic idea of the potential of television for self-revelation came, according to the director, from an experience of his own when he was working on a series called Cinq colonnes for Swiss television. Cinq colonnes was a series of fifty minute portraits of people in Swiss society. One such portrait was of a country doctor, a man who worked eighteen hours a day and had done so for twenty years with no respite, no time for reflection. Tanner's crew spent fifteen days with him and the director noted that

> cela a fait comme une sorte de cassure dans sa vie.
> Il s'est repensé en quelque sorte, et le fait de
> faire l'émission l'a marqué très profondément. Par
> la suite il a fait une dépression nerveuse assez
> grave. Il est malade pendant trois mois, les trois
> mois suivants il n'a pas travaillé. Après, il
> s'est recyclé. Voilà le point de départ de mon
> histoire'.[15]

The spectator of Charles mort ou vif is forced to consider his own position, both in relation to the situation of Charles Dé and in relation to his own life. Tanner achieves this via editing. He cuts from a shot of Charles contentedly looking at himself on television, in a bar, to a shot of another man in the bar watching the programme, looking at Charles, looking back to the screen. Here is an objective, but interested observer. Tanner then cuts to a shot of the family of Charles watching the programme and we observe a different response. The audience is thus reminded of its own position as spectator.

Charles mort ou vif challenges the spectator to 'work' on the text and does not allow him to be passive. We are after all, presented at the outset of the film with an enigma in the close-up shots of Charles's inscrutable face. We cannot at first 'read' it. Gradually we have to piece together the issues. We have also a reversal of 'normal' roles - reactionary youth/liberated parent, a challenge to what one

would normally expect. The spectator has to puzzle out for himself the significance of the ten maxims and relate them to the film profitably. We are left at the end of the film with an ambiguous ending, the maxim 'Rira bien qui rira le dernier'. There is ambiguity in Charles's relationship to Adeline. She offers herself but it is unclear if their relationship becomes sexual. (It is ironic that the detective who sees life in terms of its sordid side should say 'ça sent le ménage à trois à un kilomètre!'). The development in the character and thoughts of Charles over the period that he is with Paul and Adeline has to be worked on by the spectator. The issues are complex and are dealt with subtly.

The directions naturally taken by Tanner in Charles are picked up and developed a little in La Salamandre. As the director's career progresses they are developed and elevated into a body of theory. Charles is interesting as a first step in this development but is also a very satisfying film in its own right. It is hardly ever seen of course now in Switzerland and not at all in this country. The issues it deals with are still very real, the film still has 'bite' and is challenging. It is a wonderfully acted film and a moving plea to live more honestly, to relate to others in a more honest, open and generous way. As Tanner says 'même si on se sent coincé, il faut bien rester humain'.[14] And even if the film was apparently easily consumed, as most films are, by those who particularly needed to receive its messages, Tanner hoped for a 'poison' to remain. 'On peut le déglutir comme n'importe quoi. Il y a quelque chose qui reste. Ça c'est la certitude qui me donne le courage de continuer.'[15]

CHAPTER 3 - FOOTNOTES

1. P. Haudiquet, 'Un enfant du mois de mai', <u>L'Avant-scène du cinéma</u>, 108 (Nov. 1970), p. 9.

2. J. Collet, 'Charles mort ou vif', <u>Télérama</u> (Jun. 1970).

3. Ibid.

4. From the script of <u>Charles mort ou vif</u> publ. in <u>L'Avant-scène du cinéma</u>, 108 (Nov. 1970), p. 15.

5. Ibid, pp. 17-18.

6. Ibid., p. 22.

7. Ibid., p. 36.

8. B. Eisenschitz and J. Narboni, 'Alain Tanner: "Charles mort ou vif"', <u>Cahiers du cinéma</u>, 213 (Jun. 1969), p. 28.

9. Ibid., p. 29.

10. Ibid.

11. Collet, '<u>Charles mort ou vif</u>'.

12. Eisenschitz and Narboni, 'Charles mort ou vif', p. 30.

13. Collet, 'Charles mort ou vif'.

14. Eisenchitz and Narboni, 'Charles mort ou vif', p. 30.

15. Collet, 'Charles mort ou vif'.

CHAPTER 4 - LA SALAMANDRE

It may be seen initially to be a paradox that Alain Tanner, as a filmmaker, bears an important debt to the realist tradition, and to Brecht, and also a debt to the specific developments in radical film theory that blossomed in the wake of May '68 and basically attacked both Bazanian aesthetics and realism as Bazin had conceived it. However, what is demonstrated in the detailed analysis of individual films presented in Chapters 3-7, is a unique 'space'/practice that developed out of the tension of conflicting influences.

La Salamandre (1971) is the first of Tanner's films to be overtly influenced by radical film theory of the post -'68 period. We have outlined in Chapter 2 the broad lines of the debt of La Salamandre to the realist tradition and the chief differences between them. This chapter principally considers the film in the light of post-'68 perspectives. May '68 was fundamentally about contestation; the movement called into question the social, political and cultural structures of society; it set out to expose the functions and workings of dominant ideology, which created apparent coherence and apparent social consensus; it also explored ways in which opposition was neutralised. There was a great stress on language in the May movement and the unmasking of ideological strategies actually within language. Ideological connotations were seen to contaminate existing 'languages', e.g. that of the cinema. Critical debates about the cinema were focussed in May and in June 1968 on the Estates General of the Cinema, a body which was set up to debate cinematic issues. The Estates General of the Cinema offered a series of radical objections to the existing system in cinema and suggestions for alternatives; in effect it produced a critique of existing practices. The cinema was seen to be bound up with the ruling class in terms of both profit and in the

ideology it diffused. Film makers in the wake of the flowering of ideas in May and June 1968 were left to work out ways in which the cinema could be seized for the benefit of the working class.

In film journals, particularly in Cahiers du cinéma and Cinéthique, the repercussions for film and film theory were explored and discussed. What is important for present purposes is that the theories propounded in the pages of these journals during the immediate post-'68 period obviously had a considerable influence on Alain Tanner's work. Cinéthique first appeared in January 1968. It tended to denounce mainstream cinema, focussing on the experimental avant-garde with its broadly modernist aesthetics. Cahiers in 1968 was working also on questions relating to what was termed parallel cinema, i.e. the work of film groups outside existing structures, and with their own distribution circuits. Many such radical groups emerged, the best known being the Dziga Vertov group, which aimed to change the relation between audience and film, between what had been 'consumer' and 'product', and which offered engagé films for the far left. Cahiers du cinéma also included at this time critical work on American film, work on Lacanian psychoanalytical theories as related to film and, most pertinent for the present study, Comolli and Narboni's influential work 'Cinéma/Idéologie/Critique' published in the autumn of 1969[1]. The core assumptions of this text were that a film should be considered as an aspect of ideology, as a vehicle for expressing dominant social systems of values and beliefs. Comolli proposed a number of categories of films, as a tool for criticism of the kind he proposed. The central question was, which films allow the ideology a free and unhindered passage, and which attempt to make it turn back and reflect on itself, intercept it and make it visible by revealing its mechanisms. It is worth quoting the seven types of films that he distinguishes:-

(a) films that are 'imbued with the dominant ideology through and through, in pure and unadulterated form'[2].

(b) films which 'attack their ideological assimilation on two fronts'; these both 'deal with a directly political subject' and are involved in the process of 'breaking down the traditional ways of depicting reality'.

(c) films in which 'the content is not explicitly political, but in some way becomes so through the criticism practised on it through its form'; Comolli cites here certain experimental films which operate the principle of self-reflexiveness, of reflecting back on, and making explicit, their own devices for producing meaning.

(d)   films which have 'an explicitly political content ... but which do not effectively criticise the ideological system in which they are embedded because they unquestioningly adopt its language and its imagery'. (An example usually cited is that of Costa Gavros' film "Z", made in 1969.)

(e) films that seem at first sight to be caught up in the dominant ideology, but which reveal, on closer inspection, that an 'internal criticism is taking place which cracks the film apart at the seams'. This is the case with many Hollywood films which, while being completely integrated in the system and the ideology, end up by partially dismantling the system from within. It is here that some popular mainstream works could be considered. It was for example as a category (e) film that Cahiers offered an analysis of Ford's Young Mr. Lincoln in August 1970[3].

(f)   films which use Cinéma Vérité techniques and are based on actual political events, but which, like category (d), 'don't challenge the cinema's traditional, ideologically-conditioned method of "depiction"'.

(g) films that use Cinema Vérité techniques and are based on
actual political events, but which also operate critically at the level
of their form, and call into question the conventions of documentary
film.

The Central notion underlying this work is the idea that the
formal devices of a film are a fundamentally important consideration in
the issue of whether a film questions or merely relays dominant
ideology. C. Zimmer in his book Cinéma et Politique raises, as a
central issue, the question of whether to film something different, or
to film it differently[4]. Comolli concludes that certain formal
experimentation facilitates the critique of dominant ideology. This
work was published in conjunction with other articles by Comolli[5] and
by Beaudry[6] highlighting the ideological implications of the basic
cinema apparatus itself. The magazine Cahiers, after a ferment about
its general editorial direction, adopted Comolli's approach as its
mainspring, thus re-raising central issues pertaining to radical
aesthetics that had been under discussion for most of the century.

The sort of film that was chiefly under attack from Comolli was
category (a), a category called 'the classic Hollywood cinema', that
follows roughly a general pattern. It poses as entertainment,
'innocent fun', devoid of ideological importance and weight. It
radiates to a soporific audience in a dark and relaxed atmosphere,
involving its audience/consumers vicariously by various formulae; there
is a narrative form that guarantees interest, with a tight knit
structure of exposition, complication, dénoument, and a closed ending
where all loose ends are tied up. As Metz says 'the process of
narration is masked in favour of emphasing the story'[7]. This cinema
employs a camera whose use is masked, and deep focus and invisible
editing aid the cause of 'realism'; narrative flow is smooth. The
music is affective and underlines the story. The audience watches a

story, the work behind which is rendered invisible. Identification with characters is also facilitated, thus increasing the level of vicarious involvement.

Cinéthique, also a journal with a Marxist perspective, can be considered along with Cahiers du cinéma to be part of the background to Tanner's work. Cinéthique, as we have said, turned away from mainstream cinema and advocated as the only acceptable approach, an avant-garde cinema, a cinema with a modernist aesthetic. This cinema would deny the illusion of reality, would explore and declare its own devices, drawing attention to itself as an artefact, and would promote active work and participation by the audience. In issue number five in September 1969, Cinéthique explored the question of the relationship between cinema and politics, specifically taking up the concepts and vocabulary of Althusserian Marxism. Of the four practices that, from Althusser, the social formation was said to be made up of (namely economic, political, ideological and theoretical), it is argued in this issue of Cinéthique that cinema is in the realm of ideological practice, producing existing ideologies and generating an ideology of its own, namely the 'impression of reality'. As Farguier argues 'the cinema produces its own ideology: the impression of reality. There is nothing on the screen, only reflections and shadows and yet the first idea the audience gets is that reality is there, as it really is'[8]. A cinema that first produces knowledge about the cinema, and secondly about the world, is argued in this issue of Cinéthique to be the route to combat the 'impression of reality'. Such a cinema it is argued can move from the realm of ideological practice to the realm of 'theoretical practice'. For Althusser, 'theoretical practice' was the level at which scientific knowledge could be produced. Modernist/experimental films were hence linked with progressive political perspectives. Cahiers criticised the idea that cinema could

produce scientific knowledge but was in agreement with the idea that cinema was an ideological product and generally represented an instrument of ruling ideas.

The focus of interest of the journals was firmly on the question of how to theorise and to create a radical, progressive approach to cinema. There was a surge of interest in publishing and examining the debates of Russian aesthetics of the post-revolutionary period. One of the central arguments in the debate in Russia had been on the question of the use of old artistic forms (with a 'new' message) to make contact with the working class, versus the use of new, experimental forms to express the new reality. The Russian debate had also been about changing the relationship between art work and spectator. The idea of an art work having a single point of view was also questioned; it was argued that there might be a number of points of view , and that the audience could engage in the work of deciphering these points of view. The French journals of the post-'68 period also took an interest in the ideas of the Cubist painters. These painters had aimed in their work to make explicit the work that had gone into the creation of a painting, to make apparent the devices of painting, to undermine the spatial illusion of post-Renaissance art, and to go beyond a single point perspective. Magazines such as Cahiers and Cinéthique promoted the discussion of these ideas and praised the work of directors such as Straub and Godard who they saw as making a contribution in cinema to the modernist project.

Although Tanner makes no mention at this early stage in his career (1972),of influence by Comolli and Cahiers or the work in Cinéthique many of his statements concerning La Salamandre point to a desire for a radical approach to film and film forms, e.g. work on the relationship between film and spectator, distanciation, and undermining of conventional narrative practice. He quite clearly indicates that the

work to be done is on the language of cinema 'La réflexion doit se
faire au départ sur le langage. Inévitablement en travaillant sur le
langage on touche au contenu ... le langage c'est le contenu'[9].
Clearly, such theory is very much of its time. In fact, however,
during the analysis of the film that this chapter presents, a gap is
seen to emerge between Tanner's theoretic formulations with regard to
the film, and the actual resulting artefact on the screen. The
analysis of the film has been attempted with the twin polarities in
mind, of 'classic Hollywood' cinema and radical formalist practices
and with a view also to situating the film vis à vis Comolli's seven
categories of film.

Narrative Form

In order to look closely at the narrative form of La Salamandre,
it will be useful to use as a reference point the 'classic' style of
cinema narration, against which the narrative form of the film can be
measured. A narrative is usually defined as a chain of events in a
cause-effect relationship, that occur in time; story is defined as the
events that occur, in chronological order, their duration and
frequency; plot, as the temporal order, duration and frequency of the
events in the actual film. This may clearly be quite different from
story. Most usually plot condenses story time via ellipsis, and very
often alters order, duration and frequency. Of the possible styles of
narrative, the classic Hollywood cinema has been the dominant one. It
generally has a structure that is guided according to classical
dramatic principles, i.e. a dynamic curve of rising and falling action.
It has an exposition, complication, climax and dénoument. As Bordwell
points out, 'individual characters are the causal agents, often desire
for something gets the narrative going, and opposition to this creates
conflict'[10]. Most importantly, the narrative is 'tight' and
'economical'. The cause-effect chain is the dominant feature, time,

chronology and space being made to serve it. This is a narrative form that guarantees interest, it captures the audience. The story seems to tell itself, each scene advances the narrative and hooks neatly into the next.   Vicarious involvement is ensured.   As already mentioned, Metz has pointed out that the actual process of narration, the work, is hidden, in favour of emphasing the story. This sort of film is geared supremely to the narrative function; the test of this is that what most people retain of these films after the viewing, is the plot and a few images. This sort of film clearly discourages scrutiny of the shot for its own sake. Endings are closed in this style, and loose threads are tied up.

It has been claimed that the 'modern' film has developed beyond narrative, which was the hallmark of Hollywood. In 'the Modern Cinema and Narrativity'[11] Metz examines the terms used to categorize modern cinema, e.g. 'death of the spectacle', 'cinema of non dramatisation', 'of improvisation' etc., but he finally denies the anti-narrative myth, claiming that cinema narrative has been enriched by its new flexibility and freedom. In this essay he argues that modern film makers are not destroying the syntax, but are discovering new syntactic possibilities. The old normative laws pertaining to narrative are simply no longer necessarily adhered to. The question to pose for the narrative of La Salamandre, as indicated before, is how it is to be situated with reference to the twin poles of firstly normative classical rules, and secondly to the 'modern' narrative syntax which Metz argues characterises good modern work. In an attempt to formulate an initial description of the narrative of the film and to answer provisionally the latter question, a syntagmatic analysis of the film has been made, based on the eight syntagmatic types isolated by Metz in his essay 'Problems of Denotion in the Fiction Film'[12] and applied in an analysis to the film Adieu Phillipine[13]. This tool of analysis has

been chosen for several reasons as being a suitable one. As a cinema semiotician, Metz made exact and rigorous studies of cinema language in the late '60s, investigating closely small areas of cinematic practice. He isolated and scrutinised the codes of cinema, i.e. the rules in cinema whereby messages are transmitted. He particularly focussed attention on the codes of the conventional narrative film in the period between 1933 and 1955. Metz's work formed part of the move to replace Bazanian aesthetics with a materialist structuralist outlook, and during this part of his career he became aware of the political implications of the choice of codes in conventional narrative cinema. Semiotics was, in effect, a tool for exploring past usage thoroughly, and thus provided a basis on which to build a new cinema. (Noel Burch's well known book Theory of Film Practice[14] was an examination of the possible articulations of cinema, and the narrow band of usage actually found in conventional film making. Burch also speculates in this book about the political implications of this 'restricted' practice. Theory of Film Practice is a book very much in the manner and spirit of semiotics.)

The eight major possible syntagmatic types isolated by Metz are the autonomous shot (with subtypes of the sequence shot and four kinds of insert, parallel syntagma, bracket syntagma, descriptive syntagma, alternate syntagma, scene, episodic sequence and ordinary sequence. These syntagmatic types have been expressed diagramatically by Metz as illustrated overleaf[15].

A Syntagmatic Analysis

The narrative of La Salamandre looked at in this light and presented in note form is as follows. The numbers refer to the elements of the film isolated in the narrative diagram in the Appendix.

Autonomous segments
— 1 Autonomous shot (5 subtypes)
— Syntagmas
    — A Chronological syntagmas
        — 2 Parallel syntagma
        — 3 Bracket syntagma
    — Chronological syntagmas
        — 4 Descriptive syntagma
        — Narrative Type syntagmas
            — 5 Alternate (narrative) syntagma
            — linear narrative syntagmas
                — 6 Scene
                — Sequence
                    — 7 Episodic sequence
                    — 8 Ordinary Sequence
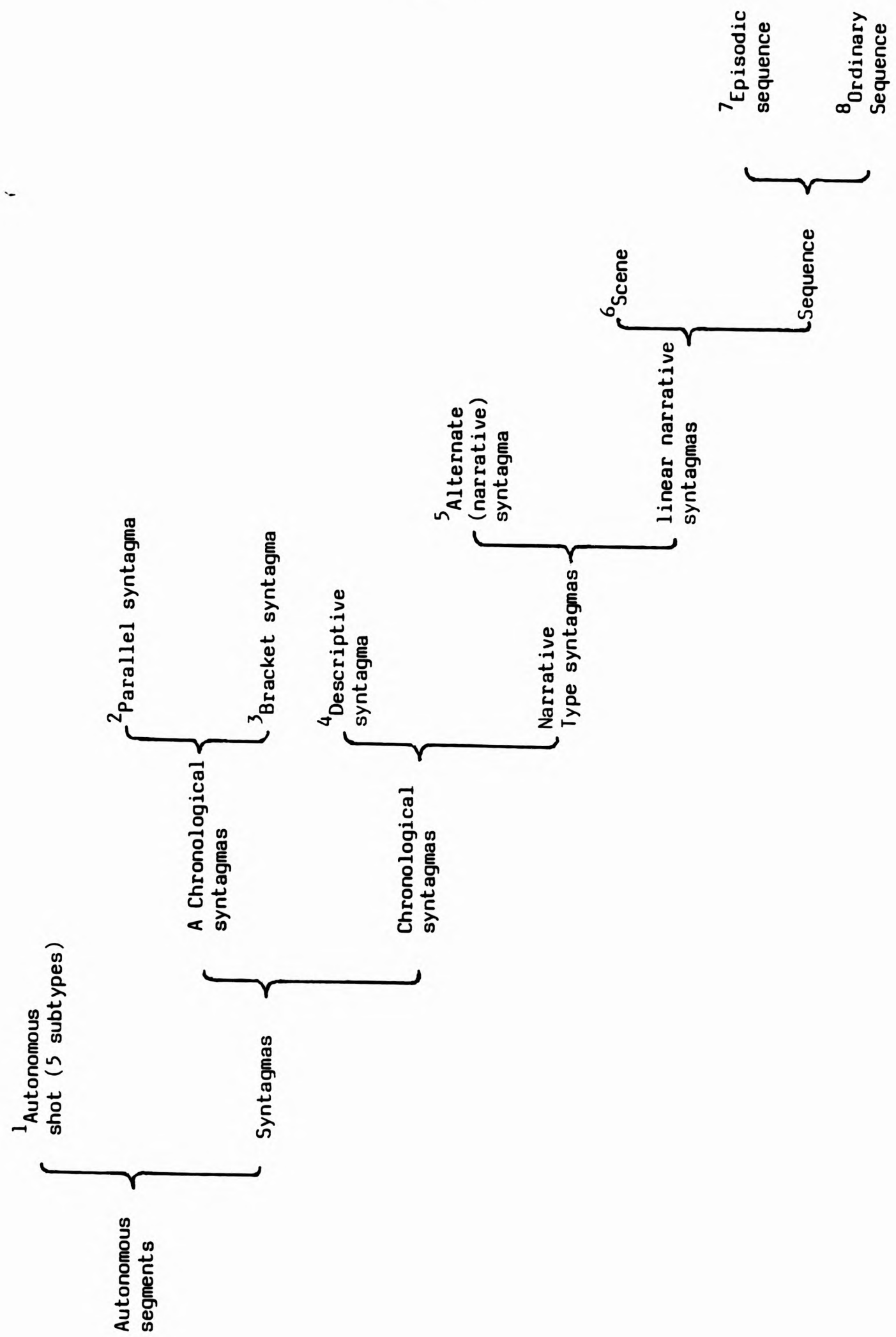
ordinary sequence (1 and 2)

    1) The shooting

    2) Rosemonde walking (credits)

Two elements clearly linked, in fact a motif used again and again in the film, action (by R.)/liberation effect.

scene (3) takes place at Pierre's house. Space and time have no flaws. Near to a theatre scene. A unit, a moment in time. Hence scene.

ordinary sequence (4) There is a temporal break. Ellipsis in the telephone conversation. In fact, all we hear of the conversation is a concluding sentence, with a shot of Pierre, inserted into a unit dealing with Paul.

ordinary sequence (5 and 6) Paul saying goodbye. Travelling location (a), location (b). There is a unity of action, though none of place, therefore, sequence rather than scene. It should be pointed out that already two areas of doubt emerge from the use of the eight types:-

    (a) There is often some degree of difficulty in deciding between the two types of sequence when using Metz' definitions - i.e. episodic sequence is a fairly long evolution that is condensed. Ordinary sequence, a shorter one. The demarcation point is difficult to decide on. In addition, the notion of the 'symbolic summary of one stage' (i.e. a pointer to an episodic sequence) does not always entail a straightforward decision.

    (b) It seems to me that there is also a major problem of where to demark the beginnings and ends of the syntagmas e.g. whether 4, 5 and 6 = 1 sequence, or just 5 and 6. 5 and 6 are linked by music. 7, I take to be a separate syntagma as it is more fully developed, i.e. longer, and does of course constitute in itself a scene proper, in Metz's sense. In saying this however, one is aware that it is semantically linked with 5 and 6. One notes also that the music which linked 5 and 6 fades before the beginning of 7, thus underlining the fact it is a

separate syntagma. Also the commentary after 6 gives an air of rounding off that syntagma.

<u>Scene</u> (7) The two men discussing the project, unity of place and time.

<u>Scene</u> (8) Obviously a new syntagma. Indeed, one of the few examples in the film of what Metz terms 'montage with effect'. This syntagma appears to me to act as a displaced diegetic insert, but this is ruled out by the fact it is composed of several shots. It could also be said to have the flavour of an explanatory insert. It hightlights the 'subject' of the film, as the two men are discussing her.

<u>Scene</u> (9) Some time has elapsed (over coffee) and a decision has been reached by Paul. A further discussion ensues.

<u>ordinary sequence</u> (10, 11, 12, 13) Some difficulty in deciding on the type of sequence but it is a sequence. It has an 'introduction' (provided by the Commentary) 'Pierre devait trouver Rosemonde avant toutes choses'. It is obviously elliptical, containing short little sections that form part of a longer search.

<u>scene</u> (14) Rosemonde and Roger at the pool. This is very common in the film, the habit of flicking across to the 'other' protagonist. Here in fact, Pierre is waiting for Rosemonde.

<u>scene</u> (15) Whilst this is short, it has the features of a theatre scene. I do not take it to be part of the preceding sequence (10-13).

<u>scene</u> (16) A problem arises here due to the 'flaw' a 'few moments later ...'. One is tempted to think of this as a scene, but this temporal flaw apparently obviates it. It is 'more than a simple camera break', therefore sequence?

<u>scene</u> (17) Pierre interviews uncle of Rosemonde i.e. he is now pursuing his journalistic researches. This notion provides the next broad 'flow' of the narrative although it seems to me that it is a section larger than the 'large' syntagmas? (It is paralleled of course in the structure with the different kind of 'search' by Paul.)

scene (18) Another of the few examples of 'montage with effect'. I am uncertain if a zoom represents a 'flaw'. I see this basically, as two shots, and call it a scene (i.e. no flaw). It is however inserted into the broad flow of Pierre's search, in order to keep the other character, and way of going about things, in mind. It is, fairly startlingly, linked however with the previous scene by the commentary.

episodic sequence (19-22 inc.) There are four 'episodes' in this portion of narrative. There is a distinct condensing of diegetic time.

scene (23) narrative focus has again shifted to give a glimpse of Paul.

scene (24) Rosemonde enters from work.

autonomous shot (25) of Rosemonde in the factory. I lean towards its being, in a sense, an explanatory insert. It does explain the need for Rosemonde's action in the previous scene.

ordinary sequence (26, 27, 29). One would like to include 29 in this, even though 28, in a scene of Paul, is intercut. One would like to refer to there being two sequences interlaced - the less dominant being that of Paul, indeed the two scenes of Paul serving only as reminders of him and his approach to the project, whilst we concentrate on Pierre. The question of whether this group of scenes constitute an alternate syntagma has been considered, but there is not strict similtaneity between the two series. And the 'Paul series' is very much less developed ... a 'reminder' simply.

ordinary sequence (28 & 30)

scene (31) Rosemonde and Pierre - recording

episodic sequence (32, 33, 34) I term it this because it is organised into distinct sub groupings. Rosemonde leaves factory/Rosemonde walks free/Rosemonde swimming.

ordinary sequence (35) I would opt to treat 35 as a new syntagma, since the previous few scenes show Rosemonde alone, and constitute a familiar 'cycle'. Also 35 is far more well developed. It cannot be

called a scene, since there is a time ellipsis, screentime is far shorter than the time Rosemonde waits (several hours). There are markers of the shift in time such as 'il fait nuit noire'. Also the commentary indicates the passage of time. Due to the fact this sequence has unity of action and place, it does have however very much the flavour of a scene.

scene (36) Paul finds Rosemone with Pierre.

autonomous segment (37) Paul writing. This obviously stands on its own. It has only one shot, conveying an 'episode' of the plot; it does not appear to be an insert, so I would have to call it a sequence shot, though being aware it is unlike the sequence shots of most modern cinema.

scene (38, 39)

episodic sequence (40, 41) There is some overlap between the syntagmas here I think. The last shot of the previous syntagma constituting the first of this sequence, which is a sequence devoted to Paul's enforced 'search' for Rosemonde.

scene (42) I take this to be a separate scene, as a new person is introduced.

autonomous shot (43) Presume a zoom, since there is no cut, puts this shot into the realms of the sequence shot, relying on camera movement rather than the cut. It must be said that the device seems ill fitting and 'flashy' in the overall texture of the film.

scene (44) Here I think there is again an overlap. The last few sentences of the dialogue belonging to the next sequence.

ordinary sequence (45) again a difficulty - episodic or ordinary? I opt for the latter, as we have a succession of shots, not organised into very distinct sub groupings. The sequence could be entitled 'journey to the country'.

<u>episodic sequence</u> (46 - 52) The demarcation point between the two sequences is difficult to determine but I opt for a new sequence starting with the hotel room (46) and going through Pauls day-long search, to his return to the hotel. The episodes are very brief and the composition is very clear. There is one autonomous shot of Pierre inserted into the sequence (49). The commentary is used in this sequence three times, amplifying points. The autonomous shot is presumed to be roughly simultaneous with the action of Paul in (48), yet it does not qualify to be an alternate syntagma. I would term it a 'displaced diegetic insert'.

<u>scene</u> (53) Seems to act like an insert, but it comprises several shots i.e. scene - no relation to other material. A weak addition? (no diegetic breaks)

<u>scene</u> (54)

<u>scene</u> (55)

<u>scene</u> (56)

<u>episodic sequence</u> (57) several 'moments' in the action, time jumps.

<u>episodic sequence</u> (58) Rosemonde talking - failure. Paul and Pierre in the tram, the Arab incident. A shot of tram. These elements can be broadly linked under 'admission of failure'.

<u>scene</u> (59)

<u>scene</u> (60)

<u>scene</u> (61) Roger

<u>scene</u> (62)

<u>scene</u> (63) This is fairly extended and developed, therefore a scene on its own.

<u>episodic sequence</u> (64, 65, 66, 67 and 68). I take it as a sequence, rather than as separate scenes because they are closely linked and because of their brevity. This is a question that the whole film poses more or less. One is generally tempted (logically) to link certain

groups of scenes together, but it is a feature of the film that even some of Tanner's scenes per se are not long by usual standards (a distinct facet of his intentions).

scene (69)

scene (70) Pierre and Rosemonde in shoeshop (later that day?). Too developed to form part of above ordinary sequence.

scene (71)

ordinary sequence (71, 72 and 73)

episodic sequence (74)

SUMMARY

SCENES	ORDINARY SEQUENCES	EPISODIC SEQUENCES	AUTONOMOUS SHOTS
21	9	8	3

(almost all are linear narrative syntagmas of course.)

Metz's model for the analysis of the large syntagmas was applied to La Salamandre in order to crystallise and particularise certain existing intuitive and loose notions about the narrative structure of the film. This sort of analysis rests of course, as Metz points out, on the assumption that the choice of large syntagmas relates directly to stylistic choices, given it must be added, certain reservations relating to frequency of occurrence of the different types at the time. It is immediately noticeable that Tanner uses scenes and sequences for the greater part of the film. Very occasionally, some sequences have an alternate syntagma 'flavour' about them, a certain embedding quality of one set of material within a broad band of other material, but it was decided in the end against terming these alternate syntagmas. There are virtually no other syntagmatic figures in the film (with the exception of one displaced diegetic insert and one explanatory insert), and virtually no use of the sequence shot much favoured by Tanner in later films. So, almost exclusively, Tanner is using types that are

intrinsically common, corresponding to a simple cinematographic presentation of the plot. The criteria of 'originality', 'flexibility' and freedom of combination of syntagmas, that Metz isolated as a chief facet of modern cinema, are not very evident in this film. This might be due to a very restricted shooting budget (that precluded for example many travelling shots on rails), and the fact that this film belongs very much to Tanner's early and hence more conventional work. Perhaps more importantly it is due to the fact that the emphasis of the film is on talk, dialogue, on the verbal element rather than the visual. (This is a preference of Tanner's at this stage, even though lack of money induced this bias.) This would account for the fact we have many scenes, which are the main feature of the film, and which are clearly that figure that is best suited to dialogue. And indeed, in the sequences also, one is very aware of chiefly watching verbal encounters. The story is straightforwardly told, linear, and can be seen to proceed in broad groups of scenes and sequences, containing perhaps the notion of a search for truth, e.g. Pierre's search for the truth, Paul's search, the three in the country and so on.

The film does not therefore appear to use the flexibility and freedom that is, according to Metz, open to exponents of modern narrative. However, there is much that is interesting about the narrative of La Salamandre, and much that undermines, denies or subverts the more classical rules of narrative. One such noticeable subversion is the calling of attention, to some extent, to the process of narration itself, rather than masking it. The chief means of effecting this is a spoken voice over commentary. This is a guiding consciousness that fills in information, aids the flow of the story, offers didactic/political observations, and provides a commentary on the action of the film. It also offers a commentary in a sense on commentaries, and on narratives in films. Attention is focussed on the

fact that a story is being told by someone. It is an artefact. We are not invited to lose ourselves in it as in 'reality'. As it is Tanner's story, one wonders why the commentary could not have been made by Tanner himself, thus going one step further in the unmasking of the origin and art of storytelling. (A more extensive discussion of the use of the commentary is givenlater in this chapter.)

Another way of drawing attention to narrative strategies is the self-conscious mixing of genres that Tanner performs. Genres have their own, well known, and tight narrative strategies, and the play with them draws attention to narrative devices. Tanner highlights the detective or thriller strategies by showing first the 'crime' and by using cinematic means, to obscure who actually committed it. The opening sequence of violence and agony is a total red herring within the context of the whole film. Paul does discover during the film that Rosemonde shot her uncle, but this fact is mainly irrelevant. The real quest has been for the understanding of a person, and the attempt to fix this into a script. The detective story is effectively parodied in the sequence opening with the words 'Pierre mena l'enquête tambour battant'; we then have a series of brief little scenes of agitated movement, telephone calls, people being questioned. These short scenes are all smoothed together and made fluid with the aid of suitable film music. The frenzy of activity and Pierre's actual clumsiness as a detective contribute to the send up. In addition to the thriller or detective genre, there are hints in the film of other genres, such as the musical and the farce.

The shape of the narrative is not that of conventional exposition/complication/climax/dénoument. Such a formulation appears to be relatively unhelpful with regard to La Salamandre. A situation is certainly set up at the beginning of the film, an aim is declared on the part of the two men, they encounter difficulties, but to talk of

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'climax' and 'denoument' is fairly irrelevant. The ending of the film is also unconventional in that it is open. There is a moment in time when the two men admit failure in their task, but the whole development of the film is the development of their relations with Rosemonde, their 'education' by her, and hers by them. By the end of the film there has been a development of understanding in Rosemonde; she tackles her last employer differently and more confidently than the first; she has learned who are her enemies and her revolt should be wiser and cooler in future. The last shot of the film noticeably does not have 'fin' appended to it. The chain of events is not closed but very much open.

The conventional narrative, as already indicated, is made up of a 'tight' and economical cause and effect chain, time and space being made to serve it. The most notable and interesting feature of this film's narrative is the liberties it takes on occasion with the cause-effect chain. Whilst most of the film follows the cause-effect pattern, Tanner injects a fair amount of material that could be said to be 'unmotivated' in the narrative sense. The narrative is loose at times and criteria of economy and tightness do not apply to it. This unmotivated material frustrates the usual urge for tight causal connection and this is most often termed a deficiency by the critics who normally review mainstream cinema. One thinks here of the injection of the Défense Spirituelle scene, the tramway 'Turk' scene, the lecturing of the bureaucrat about the man who invented the bevelled effect on the mayonnaise tube, Paul's songs, and Vladimir and his cello. Most of these elements contribute in important ways to the wider panorama of society and Tanner's wider messages, social and political, but some are in pure gay, freewheeling spirit. Yet this 'added' material cannot detract from the fact that the story is a very important factor in this film. Tanner indicates this directly, 'la technique était délibérement sacrificiée au profit du déroulement de

l'histoire, des personnages, du travail avec les acteurs'[16]. We do want to know what happens to the three. The looseness and freedom of the incursions into the story proper, may in fact be a formal parallel to Tanner's thematic celebration in the film of spontaneity in a narrow reactionary Swiss society. One thinks of Paul's bursts into song, of Rosemonde's sudden challenges to that ordered and circumscribed society. These incursions may also mirror the whole idea in the film itself, of the futility of trying to fit reality into a tight and neat text - a mistake that Pierre and Paul discover. It can be argued therefore, that in a narrative of this looser kind, there is a greater realism and truth. Reality sprawls, and ovespills the narratives that are made for it. Narrative characteristics such as these recall neo-realist practice and point to the legacy of neo-realism that one can detect in the films of Alain Tanner.

It is noticeable that the apparent lack of economy and tightness has contributed to many critics' claim that the whole film is too long (one hundred and twenty nine minutes); Derek Malcolm says 'it is certainly too long - one feels that Mr. Tanner has no idea where to end not only the film but each scene. It is so relaxed in style that its dramatic structure suffers, sometimes at the very points where its informality charms'[17]. 'A very long slow haul', claims Russell Taylor[18], 'undoubtedly too long, sagging badly in the middle when overt didacticism creeps in, with the Heine quote and Paul's lecture on the salamander, picking up almost too late with the shoe shop scenes', comments Nigel Andrews[19].

The one hundred and twenty nine minutes of film time is obviously a compression of story time. The crime takes place at an unspecified date a few years earlier, then the main action takes place between clearly defined time boundaries - the 25th October when Paul cycles to Pierre, and Christmas shopping time. The commentary actually dates

certain events within this period for us although it does so in an erratic fashion. These months are compressed into one hundred and twenty nine minutes, but the ellipsis is often not smoothed over. There is one particularly bold and very noticeable ellipsis; a jump from a scene in the country, to suddenly back in Geneva. We are not very sure how much time has elapsed and the jump is entirely unsmooth. We would not expect to notice the 'jumps' in a more conventional film. Only once does film time exceed story time - a slow motion study of Rosemonde as she walks down a street of Christmas shoppers at the end of the film.

Thus it can be seen that Tanner's narrative, although fairly simple and straightforward, does raise interesting issues about narrativity, and does, in a modest way, attempt to undermine the notion of a more conventional and 'innocent' narrative form.

Editing practice

The 'chopped up', fragmented sort of narrative that Tanner gives us in this film points by implication to the director's concern with montage. Tanner indeed accords montage prime importance, 'je ne suis pas un plasticien, je ne travaille pas dans l'espace, à l'intérieur d'un plan, ce qui m'intéresse surtout ce sont les rapports entre les plans'[20]. He claims that, given the fact that he has a general horror of 'realism' (by which he means conventional mainstream practice), montage is one of the factors used to unseat the flavour of too much 'realism' in the film.

> On a parfois l'impression d'être tout a fait proche d'une réalité, par la dialogue, la façon d'être des gens, et puis, une seconde après, par le montage tout a changé. C'est la force du cinéma que j'utilise. Je fais donc un semblant de réalité et puis, par l'humour, le commentaire off, je décolle. En même temps cela me permet d'accrocher constamment le spectateur car avec ce procédé de ruptures, il doit toujours faire un effort pour se mettre en selle.[21]

And in an interview with <u>Positif</u> he speaks of his relations with the spectator, 'ces relations supposent une définition adéquate du langage à utiliser pour présenter l'idée au public; j'ai une histoire comme celle de <u>La Salamandre</u>, et je la casse en morceaux pour la montrer au deuxième degré, pour en faire découvrir les facettes. Voilà à quelle niveau se situent les relations avec un spectateur éventuel'[22].

Close inspection of the film in fact reveals that Tanner's comments often indicate desires that are somewhat theoretic. They bear more relation in practice to later films than to <u>La Salamandre</u>. Much of the editing is fairly conventional. Assessed in Metz's terms, much of the montage would have to be termed 'ordinary montage' rather than 'montage with effect'[23], and while this classification is very general, it is clear what Metz means. Many of the cuts between scenes in the film are within the realms of cutting for ease of narrative flow. An example of this is the cut from scene 3-4.(See the analysis of scenes in the Appendix). Paul is introduced in the dialogue of the previous scene ... 'what about your hairy friend Paul?', and the cut takes us to two men painting, one of whom is obviously Paul. The use of dialogue to aid narrative flow over cuts, to introduce the next scene, is quite common in the film, e.g. Susanne suggesting the idea of Rosemonde working in the shoe shop, followed by a cut to Rosemonde actually in the shop. This cut is very little noticeable as a cut, since the narrative flows smoothly. A similar example is the flow between Roger stealing the keys and Rosemonde being questioned about the robbery. There is a time ellipsis but this is blurred. In addition, it must be said there are a lot of 'sequences', as defined by Metz i.e. groups of scenes that fall under the broad umbrella of one idea/action; we have a series of short scenes, the cuts being de-emphasised, despite the jumps in time and space, for example Paul taking up Pierre's idea of the project, which includes Paul saying

goodbye - Paul travelling - Paul meeting Pierre. Sometimes, positive results in terms of graphic and rhythmic relations between shots are observed. If we look at the cuts within the sequence introduced by the words 'Pierre mena l'enquête tambour battant', the rapidity and jerkiness of the cuts, together with changes in screen direction and a great deal of movement within the frame, provide a fast, exciting and disorientating effect, in keeping with the parody implied on 'detective' work, and on the genre of the thriller. These scenes also provide a contrast with the lengthy and static dialogue scenes that preceded them.

The cut between scenes 1 and 2 is an interesting one, and could be seen to be a curious mixture of a type of eyeline match (Rosemonde's eyes darting towards the door and escape, cut to Rosemonde walking freely by the river), together with less conventional and interesting elements. Graphic elements are contrasted, e.g. the close-up of a static Rosemonde set against a full length tracking shot of Rosemonde walking. The 'free' air of her action is mirrored in the direction and flow of the river, a motif that is used in other places in the film. Rhythmically, the two shots contrast effectively - a short fleeting glimpse of the face balanced against a long flowing tracking shot which is continued for some time. Add to this that the music 'bleeds' over the cut from scenes 1-2, as it does over many other pairs of scenes, thus linking the two shots rather than causing an abrasive rub between them, and de-emphasing the cut. Here I would suggest that we have a curious mixture of the creative and the more conventional in terms of montage. Throughout the film, music creates unexpected links between scenes. The commentary also at times serves to blur over the editing. A further and more conventional feature of Tanner's montage is his use of a kind of parallel editing; thus when the focus of the story is on Pierre's journalistic search, shots of Paul are intercut, e.g. we cut

from the interview of the uncle by Pierre, to Paul and his daughter by the river watching a train go by. This maybe seen as a kind of parallel editing, yet again, it is not simply this. Other interesting features of the cut emerge. A river has already been established as a motif of freedom used in conjunction with Rosemonde), and a train may here be used with the same symbolic implication. Both are associated with fairly positive movement across screen. In this pair of scenes we hear about Rosemonde's rebellion, then we see the strong movement of the train. (In scenes 1 and 2 we see a rebellion, then movement/freedom). Strangely enough, the commentary 'covers' the work of the actual cut since it gives us an odd linking idea between the two scenes, namely the wind. Despite the fact that the wind hurts his injured shoulder, Paul likes it, we are told. And the implication presumably is that Paul, being a freer, more spontaneous spirit, would like the wind which is often a symbol of freedom from restraint. Possibly built into the cut is also the suggested contrast in parental affection between the landlady's comment 'we treated her like a daughter' and the quiet and real companionship and affection implied between Paul and his daughter.

There are plenty of other examples of editing of a conventional parallel kind, which have however many aspects which are subtle and challenging to the viewer. Into Pierre's search for facts is intercut scene 23, a scene of Paul and his family. Via dialogue, the imaginative writer's approach to his project is contrasted to the journalistic one being practiced by Pierre. The cut between scene 27 and scene 28 serves to underline the same contrast. Again the commentary links these two scenes even more closely than the visuals could have done, and it stresses that Paul is actually writing a version, an interpretation of what Rosemonde is at that moment saying to Pierre. Hence the superiority of Paul's approach is implied. It is noticeable that the interior cutting of these scenes, (in which the focus is placed on

Rosemonde rather than on Pierre) actually works with the intercuts of Paul, in a way that serves to relate Rosemonde to Paul. Hence, editing of an apparently conventional type is actually quietly original, and demands intelligent participation on the part of the spectator. The first cut to Rosemonde in the factory, is quite startling, yet it is conventionally introduced. 'Where is the reality in all that?' asks Pierre, Paul having offered a brief history of Rosemonde as he already can imagine her. And we cut straight to the 'reality' herself, i.e. Rosemonde; this is a reality that ultimately will defy pinning down by either of them and being frozen into a TV script. We have in this cut an immense contrast in terms of sound; 'intellectual' discussion in peace and quiet, versus horrible factory noise and a bored, dull and rebellious face. The duration of the latter shot contributes to Tanner's criticism of that awful human exploitation. In the film there are several sudden cuts to Rosemonde at work, and a motif is set up of work followed by violent action or movement and liberation. In this way the drudgery is dispelled, e.g. the sudden plunge into the pool at the beginning of scene 14. This is a very effective cut. The same is true of the cut from scenes 32-33. We have static drudgery, then rebellion and movement, in this case fast walking along the river, reminiscent of the cut between scenes 1 and 2. On another occasion, we cut from work to a frenetic head shaking to loud pop music, another form of energetic throwing off of constraints. Pop 'noise' contrasts with, and replaces, factory noise. Tanner has Suzanne turn off the music and Rosemonde shakes her head in silence. It is significant that work gains the ascendancy in a sense in the end, as this silence is then replaced by factory noise again. Tanner thus captures the remorseless drudgery of the daily cycle. One thinks of the wry Parisian phrase 'metro, boulot, dodo'. Other cuts that may be called striking are, for example, that from scenes 39-40, where we

move from a conversation between Paul and the uncle about Rosemonde's behaviour, to a low angle shot of heaps of rubbish (incidentally, this is a depth shot, which is rare in the film). The commentary explains its origins and implies a criticism of a neat, ordered and sterile Swiss society that battens on migrant labour. Tanner presumably intended to imply by this cut the effectiveness of organised and group action by the working-class in upsetting the comfortable status quo. This is different from Rosemonde's unrationalised, intuitive, solo kicks against the system. Another cut that is worthy of note is in scene 47 to the winter landscape (looking forward perhaps to Le Milieu du monde). Here, Tanner has obviously chosen to draw attention to the harsh winter conditions and lifestyle that force workers to the cities. In cuts such as these, narrative flow is emphatically not the chief aim.

Whilst much of Tanner's cutting between scenes is original and positive, it does appear that his original claims, in 1972, for his achievements in this respect, are perhaps a little optimistic. The dominant 'classical' editing style is still in evidence very often, and the director later concedes that his achievements were more modest in this respect than he had first claimed[24].

Although Tanner does not make the same claims for the editing within scenes, it is relevant to note that much of it is conventional, although some more original patterns are intermingled. The general tone is perhaps set early in the film by the telephone call that acquaints Paul of the TV project, and the elliptical conversation which ensues seems like pure 'Hollywood'. The few lengthy, developed, dialogue scenes seem to be edited more or less according to conventional principles. A breakdown of a typical scene is as follows:

Scene 7 master shot of Pierre (full length)

cutaway to Paul (i.e. goes backwards in time - to 'explain'

retrospectively the knock, in shot 1)

master shot of Pierre

Paul enters the frame

a discussion

close-up of Pierre - he explains project

contechamp Paul (Paul's reaction captured)

close-up Pierre

close-up Paul

close-up Pierre - as he talks

close-up Paul (also as Pierre talks)

close-up Pierre, with wall clipping of Rosemonde behind him

pan across the articles on wall

pan finishes by framing Paul with the picture of 'salamander'.

Paul muses ... Paul moves, looks at calendar

Pierre - the conversation contines

re-establishing shot of the two men in mid-shot

Paul moves back and forth in frame (visual variant therefore,

useful also as symbolic of 'creative process'?)

a close-up of Pierre - at an important moment

Paul enters frame. So the two men are together in close-up

again.

This is fairly conventionally done as regards editing; champ
contre champ, eyeline matches etc. Interest is maintained in character
and 'outcome' i.e. story. Camera movement is minimal: (We note also
the predominance of close-ups - a legacy from television perhaps.)

The cutting of the scene where Rosemonde arrives at Pierre's
house, as he is working on his Brazilian articles, is an example
however of a fairly classical layout mixed with some unexpected

elements.   There is, for example, the sudden cut to the modernist
picture on the wall, (a telling contrast with Rosemonde's Beatles
poster).   And generally, in this scene, the rhythm and the pattern of
the cutting actually work positively to create and emhasise the tension
and humour in the situation. Rosemonde is bored and sets out to seduce
Pierre. Then of course the cut to 'the next morning' is rather a banal
one.   One suspects that this is a tongue in cheek usage of the figure
by Tanner.

Further traditional features that are found in the film's cutting
are cuts on action, match cuts, and a general respect for the 180°   and
30° rules. In terms of chronology, as is usual with Classic Continuity
Editing, events are presented in order, only to be broken by the
conventionally acceptable flashback, and duration of scenes is in
complete continuity. Ellipsis within scenes is used, but is not very
common in this film.

Two scenes that might be cited to show editing that produces very
original effects, are of course those that frame the film, namely
Rosemonde's shooting of her uncle at the beginning, and her liberation
from another sort of oppression at the end. In the first scene, there
are six cuts within a few seconds; this rapid cutting could be said to
capture the outburst of pent up, and in this case, destructive energy
unleashed by Rosemonde. These cuts aid mystery, preventing our
knowledge of whether Rosemonde fired the gun or not, thus conforming to
the evasion of information practiced by the thriller genre.   The
audience is thus put on the same level of information as the two men
for virtually the duration of the film. We see and hear the bullet
being put into the rifle and going off, then Tanner cuts to the rifle
falling to the floor. (It is interesting that film sound only begins
as the gun is loaded; the previous shots of the uncle being silent and
in slow motion, give an eerie quality, a f eₐₗ   that we are only

partly party to what is happening.) When the sound comes in, it emphasises drama and the tone of the thriller. The timing and abruptness of the cuts contribute to the thriller device; the gun is turned on the audience, then Tanner cuts to the loading etc. This is a visual joke that has been seen before in cinema, but is still startling. The slow motion used in this scene gives emphasis to what the uncle is doing, to his agony when shot (aided by the use of extreme close-ups), to the repulsiveness of the writhing grotesque head. The slow motion also distorts the rhythm of the cuts in an unusual way. A static camera and violent movement within frame, serves to disorientate the spectator in space, and to emphasise the violent movement of the uncle. It is noticeable that Tanner uses a camera movement rather than a cut to locate Rosemonde after the shot is fired; a choice that perhaps reflects Tanner's wish to re-orientate the viewer in space now, and also to perhaps implicate Rosemonde in the shooting. The next cut is to Rosemonde walking, the moving camera being in evidence again, thus providing some sort of visual link between these two fragments. The long travelling shot, with the river in the background and flowing the same way, emphasises Rosemonde's freedom; and as a distance shot, it is markedly in contrast to the compelling extreme close-up of the uncle, and with the general jerkiness via cuts etc. of the sequence involving him. The 'Rosemonde' music, or at least the theme that is subsequently identified as such, begins faintly as we see the uncle, and grows lounder and louder to directly emphasise Rosemonde's burst of effort for freedom. It flows over the cuts, creating in a sense a unity, in contrast to the cuts.

In the last scene of the film, the 180° rule is actually broken, and this in addition to the violent movement of Rosemonde in frame, gives a sense of disorientation to the viewer. Slow motion also contributes to this latter effect. There are in fact in this scene a

number of cuts, but they are not easy to spot, and they are blurred by the general flow of joyous movement that Tanner has created. Rosemonde is almost on a different plane of movement from that of the mundane Christmas shoppers - she appears to swim amongst them, going in the opposite direction. The music very loud; we have in effect, a sense of an ecstasy of youth and rebellious freedom. A slow fade, the only one of its kind in the film, is then used instead of 'FIN'. This in a sense is optimistic, suggesting no ending actually to the Salamander's rebellion, or to her corresponding resilience.

In general, it is clear that there is a gap between Tanner's theoretic statements with regard to montage and the resulting film on the screen. There remains a fairly widespread use of more conventional editing practice. Tolerance and acceptance of experimentation levels in film, obviously alter radically over a decade, but it is relevant to note that critics at the time of the film's release saw its virtues as 'flat ... understated ... solid ... talkative ... emphatically not a film to see in a mood of impatience'[25]. A general consensus is reached on the need for an alert and intelligent spectator which Tanner does himself demand. Nowhere amongst these contemporary assessments is the montage of the film picked out as starting or disturbing in an overt way, which is hardly surprising with the earlier experiments of the French New Wave well in the past. Tanner's general level of experimentation, montage included, is of course to be read against that of Tout va bien, also produced in 1972, against which it pales in this respect.

In Chapter 1 we outlined the links between the realist tradition, a tradition that was transmitted in film via the Italian neo-realists, and the work of Tanner. This chapter, concentrates on looking at La Salamandre in the theoretical perspectives of the post-'68 period. One sees in Tanner's statements about the film, that a central issue for

him was to subvert what he terms 'conventional filmic realism'. It is important here to underline the distinction between the realist tradition, as discussed in Chapter 1, and 'conventional filmic realism', against which the post-'68 theorists were reacting. 'Conventional filmic realism' is category 'a' of Comolli, i.e. the dominant form of film making, whose main criteria were articulated earlier in this chapter. Tanner makes strenuous efforts to subvert this. It is in effect normative 'Hollywood' practice. Its denunciation is more systematic in the director's theorising of Le Milieu du monde when he singles out 'l'effet de réel' as the chief target of his attack. It signifies for him a lack of apparent 'work', a transparency, a set of codes that are essentially 'Hollywood', if a reductive formulation of it.

We have exmained the narrative practices of La Salamandre in this light, i.e. as they subvert conventional, normative practice, and also the editing practice of this film. The argument for subverting conventional practice is that conventional forms are not neutral and that they carry an ideological charge, and that 'realism' can lead to vicarious involvement in the film by the audience, with the inability to separate life outside from what is on the screen.

Tanner formulates, at this stage of his career, the idea that the only way to arrive at Swiss reality is to do this via an apparent contradiction.

> Comment donc filmer la Suisse? Au premier degré c'est impossible. Il faut écarter dix rideaux qui cachent la réalité. Donc regarder ne suffit pas. Pas de psychologie non plus. Pas de décorateur qui fait comme si vous y étiez. Mais justement, le cinéma est l'art du réel. Ce qui ne veut pas dire que l'art, c'est la vie. Plus c'est vrai au cinéma, plus c'est faux; donc plus c'est faux et plus c'est vrai. Alors mélangeons le vrai et le faux, les genres, les tonalités. On approche d'une solution pour filmer la Suisse, derrière ses rideaux. A distance de ces apparences de la vie, les contrastes et les contradictions apparaissent

> mieux ... j'ai horreur de raconter une histoire au
> premier degré, de laisser le spectateur être trompé
> par l'apparence de réalité et donce se couper de
> toute possibilité de reflection.(26)

It is interesting to note in this statement that, whilst Tanner is keen to lay bare the artifice behind what looks real on the screen, he intends to retain a mix of 'vrai' and 'faux'. It might be said however that, taking the film as a whole, 'conventional filmic realism' is less obviously undermined.

Tanner retains a clear groundbase, as in later films, of elements of conventional filmic practice. If one looks at settings in La Salamandre, it is clear that Tanner basically conforms to conventional practice. As it happens, this was a feature that many critics hightlighted at the time of the film's release, a typical comment being that of G. Melly: 'on realistic level, La Salamandre is painstakingly exact; the feel of the city and the surrounding countryside, the girl's shared flat with its Beatles poster, the journalist's room with its poster of Marx, the icy winter landscapes, the small shoe shop, the noisy flyblown café'[27]. Such details as there are of settings are conventionally 'realistic'; they do not flaunt conventional notions of what looks 'real'. Yet, what is noticeable is that the details are sparse. Melly in fact celebrates a 'richness' that is not there. This bareness in the image is something intentional on the part of the director. Tanner states 'Je me méfie beaucoup du pouvoir de l'image, j'essai toujours de simplifier le plus possible cette image pour lui faire dire le moins possible, m'intéressant plutôt aux rapports entre les plans ... je ne suis pas un metteur en scène'[28]. The interest in La Salamandre is in dialogue and characters, not in the settings, which are bare and sparse. Shots in depth are noticeably rare also. This bareness in the image and the 'unpolished' quality of the image indicates a level of relationship with much neo-realist practice.

Characterisation

The obvious centre of La Salamandre is characterisation and dialogue. Via talk, not action, we watch relationships unfolding, questions appertaining to the craft of fiction and reportage discussed and explored, social and political issues thrashed out. Tanner claims that 'le vraisemblable et l'invraisemblable sont étroitement mêlées dans ce film'[29]. Conventional filmic practice generally features reasonably well developed characters, characters who are shown to have individual traits. The characterisation of La Salamandre proves in fact to be an interesting mix of the rounded and the schematic, with the final balance sheet resting very much with the former. (We have already, in Chapter 1, touched upon the issue of the relationship between Tanner's characterisation and that of the neo-realists.

The basis for the film is a three point schema of ideas. We have two different ways of approaching reality and truth - firstly, the journalistic fact finding exercise, without much interpretation of the material, the tape recorder being the chief tool, with patient tracking of the quarry being important. This is Pierre. Secondly we have the imaginative approach, which begins with a few meagre facts, the blank paper and the stylo de luxe, i.e. Paul. The third point of the scheme, the 'reality', which proves finally to be unmalleable into script, is Rosemonde. So, Tanner's two male characters represent ideas, and their interaction is an exploration of the clash of these ideas. The two men are in fact Tanner's autobiographic reflection on his own TV work in the period 1964-68 prior to the making of Charles. They represent two possible parts of himself. 'Les personnages sont un peu les personnages que je voudrais être. J'aimerais bien être comme le journaliste à qui il est indifférent de payer son loyer, comme l'écrivain qui sait réparer un solex ... comme la fille qui a le courage physique de s'en aller sans savoir ce que l'avenir lui

réserve'[30]. Tanner himself moved from documentary to fiction film making and so it is perhaps not surprising that Pierre's approach is shown in a variety of ways to be a limited one. As Tanner says 'en fait je pense qu'il faut partir de la réalité mais la dépasser en mettant à profit les ressources de l'imagination'[31]. Via Pierre, we get a catalogue of facts about Rosemonde, also untruths about her. In one scene we listen as Pierre tapes Rosemonde talking about her past self. The scene is also a potentially useful way for a film maker in fact to give necessary information, a short cut in one sense. Many issues are however raised which question the truth of the information gained; e.g. questions of interviewer/interviewee interaction, the barriers created by role playing and so on. However, while we watch the character Pierre, we realise that we are watching an embodiment of a method; his failings, for example, being significant in a more global sense than the personal. The opposition, in terms of ideas, between Pierre and Paul begins in scene 1 and is developed undoubtedly in a schematic way. Scenes 1 and 2 express the differences in how they survive financially and the relative levels of idealism this implies. In Scene 7, when Tanner brings the two men together, the differences between them are underlined in numerous formal ways, as well as by the dialogue; Paul, with a name 'Rosemonde' in mind, starts a chain of imaginative speculation, concluding that Rosemonde did in fact wound her uncle, and gives a story version that is later found to be actually very near to the truth. This restless and productive imagination is mirrored formally by the camera tracking with Paul as he moves back and forth. Pierre's reply is significant 'un petit problème ... qu'est ce que tu fais de la réalité dans tout ça?' and 'c'est la réalité qui m'intéresse, les choses ... il faut partir de là'[32]. This is the method of a cop according to Paul. It is worth noting that Tanner does also poke gentle fun at Paul (although his viewpoint and values are

endorsed)? at the 'vacant' face, the dreamer, with his 'stylo de luxe' waiting for the creative muse to descend. After this apparently very schematic presentation of the two opposing ideas, it follows logically that the 'reality' is then shown, so the next shot is of Rosemonde (scene 7). We then return to the confrontation between journalist and writer, and the two agree to adopt separate methods. It is clear the methods are finally incompatible, and it is dubious perhaps that Tanner presents these two men as accepting that they might succeed in working together, although perhaps their need of money is the only basis for the futile experiment. Music and editing serve to poke fun at the journalistic method, starting with the voice over comment 'Pierre mena l'enquête tambour battant'[33]. A series of quick short scenes covering Pierre's furious activity are accompanied by music conventionally suitable for a detective thriller. Pierre systematically finds out things that the writer already knows. Tanner arranges his scenes schematically in order to keep the two ideas constantly playing off, one against the other; the inquest for facts is punctuated by shots of the 'static' writer with paper and pen. The stages reached in Paul's story are arranged to chime in with the developments in the interviews between Pierre and Rosemonde, thus demonstrating his imaginative intelligence and his powers of interpretation. The film then shifts across to Paul. Pierre has completed his fact finding. We know it contains many untruths and no interpretation. In Scene 36 Paul sees Rosemonde for the first time, she having spent the previous night with Pierre. Paul's writing becomes completely blocked, 'les deux Rosemondes se mélangent et il y a un de trop!' He finds he must begin the work all over again, with the 'real' Rosemonde. The same schematic pattern is followed, e.g. a visit to the uncle, but Paul's reactions and success are naturally different in this sort of alien work. When they are in the country, in a sense

the roles of the two men are reversed - Pierre is the static writer, Paul goes out to 'quadriller le pays', a role he is of course unsuited to. Pierre announces that spirits are crushed in Switzerland as bodies are in Latin America, but, he continues, this piece of information 'cela allait roulait comme un caillou dans le grand fleuve gris de l'information'. This realisation ultimately undermines the journalistic mode. Hopefully imaginative truths have the potential for a more lasting and real impression. This realisation is, incidentally, also balanced schematically against Paul's imaginative leap regarding the comparison of Rosemonde to a salamander in his last piece of imaginative writing in his notebook. So, ultimately, it is not surprising that Paul can say to Rosemonde 'c'était toi Rosemonde qui a tiré sur ton oncle. Paul understands Rosemonde better, and is able to teach her to rationalise her intuitive fight against the system for the purpose of future battles. In the end both journalist and writer grew too close to the reality of Rosemonde, ever to be able to pin her into a TV script; they have been changed by her, their ideas of working-class people have perhaps been modified; they changed more than Rosemonde changed in her relations with them.

Whilst a formula of character based on a schema of ideas is foreign to conventional practice, it must be said that Tanner actually fills in this schema so as to actually produce rounded and very lifelike characters. The two men have many character traits, and the acting style is chiefly naturalistic. As Tanner says, 'ce que j'ai surtout cherché, au-delà des thèmes contenu dans le film, c'est à <u>faire vivre</u> ces personnages et à les faire aimer du spectateur'[34]. And they do live, and are very likeable also. There is plenty of detail in the main character presentations; Pierre for example has a huge house full of 'strays', we see his disorder, his slight laziness, his humour, his size and gawky appearance, and his slight air of endearing

ineffectuality.   Things happen to him rather than his   influencing   the
course of events. Filling out the schema of each man in surprising and
often   contradictory ways, tends to make them appear real, for   example
the writer/dreamer can mend things, and is more practical in his
approach to situations generally. He lives in the country, not because
he is a rural drop-out as we might have expected, but because it is
cheaper.   Pierre, the'facts' man, is totally disorganised in his life
and his financial affairs. He is impractical. He tends to flee from
difficult situations. So, all the details of character are found not
to fit into a neat pattern or idea.

The characterisation of Rosemonde is also to some extent schematic;
she is an observable social 'type', though perhaps to a lesser degree
than the two men.   Tanner had wished to place opposite his two
intellectuals someone who was not intellectual at all, exactly the
opposite.   During his TV work he met young delinquents in a prison and
noted similar psychological traits among them and similar histories.
They came chiefly from deprived backgrounds, large families, and had
left school early; but the important thing he saw in them was 'elles
peuvent avoir en eux un certain dynamisme, un certain goût de la
liberté, un certain refus de l'autorité telle qu'elles s'exercent dans
le cadre du travail par exemple ... les papillons contre les vires,
n'étant pas armées intellectuellement, elles ne peuvent structurer
cette révolte donc délinquence[35]. This revolt against accepted codes
and norms of Swiss society is of course admired by Tanner, and
celebrated in Pierre and Paul themselves as well as Rosemonde. It is a
permanent theme in his work.

Rosemonde, apart from representing a reality to be captured and
pinned down in a TV script, also represents in a sense 'labour', and,
via her, we are led to a very fine presentation of the reality of work
on a production line; we have one shot, held a very long time for

emphasis, of her bored, tired and nerve worn face, chewing gum as she performs the same actions again and again. Occasional glances to the side suggest the desire for escape. The work she is doing, at the sausage filling machine, is not just a visual phallic joke but a profound comment on a human degradation that is in fact obscene. As worker and as woman she is exploited. As noted previously, we see Rosemonde in cycles of work/play-release/work/escape, and so on. Via Rosemonde we are led to understand about youth, rebellion and pop music. Pop is more than mere enjoyment, it is a drug-antidote; it is the frenetic shaking off in free movement of the trammelled atmosphere of work. To add to the schematic nature of Rosemonde's presentation, we also have the idea of her raised to the level of symbol by Paul, as a 'salamander'; he tells us that 'La salamandre est un joli petit animal de la famille des lézards. Elle est noire avec des tâches jaune-orange, la salamandre est venimeuse. Elle ne craint pas le feu et peut traverser les flammes sans se bruler'. This is a view that clearly has authorial weight and which subsequently colours our reading of the film.

But having said this, Rosemonde is also very real. As the 'reality' in the schema, she is by definition capricious, difficult to capture, indeed she appears as a chameleon. When the film first appeared, the characterisation of Rosemonde was what was chiefly praised, together of course with the acting of Bulle Ogier. The actress comments in an interview that, in fact, when La Salamandre was released many viewers thought that she was a real worker from a factory recruited by Tanner for the film. As Tanner says 'l'essentiel est de parvenir à insuffler la vie dans la schéma didactique original'[36]. And there is no doubt that he does this admirably.

Rosemonde is classed by most as 'a bad lot'. She rebels against the monotony of work and the exploitation and repression of her true

self. These are the 'flames' that the Salamander survives. Tanner
principally stresses her fatigue at first, e.g. as we listen to her
first chat with Pierre in the car; she is exhausted and rebellious
although he can genially fob off the problem of work. Even at this
stage she surprises him. When he takes pictures of her, her 'truest'
face is captured right at the end when she is no longer posing, and
this face is sullen, hurt and rebellious. Pierre interviews her and
during this procedure we learn more of the limitations of the interview
form than we do about Rosemonde, who proceeds to play roles and mingle
truth with fantasy. The interview form, with Rosemonde speaking direct
to camera, also serves to break down the fictional illusion,
undermining conventional filmic practice.

A most important feature of the characterisation of Rosemonde is
that she is shown to develop and alter over the course of the
narrative, from a being who instinctively and physically rebels against
her situation, to someone who arrives at some rational understanding of
her actions and situation. At the end of the film, her rebellion in
the shoe shop is cool, deliberate and verbal: she has worked out that
the petit bourgeois is her chief enemy. This is in contrast to
Rosemonde's own earlier formulation of the situation, 'les gens
détestent mon indépendance et essaient toujours de me briser. Ils
disent de moi que je suis paresseuse, sauvage, hystérique'. Though the
virtue of introducing such a soliloquy by Rosemonde is I think
questionable, in the sense that it shows her to be more capable of
rationalising her situation than we thought, there is no class
generalisation here at all, no specific understanding about her
oppression. And if Rosemonde does move to a greater consciousness of
her state, this forms a point of optimism to be drawn from the film;
she achieves a degree of personal liberty. As Paul put it, 'il y a
trop de gens à qui la liberté d'être un peu dans leur peau est

systématiquement refusée'. This is the 'écrasement des esprits' in Switzerland as Pierre formulates it. The keystone of this concern in the film is derived from Lydie's quote from Heine (<u>Journey from Venice to Genoa</u>, 1828).

> Le soleil de la liberté réchauffera la terre de plus de bonheur que toute l'aristocratie des étoiles de la nuit; une nouvelle génération se lèvera, engendrée dans des embrassements librement choisis et non plus sur une couche de corvée et sous le contrôle des percepteurs de la clergé. Avec une naissance libre naîtront aussi des pensées et des sentiments libres, dont nous autres, esclaves nés, n'avons pas la moindre idée.(37)

Paul's wife goes on to describe in Heine's words, the black night of the present. Using this quotation as an ultimate reference point, the achievements of a Rosemonde are slight, but as Paul says it is a question of 'poser ma petite brique'. Unfortunately, and this may be a weakness of the ending of the film, the last shot of Rosemonde contains a hint of ambiguity. In the last scene, we witness Rosemonde after a different kind of break out than that witnessed at the beginning. She weaves in the opposite direction to the flow of the Christmas shoppers, and we see a joyful celebration of her liberty, her difference and her individuality. The commentary tells us of the schizophrenia of the people, most marked now it is Christmas time, the time of consumer delirium. Balanced against this we are told of Rosemonde's normality, rather than any 'normality' expressed in the crowd whose faces are tragic. They are grey automatons with a look of joyless conformity. Cinematic means are used to make Rosemonde appear to operate in a different space and time from the other people. However, ambiguity may lie in the fact that Rosemonde's face may have the look of complete dissociation and withdrawal from the real world, a look of schizophrenia itself in fact?

Whilst Rosemonde is free of trammels at the end of the film, the two men certainly are not - economic constraints dog them both. Pierre flees from debts, including unpaid rent; Paul will be forced back to work as a painter. There is no place in fact, where marginal spirits can remain untainted. However they go on, each doing what he can. 'Il faut voire quand même ... avant la révolution', says Tanner[38].

Much of the other characterisation (the small characters) is deliberately schematic, and to judge it against the criteria of 'realism' as Gavin Millar appears to do in his review, when he claims that the film suffers attacks of ideological romanticism, 'the petty bourgeois are so petty; the spirit of Rosemonde so indomitable'[39], is to miss the point of the deliberate play between conventional practice and its disruption, that Tanner tries to engender in the film. The uncle is merely a schematic collection of all the traditional, and conventional views of a reactionary society. His rifle is almost the symbol of the 'model' citizen defending the status quo, 'le symbole de nos libertés', he terms it. It is very fitting that the free spirit shot him with it! When Pierre first visits the uncle, Tanner arranges the scene so that the rifle is in the foreground of the picture as he opens the door. The uncle is a parody, unashamedly a caricature. There is no attempt made to fill out the character further. Tanner uses cinematic means to render him slightly repulsive. The people with whom Rosemonde has worked tend also to be schematic manifestations of 'normal' Swiss society, and finally we have the 'petit patron' himself and his mother. They are superbly funny caricatures; self-righteous exploiters of the work force, out to stamp out threatening deviation in any form. The close-up shot oi he petit patron, caught between two sorts of possible exploitation of Rosemonde, as women and as worker, is superb. The weapon of humour is used against them mercilessly. The man who comes to assess the value of Pierre's furniture appears to be

the epitome of the paid servant who has internalised the system completely, with his grey mackintosh and his smooth and fluent quoting of rules and regulations. The agent for the Defense Civile is portrayed as a pathetic mouselike tool of the state. His stature - physically and metaphorically - is small, and this is emphasised by Tanner's camerawork.

Dialogue

In the main, the style of dialogue that Tanner uses is very realistic. The characters' talk has the flavour of real speech. Tanner wrote all the dialogue before the shooting (having drawn collaborative general notes from John Berger), and it was not changed at all by the actors (a pattern that continues until Messidor). Mainly, it strikes one as being very simple, having the quality of the everyday including slang and colloquialisms. Each character has his own idiolect, for example, the shorter simpler syntax of Rosemonde, who tends to monosyllables and is often uncommunicative. The flow of her speech is erratic. Balanced against this we have the gritty no nonsense but educated style of Pierre.

Tanner's dialogue is not all within the narrow limits of 'realism'; in fact there are certain scenes where the talk is on a level that can be called consciously symbolic, and such scenes provide examples of the play on several different levels between conventional practice and its disruption that is at the core of the film. A particularly interesting example of such a scene, is the one where Paul and Pierre are lost in the wood near Rosemonde's home village (scene 54). From a brief little argument concerning their project, in which they both know they are stuck, the talk consciously leaves the realms of the strictly realistic in two ways: firstly, Pierre's speech sounds like a take off of election slogans, and secondly, Paul raises the talk to symbolic significance. Their being lost becomes a more global

metaphor for the human condition at their point in history; 'on est en route vers la terre promise, ou bien on est en route vers la barbarie et l'intoxication programmée que nous préparent les technocrates'. With the help of the silent majority, adds Pierre. Given the fact that this comment by Paul contains the subtitle of the film, and touches upon the general theme, we take this in a sense to be authorial comment of a fairly direct kind. And in fact, realism is further estranged by the interjection of the commentary which picks up and explains the idea of the 'silent majority'. The camera at the same moment cuts to the men's feet plodding in squelchy mud, an apt metaphor for a civilisation that is bogged down. Other scenes of the film sheer off from conventional filmic practice in terms of dialogue. We think of the scene with the Heine quote, a quote made direct to camera, as a 'message' to the audience. Paul has just told his wife he has slept with Zoe, and her response is to quote the passage from Heine, direct to camera, thus subverting conventional expectations of an ensuing marital dispute. This quotation with its global, utopian vision replaces the personal and the erotic; in it, the present is compared to the (possible) future. Other scenes, in yet different, ways leave the limits of conventional realism in the direction of fantasy; for example, the scene where we see an 'Inspecteur da la Défense Civile', 'Section Spirituelle' (Scene 38). Tanner says that 'ce petit livre existe réellement, a fait scandale en Suisse car, sous couvert de prévenir contre les dangers d'une guerre atomique, le gouvernment a distribué à tous les citoyens un véritable manuel idéologique où la défense des valeurs éternelles se double d'un anti-communisme virulent'(40). By pushing the facts one step further and having an Inspector appear to check on the usage of the book Tanner reaches the realms of the bizarre, of science fiction. And yet the Inspector of

Civil Defence looks real - even picks his nose - Tanner being fond of
this sort of incidental comedy.

The Use of Black and White

Tanner's use of black and white for <u>La Salamandre</u> also forms part
of the assault on conventional filmic practice. Colour he found, at
that time, too realistic. 'En couleur, vous voyez tout, c'est
effrayant ... alors que dans le noir et blanc vous avez tout de suite
vos points d'accrochage, vos points de lumière'[41]. He claimed he
also used black and white as a sort of protest against TV, which was
then set in the direction of colour, and as a jibe against TV salesmen
who were flogging colour sets as the ultimate in technology. He pokes
fun at this obsession with colour with the words 'chronique filmée en
couleurs noires et blanches' put upon the screen after the title. (His
limited budget of course made any other choice impossible, but
nevertheless black and white was a matter of policy for him.) A '70s
audience would certainly find the black and white non-realistic, and
possibly reminiscent of the quality of old newsreels. More than this,
the black and white is very high contrast, it forces itself on the
attention, a fact that Jean Collet, in his article, uses to highlight
the legacy in <u>La Salamandre</u> of Tanner the TV director[42]. We have a
poor quality, grainy image that calls attention the fact of film, hence
to the artefact.

Camera Usage

Tanner's account of his use of the camera also forms part of the
theory that he has erected to explain the attempt to undermine
conventional filmic practice in this film. He claims that the
travelling camera is generally wedded to the passing off of screen
material as reality. He refers to 'les travellings qui glissent à
l'intérieur des choses vraies'[43], and despite the fact that his
budget did not allow for this sort of shot in quantity, he again makes

a point of theory out of this feature. (It is only later, with Retour d'Afrique onwards that he begins to explore the signification of the travelling camera. In later films he tends to use a moving camera to stress the use of the camera itself, i.e. the fact of cinema. We see a camera that operates quite independently of the characters and the narrative in the strict sense, another 'character' in its own right.) The opening and closing scenes of La Salamandre use a travelling camera. Used with music, and in the first scene linked metaphorically with the free flowing river as background, camera, setting, context and music all combine to create and emphasise a feeling of joyous freedom and liberation. The movement of the camera seems to implicate us sympathetically with Rosemonde and her fortunes. It can be argued that when Tanner does uses the travelling camera, this can in fact be termed the 'bourgeois camera' usage referred to by Henderson in his article, 'Towards a Non-Bourgeois Camera Style'[44]. This is because Tanner's camera is basically interested in, and explores character; it is an 'invisible' camera that does in fact aid the passing off of screen material as reality. One other time that Tanner uses a travelling shot is the one that follows Paul and Rosemonde walking along the winter country road; the director did state that he was averse to its use here. However, walking along the road, these two were spontaneously reminiscent of Modern Times, and so he used a travelling camera to capture this quotation. There are a few pans in La Salamandre, in addition to the small number of travelling shots, but for the rest of the film the camera is stationary. Importance rests on the actors and the dialogue, and such movement as there is is in frame. (This is a combination that is put to superb use in fact in the first scene, where a static camera is used and the uncle writhes and rolls in agony in and out of frame in a dramatic way.) On several occasions indeed, a static camera is most telling, for example in the shot of Rosemonde at the

sausage machine. The shot is held static for long enough for us to experience the monotony of the production line. But the greater part of the film is quite without camera movements or effects attributable to camera usage, a static 'eye'. Suspicion of the ideological implications of which are not developed at this stage in Tanner's career.

The Relationship between Audience and Film

Along with the desire to subvert conventional filmic practice is the intention of Tanner to achieve a distance between audience and film, thus allowing the audience cool reflection on the issues involved. This intention is Brechtian in inspiration. Tanner makes large claims in this respect for the commentary. The results in practice are more complicated. He says

> le voix off est un procédé de recul, de distanciation qui me paraît essentiel, il s'agit là de briser l'impression de romanesque dont j'ai horreur par-dessus tout: laisser agir le pouvoir du cinéma qui est de donner l'impression de la réalité dans une série de fausses pistes et puis rompre l'enchantement, le conditionnement, par quelque initiative subite pour prendre le recul nécessaire à la réflexion ou à l'action.(45)

The voice over commentary makes a complex contribution to the setting up of distance between audience and film. The voice over commentary is a very intrusive convention, and cannot readily be digested as part of the filmic world. It is a feature reminiscent of the literary practice of some nineteenth century authors e.g. George Eliot. Eliot's novels have an authorial voice which directly addresses the reader, offering comments and judgements on people and issues. The novel is thus acknowledged as an artefact, with an overt controlling consciousness behind it. Despite the fact that the fictional illusion is thus broken, one can also argue that the effect is more complicated. Such intrusions may in certain circumstances be said to draw the reader, or in film the spectator, in closer to the text. So one can

sometimes see a curious 'two way' tension. The voice over in La Salamandre is curiously multifunctional. We are presented with a voice that not so much comments about the film and the characters, but acts as if it were in league with them. Sometimes the voice over offers straight information, for example, about Paul, the first time we see him as he is riding to Pierre's house. The information is important here, it is designed to strip appearances to their economic facts. The voice over uncovers, it prevents misconstruction. The commentary sometimes offers information that we already know, or that we can see from the visual , r that even duplicates the dialogue. This points to a leaning towards deconstruction of the very notion of a voice over commentary. The commentary is very often amusing, but perhaps Tanner is warning us against taking uncritically even such information as might appear to have authorial weight. Nowhere is the audience allowed to 'sleep', be secure in being told what to think. The commentary is also used, on occasion, to inform us what the writer is writing (a rather awkward alternative to static shots of a page of writing), and sometimes to inform us of inner thoughts of the two men. The commentary is, significantly, not used to expound on Rosemonde; she is an enigma, the reality being explored. But it picks up things the two men have said and amplifies them. Its political position is left wing, witness the comments on the dustmen's strike. This is an apparently gratuitous scene, but where Tanner is perhaps concerned with drawing a wider circle of reference to 'workers' and their problems, as a contrast to our exclusive concentration on Rosemonde. The commentary also sometimes tells the outcome of action that we do not see completed on the screen, which is odd, as often Tanner could very easily have shown it. And finally, the commentary tells us about the passage of time, giving dates (albeit in an erratic fashion), or telling us how many hours have passed.

One wonders in what senses this commentary can be said to be a 'distancing device'? It is more like the voice of a friend of Pierre and Paul, but one we just don't happen to see. A delightful complicity exists between them. The commentary involves us further with their characters and their positions. However it does also increase awareness and speculation about voice over commentaries film in general in the sense that we become aware that this commentary is erratic and occasionally unpredictable. Most often the voice over offers serious 'contributions' to the film but sometimes there is thrown in a solemn line about the weather, or a trivial statement which is picked up and used by one of the characters, creating a humorous effect; commentary 'il faisait maintenant nuit noire': Pierre 'Il fait nuit noire'. (A similar use of voice over has been noted in Tirez sur le pianiste.)

Regarding the other possible features that could contribute to creating a distance between audience and film, we find them all very limited in La Salamandre, despite what Tanner claims. The director cites as other distancing devices, the use of humour, music and the interview technique. To look at humour in the film first of all, it would seem to be a false premise that it is necessarily distancing. One can laugh and be further involved with the film or characters. Fun is gently poked at the journalist's mode of action in a variety of ways, and at his physique and general appearance and behaviour; he is also the beleaguered male in a classic seduction scene; things generally happen to him, rather than his dominating events. We smile also at Paul. But the humour does not distance us from either of the men. We like them the more for their quirks. (Rosemonde is not, significantly, the object of any of Tanner's gentle humour.) If one looks at the types of humour to be found in the film, we find that which is strictly speaking unrelated to the plot (this often has the quality of slapstick), humour that is self-consciously filmic, e.g.

that relating to the parody of genres and quotes from other films, and humour that is bitter social satire, directed as a weapon against the Swiss capitalist social fabric. The 'unrelated' humour, the slapstick, may be said to weaken our close interest in the plot, and thus be 'distancing', as may be the self-conscious play with film genre. This would alert an audience to the fact of film, thereby distancing them temporarily from it. Tanner was actually disturbed by how much the audience laughed at the film, although he considered they laughed in the right places. He felt that perhaps the humour had weakened his serious intentions. In the end, as he remarks, you can of course laugh at anything.

Regarding the interview technique, which Tanner cites as another feature of his policy of 'distancing', it also seems to be very questionable that this achieves the desired effect. Take for example scene 27, where Pierre is interviewing Rosemonde, and recording her answers. First of all we have a close-up of Rosemonde, in whose character we are very interested, and to whom we are not unsympathetic. The effect is the opposite of distancing. We draw nearer to Rosemonde as we study her, particularly as there is pathos in what she is saying. Secondly, Tanner doesn't hold the shot on Rosemonde alone for too long; we have intercuts of the questioner, Pierre, reminding us that this is a conversation <u>within</u> the fictional world, Rosemonde is not merely talking to camera, stepping out of the narrative in some way. The interview technique could be effectively distancing in that a character talking direct to camera/audience would break the fictional illusion. Tanner scarcely achieves this effect with this interview scene.

Tanner does not distance us from his three characters at all. They are likeable people to start with, and cinematic means are used to enhance their likeable qualities. The sheer amount of close-ups works against distanciation, where the human face can be scrutinised at

leisure. This is perhaps a legacy of TV work where the close-up is a dominant feature. We even have an interior monologue of Rosemonde, where we presumably hear true revelations about her character, and of course the commentary itself very often explores and develops character. Tanner did specifically say 'ce que j'ai surtout cherché au-delà des thèmes contenus dans le film, c'est à faire vivre ses personnages et à les faire aimer du spectateur'[46]. This overriding lack of distance presumably presupposes some level of identification. Identification may be thought of as 'empathising with' or 'putting oneself in the place of'. A difference of degree is perhaps apparent in these two possible definitions. Tudor presents a fourfold classification of identification; emotional affinity, self identification, imitation (of physical and simple behavioural characteristics) and projection[47]. The first, he argues, is the weakest form of identification and the most common. Tudor describes it as 'the audience feels a loose attachment to a particular protagonist, deriving jointly from star, narrative and the individual personality of the audience member; a standard sense of involvement'[48]. Tanner does not use stars, but otherwise, the weakest of the four types seems to be the more appropriate in this case. Our attachment is there, but relatively cool. One imagines that the success of the original long run in Paris (seventy four weeks) was due to the film's appeal to young left-wing audiences, in the wake of the euphoria of May '68; the themes and spirit of the film were attractive to audiences at that time.

We have mentioned that cinematic means encourage closeness to the characters, close-up shots being an important feature in this respect. If we look at scenes 4, 5 and 6, we note that Paul is introduced to us in mid-shot, but gradually we 'draw nearer' to him until we have a number of sustained close-ups, with the commentary explaining at the same time more about him. Tanner loves to scrutinise the face - we

think of the long held close-up of Lydie, the zoom to a close-up of the happy little girl, Paul's daughter, as she watches a train. There is little or no narrative reason for this latter shot.

There are however places where Tanner denies us the close-up that we are expecting - for example in scene 56 when we hear the thoughts of Rosemonde, and we see her in mid-shot, naked, but from the back. Tanner as it were 'steps back' from a combination of factors that might have drawn his audience too close to Rosemonde. There are in fact a lot of mid-shots in the film; this is overall the predominant shot type, and this would tend to encourage some degree of coolness.

When we consider the question of identification with characters, it might be serviceable to look at point of view shots. Point of view shots are apparently subjective on the part of the characters, putting us, the audience, into their positions in space and allowing us to appear to 'see with their eyes'. Strong identification with a character in a film would presumably rely on a good deal of p.o.v. structures in that film. Metz sees p.o.v. shots as one of the five possible subjective shots; the others he argues are purely mental images, subjectivising the objective, imaginary narrative and memory images[49]. The p.o.v. shot seems to be the only one of any relevance to La Salamandre. Brannigan indicates that the p.o.v. shot is composed of five elements, normally distributed in two shots:-[50]

(1)   establishment of a point in space

(2)   glance - establishment of an off-camera object by glance from the point, cues may be eye movement, head movement, a new camera angle etc.

(3)   the transition - any device that implies temporal continuity - a requisite for p.o.v.

(4)   the camera moves to that point established by element (1)

(5)   the camera reveals the object suggested by element (2)

After (5) we are seeing what a person sees, and via focus, movement etc., it can also reflect how they see it. Brannigan points out there are all sorts of possibilities for disruption and variation within this basic pattern, with variable effects achieved. Naturally, distortions of the pattern are very common. The shift beween element (1) and element (4) represents, according to Brannigan, the real shift in narrative perception from objective and omniscient to subjective and personal. The actual transition device can be a cut, fades, wipes etc. or camera movement, where we watch while there is re-positioning. Simple variations include; 'closed p.o.v.' - in the form of 1, 2, 1, with the last 1 signalling the end of the 'subjective' view; 'delayed p.o.v.' - 2 is withheld for a while; 'open p.o.v.' where we never see the object; the 'continuing p.o.v.' - a character looks at several things or one thing lots of times, rendered by cutting or a travelling; 'multiple p.o.v.' - several characters see the same object; 'embedded p.o.v.' - a p.o.v. of one character is nested into a larger p.o.v. of another character; and 'reflexive p.o.v.' - alternating p.o.v. of two characters engaged in conversation.

Several startling examples of p.o v. can be immediately seen in _La Salamandre_. For example the Défense Spirituelle scene; the inspector is established on the screen and then Pierre, so we can see the two in mid-shot. Then there is a p.o.v. from Pierre's standpoint down on the man (Pierre is at a high window so we get a high angle shot of this 'little' bureaucrat). Calling Paul's attention to come and see this phenomenon, we get a repeat of the p.o.v. and then a p.o.v. from the point of view of the inspector, up to Pierre. A wider point is obviously being made by Tanner through the mise en scène. The other very noticeable p.o.v. is in the Heine scene where we get a p.o.v. shot of Paul's, as he looks up to Lydie - a low angle shot of her as he is mending his bicycle. The significance of these levels has been touched

on before. The p.o.v. might also serve to undermine the possible disrupting effect, the possible distancing qualities, of such a long quote.

P.o.v. structures are however fairly rare in the film (apart from a few questionable examples in some of the dialogue scenes), thus cooling the possible identification with characters. The tone is set perhaps by the fact of the voice over; this is another consciousness, outside the filmic world which looks on and comments on the characters and their predicaments. This is reinforced by the fact that the majority of shots 'belong' to no fictional character. In the scene where Paul arrives at Pierre's flat, we get a p.o.v. shot, Pierre says 'entre' then we see Paul entering - yet Paul moves to Pierre so they are both in frame together, and hence there has been a shift in standpoint to the objective, achieved by camera movement. The conversation following, done in close-ups, might be seen as a 'reflexive p.o.v.', of the sort used in conversations, but the camera angle on the close-up of, for example Pierre, could not be Paul's view (as we have seen the whole set-up spatially, Paul is static and we know it cannot be a p.o.v.). The long contrechamp on Paul is also done from the front and could not be Pierre's view exactly. Yet in the next exchange, we get a shot of Pierre in profile that could be Paul's view (though it is done in close-up, do we see in 'closeup'?), and the following travelling shot over the cuttings on the walls is Paul's vision - a subjective travelling shot in fact. Then, after this, we watch the two men from the 'outside'. This mix of minimum p.o.v. and 'unclaimed' shots is perhaps fairly typical of the film. The 'outside' view in scene 10 - where we see one of the windows in Pierre's house, Pierre at the window, the door, and then Pierre coming out, perhaps serves to emphasise an objective tone, a more direct admission - ideologically speaking - of film, of the director's

view/selection/work. The director does not 'hide' in this instance behind p.o.v. shots. According to Browne, many films mask the author/narrator's activity by choosing a centre, a persona, and making it appear that much of the film is the result of that character's consciousness, his seeing, his point of view. So he appears to be an internal narrative authority. The role of the director, his all pervading vision is thus cunningly played down[51].

As it is evident that we do experience a closeness, a bond, with the characters, an 'identification' of some sort, this means that the p.o.v. mechanism is not so vital to the setting up of this as might have been surmised. Other factors must account for it - the music, close-ups, shot duration, the general likeable nature of the characters shown, the fact that the film is a close study of the evolution of these three characters over a period of time. Add to this, the fact that some shots have a subjective 'feel' about them, without being p.o.v. shots. Take for example the last long travelling shot of Rosemonde at the end of the film. The director is using cinematic means - slow motion, camera angles etc. - to mirror and to present the state of mind of Rosemonde, indicating his empathy with her character and situation at that moment.

Music was also cited by Tanner as a distancing element. The music is more often in fact found to work in quite the other way. Tanner says 'Je cherche à créer entre le film et le spectateur une certaine distance ... l'utilisation de l'humour, du commentaire, de la musique à contre sens, pour faire en sorte que le spectateur soit entrainé sur des fausses pistes et par conséquent mis en éveil'[52]. In the same vein, in an interview with Langlois, music is said to provide false trails, 'on va croire que c'est du cinéma et puis, la musique s'arrête et le cinéma disparaît'[53].

Most of the time however the music is very near to conventional affective cinema music. There is, on examination, a 'theme' music for Rosemonde - one particular variation that is of the whole piece that is used in the film. Rosemonde's 'theme' is heard very faintly - before we ever see her - as we watch the uncle load his gun. Retrospectively, we will recognise this as Rosemonde's theme. It is hauntingly suggestive of her presence on several occasions when she is not present. An example is when the uncle is talking about her to Pierre - the haunting faint tune is in the background. There are many other examples of this, one of the most notable being the fact that this music re-emerges over the Heine passage; this is a logical choice since Rosemonde's struggle is the 'humble' part of the global struggle expressed by Heine. The music here also could be said to amplify the nobility of the message. The music also on numerous occasions overtly and loudly celebrates Rosemonde's individuality and her revolt.

The music is not restricted to Rosemonde, but 'covers' the men at times, and very often in type or tone mirrors the action of the scene - for example the brisk pace of the music as Pierre sets about his detective work. This is music that helps the parody of such work, and such a film genre. There is a 'suspense' version as Roger steals the shop keys at night from the girls' flat. Very often, the music is used in conjunction with movement, e.g. the beginning and end shots, the shots of the two men walking in the forest, the three in the car going to the countryside. And the sound of this music is essentially free-wheeling, modern and gay. In conjunction with movement on the screen, it heightens the feeling of gaiety and optimism in the film, in spite of the odds. The last scene is particularly, defiantly optimistic, and the music is correspondingly loud and positive. None of the above comments indicate distanciation via the music - quite the

reverse. The music plays a large part in harnessing our complicity with the characters and with the film.

There are some exceptions to this mainly conventional pattern; sudden 'electronic' noises over Rosemonde's face, odd percussive and bizarre sounds, suggestive of suspense and murder, i.e. contributing to red herrings indications of the thriller genre noted before. We certainly become aware here of the music as a separate entity, and this might possibly for a second distanciate us from the film. Similarly, there are the strange percussion notes as Paul massages Rosemonde's back. But the music 'à contre sens' is barely visible. Tanner's other statement is interesting 'on va croire que c'est du cinéma et puis la musique s'arrête et le cinéma disparaît'[54]. What must be said is that the music comes and goes abruptly, erratically. It is also used only 14 times in the 74 scenes. It bleeds over scenes sometimes, sometimes it starts as a scene starts, then stops for no reason, and re-appears later on. But given the fact that it mainly acts in conjunction with the visuals, that it sways the audience in co-operation with the visuals, the effects of these stops and starts are less noticeable. The music seems to be a clear case where spectator reception could be argued to be quite at variance with directional intentions.

Having said that Tanner's attempts at distancing are strictly limited, the inherent difficulties of transferring this and other aspects of 'epic' theatre to a different medium are not to be forgotten. Film, by nature, has the ability to create a powerful illusion of reality and can easily and naturally cause strong identification between the cinema audience and the screen. The reality that we see is apparently objective, the voyeuristic element is underplayed, the audience is easily 'hooked' within the film. We accept the film as the world. As Kracauer said, 'Struck by the

realistic character of the images, the spectator cannot help but relate to them as he would to the material aspects of nature in the raw that these photographic images reproduce'[55]. Via its unique range of codes, size, distance, space relations and time are re-organised for us so that our normal reference points are taken away. Point of view is strictly controlled. Rational thought processes are often blocked, the emotions of the spectator being the target. If one adds to this the circumstances of watching - the relaxed, dark, isolated mode of viewing then the domination of the screen is complete. Cinema acting is totally different from theatre acting; words are (generally) perhaps of less importance. The actor's performance is plastic, to be moulded in other processes outside himself. This means that Brechtian acting techniques are not easily transferable to the screen, unless in conjunction with mise en scene. Distanciation is, as can be seen from the above comments about the nature of film, difficult to effect in film. In theatre the intensity of illusion is lower to start with, the fact of theatre is not easily forgotten.

As we have already noted, many progressive film makers saw it as important that spectators should be detached in the viewing situation, rather than being absorbed and 'lost' in the conventional cinema process. Truffaut among others had already experimented with Brechtian forms. Much work had been done by Godard on Brechtian techniques in film. It is Godard's work that perhaps represents the most systematic transference of Brecht on to the screen[56]. In many of his films he deconstructs the narrative, giving the films a loose, episodic structure. He uses inserts of all kinds to break up the narrative structure, editing styles that disrupt the flow, ruptures in tone, mixtures in media. By obtrusive foregrounding of cinema technique, camerawork, framing, experimental combinations of sound and image, Godard draws attention to the cinema itself and creates an audience

that is distanced from the film, and brought to reflect on the film medium itself. The difference between Godard and Brecht perhaps lies in the more 'outward' looking emphasis of Brecht's theatre. Brecht was primarily concerned to expose social processes, whereas Godard, at certain periods of his career, puts greater focus on the medium than does Brecht. As Godard said in 1970, 'Bourgeois film makers focus on the reflection of reality. We are concerned with the reality of that reflexion'[57]. There were dissenting voices of course on the question of the possibility and/or the desirability of adapting Brecht in film making. Critics such as Carta argue that the real 'fascination filmique commence lorsque nous croyons que ce qui se passe sur l'écran est vraiment en train de se dérouler ... le cinéma a une aspiration vers la réalité qu'il est vain de combattre'[58]. He argues that the cinema's true vocation is firmly realist, 'Les méthodes de Brecht sont anti réalistes ainsi il est impossible de les appliquer à l'écran'. Carta goes on to cite other cinematic techniques that are able, in his view, to aid the cause of creating an alert spectator, techniques such as depth of field and the plan séquence. This is obviously a perspective derived from Bazin. Such techniques, Carta argues, are well able to contest the unhealthy fascination of the screen. He discusses various film makers (e.g. Varda in Opéra Mouffe), who in conjunction with the above techniques, use beings with whom it is impossible to identify, and a vision that is seen to be partial. In such cases what he argues to be the natural realism of the film image is not harmed.

Tanner's theory that surrounds La Salamandre leans basically, as we have seen, to contemporary influences in radical film making. But there is an observable gap between his theory and his practice. What happens of course is that, over a period of years, he feels his way towards a successful personal film practice. We find generally, that La Salamandre leans in most senses to the 'dramatic' form rather than the

'epic', and Jean Collet in his article appears to have overstated his case with regard to deconstruction and self-reflexiveness in the film. He says

> l'histoire de La Salamandre est un miroir. Elle nous renvoie au travail du cinéaste lui-même. Si Tanner refuse de solliciter la transparence du cinéma, c'est pour mieux nous précipiter aux limites du cinéma, nous faire toucher du doigt le terme de l'entreprise et pressentir son au-delà, qui nous appartient. Oeuvre ouverte, La Salamandre nous apparaît comme une épreuve; l'épreuve du film qui s'épuise à rejoindre le réel. Il ne s'agit pas ici d'édifier un spectacle entre nous et le monde, un trompe l'oeil qui se donnerait comme le monde, il s'agit d'ébaucher une recherche, de poser des jalons, d'amorcer un travail, d'ouvrir des pistes. Voilà ce que fait la télévision dans ses milleures moments; son domaine est l'ébauche, les 'coulisses de l'exploit' plutôt que l'exploit lui-même. L'oeuvre achevée n'est pas son rayon. McLuhan insiste beaucoup sur ce rôle de la télévision, qui l'oppose au cinéma classique; elle semble destinée à nous faire[59] participer à des processus d'élaboration.

Despite Tanner's comments, La Salamandre would be regarded as fairly near to conventional film practice, and relatively weak in its examination of its own practices as cinema. This, according to radical purists, would nullify whatever effective subversive discourse is to be found in the content. This is to unfortunately deny the truly subversive and political flavour of the film, to deny the real contribution it might have to make in the radical cause. As Amiel says 'La Salamandre nous administre la preuve que le cinéma politique est une réalité vivante et promise à un brilliant avenir'[60].

A Portrait of Switzerland

It may be perhaps fitting to turn attention to the qualities of the film that perhaps are not stressed by the director. La Salamandre reflects on the situation that Tanner finds in Switzerland in 1970/71, and although to a minor extent it may reflect on film too, the former reflection is perhaps the most valuable of the two contributions. Whatever forms Tanner uses, do adequately appear to deal with that,

and, as far as one can see, do not blur the incisiveness of the portrait. I would find it difficult to accept that the content of the film is impaired by the maintenance of a certain level of use of 'old' conventional forms. The picture of Switzerland has relevance to the analysis of any modern western capitalist society, although Switzerland could be said to have a weightier than average core of static reactionary beliefs. Certain scenes in the film are of key importace to the analysis, the Défense Civile scene for example. The little red book referred to was a government manual for survival after an atomic explosion. Tanner said of this book that 'il se double d'un aspect idéologique très dangereux; l'anticommunisme le plus virulent s'accompagne d'une véritable défense des valeurs éternelles et morales'[61]. Tanner may push this episode into fantasy, inventing the civil servant who takes information about the book's usage and black lists offenders, but such licence only serves to hammer home an ugly fact of social manipulation. In the drab rule of the petit bourgeois, under the sway of a reactionary establishment, it is fitting that Tanner's film takes place in winter - a symbolic winter. Tanner formulates the Swiss situation thus:

> Le problème de la Suisse tient dans le fait d'être un petit pays devenu une grande puissance économique. Le système a pu fonctionner correctement jusqu'à la dernière guerre, mais depuis l'isolement n'est plus possible, et la confrontation avec les problèmes des sociétés industrielles - main d'oeuvre étrangères, d'où la scène du tram, logement, inflation - entraine des réflexes de conservatisme, de poujadisme, de xenophobie, d'intolérance très profondes.[62]

Although Tanner portrays Switzerland with humour, with satire, a dangerously reactionary society is in question. The tram incident is only on the first level amusing; it is basically tragic. The racialist xenophobia is only just below the surface. Switzerland has an enormous percentage of foreign ('guest') workers in its industries and has

expelled them at will; it has a very chequered moral history with regard to dealings with them. Tanner mentions one strike by the 'guest' workers in the film - a dustmen's strike - which, the commentary notes acidly, threatens only sacred Swiss order and cleanliness.

Rosemonde's uncle is a veritable collection of Swiss reactionary values, with his reverence for his rifle, and his self-satisfaction at his pose of defending his country and its values. He indites Rosemonde for running counter to the ordered and reactionary society he upholds. Deviation is not tolerated in Switzerland. Similar sentiments - reactions to threat to the Establishment - are manifest in the words of Rosemonde's previous landlady 'si vous avez vu sa chambre - épouvantable', or the shopkeeper 'si on est pas capable d'arriver à l'heure le matin ... elle - ça battait tous les records'. Tanner shows us the types who uphold order, e.g. the 'premier clerc de la régie immobilière', who comes to assess Pierre's furniture. Tanner has a gift for the comic presentation of types. This clerk is a man who has totally internalised the system he represents, and he simply fails to grasp the comments of Pierre and Paul about why he is acting as the boss when he is not, and why he is in the position he is when he has the lesson before him of the man who invented the bevels on the mayonnaise tube! This is the capitalist myth of advancement within the system. Switzerland, in Tanner's view, may well be, as Paul says, 'en route vers la barbarie et l'intoxication programmée que nous préparent les technocrates',a stage helped on by the cowed, misguided silent majority.

Hence one of the chief themes of the film is the celebration of spontaneity, of individuality that refuses to be crushed against all the odds, of the intuitive, rebellious, non-conformity of Rosemonde who says 'les gens détestent mon indépendance et essaient toujours de me

briser'. In modern western democracies, the attempt is to crush the spirit, not the body. But Rosemonde we know, will survive (albeit scarred) like the mythical Salamander, aided by the knowledge passed on to her from Paul. The two men's efforts to retain their integrity are more fraught. Pierre is forced by economics to flee to Paris, and Paul continues to compromise himself on one level in order to avert the compromise at a more important level, i.e. in his writing. For marginal intellectuals, it is not easy to remain 'uncontaminated'.

It is important also that the centre of this revolt against industrial society in Switzerland is a woman. Throughout his films, Tanner has been noted for his foregrounding of women's problems and La Salamandre is perhaps the first example. As Ying Ying Wu claims, the Swiss director Tanner 'is one of the few who prefer to offer audiences the possibility of an independent heroine capable of fighting to establish her identity'[63]. The portrait of Rosemonde is the forerunner of that of Françoise, and Adriana. Despite occasional fears for her future, and growing old, Rosemonde is independent and tough. She resists exploitation of herself as a worker and as a woman. She will remain a free agent, resisting drudgery, monotony and boredom.

The position of La Salamandre within the revival of French speaking Swiss cinema should also be mentioned. After the war, mainly mediocre films were produced in French speaking Switzerland, and there was a general decline in the native cinema of the area in the '50s and '60s. According to Bucher, the most influential circles appeared to have come to see, film as a purely commercial affair, and in artistic matters Switzerland lagged behind[64]. It was a period of 'artistic underdevelopment', a cinematic desert where the relevant cinema skills were no longer to be recruited[65]. A first step towards an improvement came with the 1963 film law which set aside money for documentary and science films, gave prizes for all films, subsidised

studies and gave grants to film makers. In addition to this, a group of film makers connected with Geneva TV began a new, practical, and creative effort. Tanner, Soutter, Roy, Goretta and Yersin were out to regard film as a cultural investment, accepting it as loss making. They formed their own production group 'Group 5' as it became known, in conjunction with the TV company Suisse Romande. The TV company agreed to cover fifty per cent of production costs and, in return had the rights of the film for TV showing for one year from the date of completion of a film. Tanner's first film Charles Mort ou vif (1969) was the first produced under this scheme. La Salamandre was made with an advance, plus some money accrued from Charles, and some money from an unnamed investor. Nevertheless, the budget was still very small indeed, and the film had to be shot in six weeks.

The greatest virtues of La Salamandre lie - not where Tanner puts his emphasis, on work on the language - but in characterisation, story, thematic exploration and in its general honesty and gift for humour, lack of pomposity and intelligence. It is a film that is inspiring, and endearing in its optimism in the face of the odds. It is a celebration of opposition and resiliance that is as much needed now as it was in 1971.

Pierre: Comment ça va?

Paul: ça va.

Pierre: ça va vraiment?

Paul: oui.

Pierre: Moi j'comprends rien - au milieu de la
misère morale la plus totale, ça va quand
même ... moi je trouve ça formidable.

As Tanner said in 1971, 'il faut vivre quand même, être heureux ...
c'est un devoir. On sait bien que le grand soir n'est pas pour demain.

Mais on n'empêchera pas les gens d'avoir envie de se marier, de manger,
de faire des enfants ... avant la révolution. Oui, il faut vivre, il
faut savoir prendre les bons moments'[66].

CHAPTER 4 — FOOTNOTES

1. J. L. Comolli and P. Narboni, 'Cinéma/Idéologie/Critique', <u>Cahiers du cinéma</u>, 216 (Oct. 1969) and 217 (Nov. 1969). trans. Susan Bennett <u>Screen</u> 12:1 (Summer 1971), pp. 145-55 and 13:1 (Spring 1972), pp. 120-31. Reprinted in <u>Screen Reader</u> 1, pp. 2-10 and pp. 36-46.

2. 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism (1)' trans. S. Bennett <u>Screen Reader</u> 1, pp. 5-8.

3. 'John Ford's "Young Mr. Lincoln"', trans. H. Lackner and D. Matias, <u>Screen</u> 13:3 (1972), p. 6.

4. C. Zimmer, <u>Cinéma et Politique</u> (Seghers, 1974).

5. J. L. Comolli, 'Technique et Idéologie', <u>Cahiers du cinéma</u>, 229 (May 1971).

6. J. L. Beaudry, 'The Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinema Apparatus', <u>Film Quarterly</u>, 28:2 (Winter 1974-5).

7. C. Metz, <u>Film Language</u> trans. M. Taylor (Oxford University Press, 1964), p.

8. J. P. Farguier, 'Parenthesis or Indirect Route', trans. by S. Bennett <u>Screen</u> 12:1 (Summer 1971), p. 136.

9. M. Boujut, 'Alain Tanner: l'objectivité empêche le pari sur l'avenir', <u>Jeune Cinema</u>, 60 (Jan. 1972), p. 21.

10. D. Bordwell and K. Thompson, <u>Film Art</u> (Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 51.

11. Metz, <u>Film Language</u>, p. 185-227.

12. Ibid., p. 108.

13. Ibid., p. 149.

14. Noel Burch, <u>Theory of Film Practice</u> (New York: Praeger, 1973).

15. Metz, <u>Film Language</u>, p. 146.

16. Guy Braucourt, 'Alain Tanner', Propos recuillis à Genève le 16 août 1973, <u>Ecran</u>, 73:16 (Jun. 1973).

17. D. Malcolm, 'The Salamander', <u>Guardian</u> (25.1.73).

18. J. R. Taylor, 'The Salamander', <u>Times</u> (25.1.73).

19. N. Andrews, 'La Salamandre', <u>Monthly Film Bulletin</u> (1973), p. 57.

20. G. Langlois, 'Alain Tanner: Deux attitudes face a une réalité', <u>Lettres Francaises</u> (27.10.71). <u>Note</u> very often page nos. are obscured in periodicals obtained on International Inter Library Loan. These articles are also most often very short, i.e. 1 or 2 pages.

21. Ibid.

22. L. Bonnard, 'Entretien avec A. Tanner', <u>Positif</u>, 135 (Feb. 1972), p. 35.

23. C. Metz, <u>Film Language</u> p. 149.

24. Braucourt, 'Alain Tanner'.

25. J. R. Taylor, <u>Times</u> (26.1.73).

26. Quoted in a production leaflet about the film, issued by Production Svociné 7 rue Carteret, Genève.

27. George Melly, 'Layers of Meaning', <u>Observer</u> (28/1/73).

28. Langlois, 'Alain Tanner'.

29. Bonnard, 'Entretien', p. 36.

30. Ibid.

31. Langlois, 'Alain Tanner'.

32. Filmscript, <u>L'Avant-scène du cinéma</u>, 125 (May 1972),p. 12.

33. Ibid., p. 15.

34. C. J. Phillippe, 'Interview with A. Tanner', <u>Télérama</u> (6.11.71).

35. Ibid.

36. Brancourt, 'Alain Tanner'.

37. Script, p. 25.

38. Langlois, 'Alain Tanner'.

39. G. Millar, 'La Salamandre', <u>Listener</u> (1.2.72).

40. Langlois, 'Alain Tanner'.

41. Ibid.

42. J. Collet, '<u>La Salamandre</u>', <u>Etudes</u> (Dec. 1971), pp. 733-5.

43. G. Braucourt, 'Interview with A. Tanner', <u>Combat</u> (28.11.71).

44. B. Henderson, 'Towards a Non Bourgeois Camera Style', <u>Film Quarterly</u>, 24 (Winter 1970-71), p. 2.

45. Bonnard, 'Entretien', p. 38.

46. Phillippe, 'Interview'.

47. A. Tudor, quoted in 'But its Only a Movie', J. Linton, <u>Jump Cut</u> 17 (Apr. 1978), p. 17.

48. Ibid.

49. C. Metz, 'Current Problems of Film Theory', <u>Screen</u> 14:1-2 (Spring 1973), p.

50. E. Brannigan, 'The Formal Permutations of the Point of View Shot', <u>Screen</u> 16:3 (1975), pp. 54-64.

51. N. Browne, 'The Spectator in the Text; the Rhetoric of Stagecoach', <u>Film Quarterly</u> 29:2 (1975), pp. 26-38.

52. Phillippe, 'Interview'.

53. Langlois, 'Alain Tanner'.

54. Ibid.

55. S. Kracauer, <u>The Theory of Film</u> (OUP, 1979), p. 158.

56. For a detailed discussion of Godard's Brechtianism see J. Lesage 'The Films of Jean-Luc Godard and their use of Brechtian dramatic theory', Indiana University Phd. (1976), 420 pp.

57. K. Caroll, 'Interview with the Dziga Vertov Group', <u>Evergreen Review</u> (Oct. 1970), p. 59.

58. J. Carta, 'L'Humanisme commence au langage', <u>Esprit</u> (June 1960).

59. Collet, 'La Salamandre', p. 734.

60. M. Amiel, 'La Salamandre', <u>Cinéma 71</u>, 161 (Dec. 1971), p. 111.

61. Braucourt, 'Interview', <u>Combat</u>.

62. Ibid.

63. Y. Y. Wu, 'The Middle of the World', <u>Jump Cut</u>, 7 (May-Jul. 1975), p. 7.

64. F. Bucher, 'Le Nouveau Cinéma suisse: réflexions sur un phénomène imprévu', <u>Jeune cinéma</u> (Winter 1974).

65. For further information see J. Brossard et al., 'Bref histoire du cinéma suisse 1896-61', <u>Revue du cinéma</u> 280 (Jan. 1974), pp. 17-70.

66. Phillippe, 'Interview'.

APPENDIX

1 The Crime	2 Rosemonde walking CREDITS	3 Pierre-financial troubles. idea of script	4 Paul on telephone (intercut of Pierre)	5 Paul says goodbye	6 Paul travelling
MUSIC	----25th October----			---25th October------	
			(COMMENTARY ....)		
7 Pierre and Paul discussion (a)	8 Rosemonde at work	9 P and P discuss (b) project	10 Pierre off in search for facts	11 Pierre's search	12 Pierre interviews
			------26th October-----		
			(COMMENTARY ....)		
13 Pierre arrives at R's flat	14 Rosem and Roger at pool	15 Pierre meets R and R	16 Pierre tells Paul about R. Vladimir	17 Uncle and Pierre	18 Paul and his daughter
					(COMMENTARY ....)
19 R leaving factory. meets Pierre	20 in the car	21 Pierre and R in café	22 Pierre and R at the flat	23 family scene at Paul's house	24 R enters from work. Head shaking to pop
25 R at work	26 R and Pierre in café	27 Pierre's house and R taping R	28 Paul's house	29 Pierre and R recording	30 Paul writing
			(COMMENTARY ....)		(COMMENTARY ....)

31	32	33	34	35	36
R and Pierre recording (another day)	Factory. R. quits.	R leaving factory 'free'	swimming pool – R	R arrives at Pierre's. stays night	next morning – Paul finds Rosem

23rd November

37	38	39	40	41	42
Paul writing – problems now	P and P discuss project. defense spirituel Paul listens to tapes	Uncle and Paul (parallel scene)	The strike – Paul walks to R's flat	R looking for job. Paul doing badly. Paul makes love to R.	Paul tells wife Heine passage

25th November

(COMMENTARY ....)   cont.

43	44	45	46	47	48
Paul and daughter	R comes to Pierre's. idea of country	in the car – 3	P and P in hotel	shot of paysage 2 men exit hotel	Paul walks – writes 's'

(COMMENTARY ....)

49	50	51	52	53	54
	Paul and Ros walking in snow SONG	mere de famille R and Paul	Paul and R walk to hotel SONG	Ros and paysan	Paul and Pierre in forest

(COMMENTARY ....)

(COMMENTARY ....)

55
P and P discuss hotel bill and finances

56
Rosem - studio - inner thoughts

57
R in shoe shop p. patron

58
R and Paul try a last taping. - failure. Next am P and P admit failure

59
tramway

60
tram passes

(COMMENTARY ....)

61
Roger takes keys

62
R questioned by police at shop

63
Pierre, R and Paul - discuss theft

64
Paul arrives at R flat

65
P and R in studio

66
P and R in lift

67
P and R at bus stop

68
Paul and R in tram - the 'story'

69
Outside the shop "ennemies"

70
Paul buys shoes from R

71
Paul and Pierre - bailiffs

72
'inspector' leaves

(COMMENTARY ....)

73
P and P Pierre announces he is leaving for Paris

74
R strokes client's feet (intercut of Paul)

75
R leaves shop freewheels in crowd

(COMMENTARY ....)

CHAPTER 5 - RETOUR D'AFRIQUE

In its analysis of La Salamandre (1971), the previous chapter attempted to assess the level of work done on film language, the level of radical formalist practice, and to balance the theoretic formulations made about this film by the director against the resulting artefact on the screen. A gap was seen to emerge between the theoretic formulation and the end product. In addition, the analysis revealed other important but unstressed aspects of the film which were seen on examination to be very interesting and significant. Whilst not adhering to the pure aims in radical film form of such journals as Cinéthique in the early '70s, the film could still be considered a film that was (and is) useful in the radical cause.

This chapter centres on Tanner's film Retour d'Afrique (1973), and presents a similar analysis of the work on film language endeavouring to assess how far this work has in fact progressed from that in La Salamandre. Comolli's seven categories of film cited at the beginning of Chapter 4, are again kept in mind as a useful formulation of ways to situate films with regard to their level of work on film language. Comolli's analysis provides ideas of what constituted a successful radical film in the early '70s and whilst Tanner does not mention him overtly until 1974, in connection with the making of Le Milieu du monde, it is clear that Comolli's ideas underlie La Salamandre and Retour d'Afrique. Both could be said to be a category 'c' film. There can be no doubt that Tanner considered work on the language to be his main thrust in Retour and considered his films as direct progressions in this work. He said that after the surprising success of La Salamandre he had refused lucrative offers concerning his next project, 'qui m'auraient empêché de faire un certain nombre d'expérienes auxquelles je tenais, notamment au niveau du langage'.[1]

Of Retour, he said that it was 'un film qui est moins le film d'une

histoire que le commentaire d'une histoire, et même le commentaire du

film d'une histoire'.[2] Coupled with this work on film language, he

considered the work on distanciation to be much further advanced, a

claim that is also examined in this chapter. Work on film language and

on distanciation techniques are issues that are inextricably linked

with the debate about cinematic realism, and the chapter also presents

a discussion of the film from this perspective. Again, during a close

analysis, certain strengths of the film are seen to emerge, strengths

that 'escape' the theoretic formulations about the film made by the

director, strengths that are, in effect, relatively 'unsung'.   The

chapter concludes with an assessment of how useful, as radical,

subversive film, the final mix of Retour is, and how this 'mix', made

in 1973, relates to more recent thinking on the subject.   Tanner may

perhaps be seen to be significantly in advance of his time in this

respect, though failing in the strictest application of accepted

criteria of 1973.

Whilst the work on film language was tentatively begun in La

Salamandre, Tanner later conceded that technique in this film was in

fact largely sacrificed to story and character. In the interview with

G. Braucourt, Tanner isolated two types of film 'ceux qui sont faits

purement sur l'intuition, avec les tripes, le coeur, les obsessions

personnelles, les films subjectifs donc; et les films très pensés' and

said 'moi, j'essaie de réaliser un cinéma de la seconde catégorie, car

je crois à la necessité de réflechir sur le mode d'expression'.   Retour

he claimed, belonged to the second group; 'Retour est un film très

froid, très théorique, davantage fait sur les idées que sur la matière

vivante, comme l'était Charles ou La Salamandre. Le Retour est un film

où l'on doit voir le cinéma, un film à trois personnages, le couple

Vincent-Françoise, la caméra et le spectateur.'[3] So, work on camera,

editing techniques, narrative etc. were of prime interest, despite the fact that, at this time, this proved practically very difficult, due to the total dearth of skilled film technicians in Switzerland. Tanner wishes to engage his viewer in a dialogue, primarily concerning the consideration of cinema, of the artifice.

Editing Practice

Editing is one of the most important aspects of cinema language and the following examination of editing practices in Retour, made in the light of the above statements of intention, aims to assess if the work on this aspect of film language has in fact advanced beyond that displayed in La Salamandre. The enormous importance of editing is clear immediately in this film. Tanner said 'en fait je suis pris entre deux tendances contradictoires: garder la forme du récit, et en même temps la travailler, la dépiauter, la mettre en morceaux pour voir comment elle fonctionne', and, 'J'ai travaillé le film, dès le stade du scénario, comme s'il s'agissait d'une soixantaine de courts métrages de deux minutes, chaque scène ayant un début et une fin et le tout formant, plutôt qu'un récit lié, un ensemble fragmenté en petits épisodes'.[4]

Tanner's editing practices are to be examined in relation to a dominant editing style that is pervasive in Western film, sometimes called continuity editing, which is in fact a particular set of editing possibilities. This style developed to tell the story coherently and clearly, so that the process of editing does not distract or disturb, and does not call attention to itself. The editing is at the service of narrative continuity. In graphics there is a general continuity, for example the object being at frame centre, the lighting continuity between shots being similar, absence of colour clashes between shots. Rhythmic relations between shots are generally made dependent on camera distance - for example long shots are generally held longer on screen.

Spatial continuity is preserved between shots, the viewer not being disorientated spatially, and not hence distracted from the story. The 180° rule is not generally broken, except in certain well defined ways, and smooth flowing space is created by shot reverse shot patterns, eyeline matches and matches on action. Cuts are in effect completely de-emphasised. Temporal relations between shots are organised also to permit the smooth and economical unfolding of the narrative for example, the story is in chronological order generally, with only flashbacks allowed to violate this. Screen time is shorter usually than story time, ellipsis being used to eliminate 'dead' or insignificant moments. Smooth flow and de-emphasis of editing is also aided by flowing music over the cuts. Tanner considers this artifice a deception practiced upon the viewer and he is pledged to bring it to the open for discussion.

The first group of scenes of Retour constitute a kind of prologue, or prelude. I refer to scenes 1-3 and to the narrative breakdown diagram given in Appendix 1. Given that the director's stated intentions are self-reflexive as far as cinema and its processes are concerned, it is no accident that the first shot is of people watching a film, with the second scene showing them discussing it afterwards; a mirror image of the position of Tanner's audience. In editing terms these early scenes are a curious mixture of the ordinary and the startling, but predominantly the latter. The initial choice of dark scene/noise/close-ups is rather startling and the transition from scene 1 to 2 is both ordinary - in the sense of an obvious narrative continuity with ellipsis, and surprising - in the sense that the sound of 2 is suddenly very different from 1, and graphically, the establishing shot of the café is a sudden change after the close-ups of 1. The light is also dramatically contrasting between scenes 1 and 2. The cut to a close-up after the establishing shot in the café is a

conventional progression, but little else about this shot itself is conventional. In graphic terms there is obviously a similarity between the lateral travelling movements of the camera that covers the conversation of the friends in the café and the camera movement of shot 1. The device is surprising and disruptive in itself. The cut from scene 2 to scene 3 could also be argued to be a mixture of the startling and the conventional; Tanner bleeds music over the cut, thus seeming to de-emphasise it, yet uses a sudden transition to aerial shot from close-up. Also, he is seen straightaway after the cut to be repeating the lateral camera movement but on an aerial scale. The credits are superimposed on this aerial lateral moving shot over the city roofs. (We note by the way that he concludes this shot on the church, or cathedral, the significance of which becomes apparent later as Vincent spells out the forces of Establishment oppression). There is of course no narrative link between 2 and 3. A thematic reason for the transition would not be obvious until later on in the film. Apart from certain conventional elements, the prelude draws attention to editing, and indeed to the fact of cinema generally. One would expect a prelude to set the tone of the work following it.

From scene 4 onwards however, having set up certain expectations, there is a surprising change in the nature of the editing. Tanner takes us on to a group of scenes which describe the ordinary day-to-day life of Vincent and Françoise. Very conventional editing patterns are suddenly observable; classic continuity editing is being demonstrated in front of us it seems. The cuts between scenes 4, 5 and 6 could serve as examples; we see Emilio telephoning Vincent, Vincent answering and a lift for Emilio being arranged in the ensuing conversation. The choice of images is conventional; Emilio coming across to the telephone box, a shot of the telephone and the fingers dialling, a cut to Vincent's phone ringing, a cut to Vincent in bed and then getting out

to come to the phone. Small essential snippets of the conversation are given over shots of the person speaking; a conventionally treated telephone conversation in fact. In these early scenes there are small time ellipses, and each small section is a link in a close narrative chain of events, each bit 'hooking' into the next, and thus distracting attention from the act of cutting in itself. Unimportant moments are eliminated. The only unlinked element is a small luxury that Tanner permits himself - a quick shot of the exasperated face of a man waiting outside the telephone box while Emilio is describing his burst bicycle tyre. The director apparently cannot resist the odd humorous moment, unrelated to the story. (Other instances of this were noted in La Salamandre). Fairly conventional cross-cutting then brings Vincent and Emilio together - shots of Emilio to keep him in mind, as Vincent is shown in his car motoring towards him. These scenes of Vincent driving may be surprising in other ways but not in the editing, which is smooth. Cross-cutting is again used between Vincent and Emilio in the car and the boss waiting for them to arrive at work. Dialogue sometimes flows over the cuts; for example, the patron shouting for an explanation for their lateness flowing over the cut to the two men who then explain. In scenes 7 and 8 we follow a conventional pattern of establishing shot leading to close-ups. One is aware in this section of the film of a fairly slow pace, induced by the fact of there being a lot of cuts but not much 'progress' between them. In establishing the ordinary, drudging routine of his couple, Tanner may be using purposely conventional editing patterns and slow pace to underline the lack of inspiration, boredom and lack of progress in any real sense for Vincent and Françoise. Similar editing implications are seen in the treatment of Françoise's day at work. We see her coming down the street, we cut to the lock of the shop door, cut to her entering. The narrative steps are small and logical.

However, despite the conventional pattern of editing that Tanner has set up in this opening section of the story, he does have a few very effective cuts which serve more than the narrative. He establishes a pattern of cross-cutting between the elements of Vincent's day and that of Françoise, and some of the cuts between the two have the added dimension of demonstrating important differences in work roles, for example scenes 9 and 10. We have the silence and indoor loneliness of Françoise's shop balanced against the noise and camaraderie enjoyed by Vincent who is at work outside in a garden. It is noticeable that Tanner creates, via cutting, a circular movement to the day. Thus, at the end of work, we have almost exactly the same shots and cuts of Vincent driving home, and there are again rather a lot of them; for example, Vincent shot side face driving, the car from the outside, Vincent from the back, and so on. We are aware of repetition. Similarly, Françoise's actions in opening the shop in the morning are simply shown in reverse order in the evening. The cuts are both conventional, and exactly the same as the ones seen before. The day is shown to be moulded into the pattern of travel, work, travel, sleep, travel and so on. There is a last cut to the couple in bed at the end of the day, the cycle completed. As Vincent points out the worrying thing is that they could go on like that for ever. It could be argued that the director uses classic continuity editing in this early part of the film for his own thematic purposes, and to render the audience conscious of conventional patterns after the more daring editing patterns of the prelude. If however his fundamental purposes are missed, he obviously runs the risk of boring his audience with the slow pace, lack of development in the narrative, repetitive conventional cutting. The only surprise in this early section, with regard to editing, is its sudden abandonment in the scene of the conversation of the three workers and the patron (scene 8) in favour of the third

instance of lateral travelling movements over the faces concerned. This sudden switch from what was perhaps expected raises, it could be argued, the level of audience consciousness on editing practices. The camera movements in scene 8 obviously hark back to the previous two similar examples.

The next series of cuts (15 onwards) displays bigger time ellipses. Tanner is still showing us ordinary daily events (different ones) of the couple's lives but he is now being more selective. He is selecting moments on a slightly different principle, those that perhaps have a more significant bearing on the development of Vincent and Françoise, rather than a strict linear series that shows the boring elements of their days. The pace of this section is hence slightly faster, by virtue of the editing. It is in this series of scenes that Vincent announces finally that 'a spring broke' and they begin to grope towards the thought of some positive action. At the end of scene 15, Emilio asks 'why don't we plant the tree in my courtyard?' and Tanner cuts to a shot of the three men planting it in the noisy yard. The dialogue links the two scenes but this cut is spatially and temporally, a jump. Very often however, there are still many conventional elements in the cutting of this section. We have, for example, the conventional fast cross-cutting that we usually see in the treatment of a quarrel between two people. We have also, eyeline matches and ordinary reaction shots. There are again some circular patterns observable; for example, the cut to Vincent at table and Françoise in the bath, and a later cut to the couple at the table and friend in the bath. Occasionally in this section of the film, we have a surprising or challenging cut; one that could be cited is the cut from the couple in bed to the title of the book that Vincent is reading on the work lorry, which is spatially and graphically quite daring.

The editing however becomes suddenly very daring in the last part
of this first section. (I assume here that the film divides easily
into prelude plus three sections; one, ordinary life leading towards
the decision (4-33); two, waiting and the decision (34-81) and three,
(82-end) the new life and its implications.) The cutting creates pace
and reflects the excitement of the decision that has been made. The
letter to Max is written, is posted, and then we have a daring time
jump, a cut from Françoise's hand putting the letter into the box to a
shot of Vincent's hand taking out the reply. Once the furniture is
sold there is a startling cut to the couple on a bridge in the country.
The cut is a jump to open air and space after the confines of the city,
providing implications of sudden freedom. Presumably the bridge - they
cross it - is intended to be symbolic. They are now 'going somewhere'
and in these scenes we have movement by Vincent and Françoise in frame,
contrasting with what went before. Each cut in scenes 29 and 30 is
surprising and unpredictable. From 28, inside the flat, the director
cuts to a close-up of the back of their heads, not the front, with a
white space surrounding the close-ups. Spatially the cuts are
exciting. Tanner proceeds to cut from this close-up to a low angle shot
of a train going over a huge viaduct (in fact a bold eyeline match of a
sort as they are looking upwards in the previous shot). The cut is
very effective and the train suggestive of departure and movement. The
next cut is to a closeup of their faces from the front and a
continuation of the conversation. Tanner then cuts to a low angle shot
of them high up on the viaduct where the train was. They appear to
have 'jumped', the transition is so sudden. The spatial freedom is
almost disorientating, certainly exhilarating. And then we cut to a
downwards (again subjective) view of the countryside, their voices
ringing out excitedly over the acres of space. We do have created for
us, via cutting, a veritable hymn to freedom that is dizzying and

joyful. The director then cuts to yet another panoramic view, this time one of the couple walking across the frame, small against enormous mountains. However, freedom is short and the next shot is the attendant Nemesis; the Post Office girl seals a fateful telegram gives it to Antoine to take. Again the cut is surprising and effective; from panorama to a close-up in a cramped interior. Even before it is confirmed, the meaning of this shot is clear. The call to Antoine hooks this shot into the following one and we see the boy cycling away with the fateful telegram. The next few cuts are interesting with Tanner appearing to deviate entirely from the needs of narrative. Antoine is dwelt upon with affection, the shots of him are beautiful, a combination of use of music, movement within frame, moving camera and cutting. There is absolutely no economy in narrative terms. It seems that Antoine is one of Tanner's chosen people - tranquil yet different, existing within the system yet an alien to it; which of course relates him to the ultimate messages of the film, and the true 'Retour d'Afrique'. The previous disorientating freedom shown in the countryside, and linked to escape, is of course in the film's terms shown to be entirely false and a worthwhile existence is finally found in the city. This point in the film could be said, together with the farewell party, to be the end of the first section. Generally in section-one it is apparent that Tanner is using editing productively. Where he conforms to classic continuity editing it can be argued that he is doing it self-consciously, to underline his message; in the juxtaposition of this sort of editing with the daring and the experimental, he draws attention to the fact of editing in itself, in effect he sets out to teach.

The guiding principles of the editing in the second section are quite different. Sound is very important in the cut from the messenger, over which we hear Bach, and a spirited passage at that, to

the monotonous Arab music of the party and later the slow jazz as the
party wears on and the night gets late. The pace slows to a crawl at
the party. Camera movements, particularly the lateral travelling over
faces, help create this. Also producing a slowness of pace at this
party, we notice that there are numerous small 'scenes' shown of the
one party, one evening, i.e. there is not much progression between the
fragments of material shown. Vincent and Françoise have had their
action (albeit false) swept away from them and are drifting into
inactivity and waiting in their flat. It is noticeable that the cuts
within scene 33 are conventional, de-emphasised, in no way calling
attention to themselves; eyeline matches in fact are used.   In 35,
dialogue flows smoothly over the cuts, thus de-emphasising them.   The
above observations about editing are applicable to the whole of this
second section, both in the scenes and between the scenes that concern
Vincent and Françoise. Perhaps to focus attention on the boredom and
the waiting, there is nothing distracting in most of the editing.
There are, of course, many small scenes, and hence a lot of cuts, but
there is little or no time lapse between them. The material is also
highly repetitive, in order to reflect their lives at this point.   Also
in these scenes of waiting, the pace is sometimes slowed by the choice
of camera movement over cutting. Embedded in this tedium, created by
editing, camera and music, we do have a series of intercuts of the
city, which is the only startling editing in the section. The cut from
35 to 36, a cut from a close-up to a high angle view of the city roofs,
is particularly striking, being the first in the series. There are ten
intercuts ranging from aerial shots of the city to ground level shots
of the busy traffic-ridden streets.   In general these cuts are
effective due to the contrasts they present between silence (the flat)
and noise and bustle (the outside world). The intercuts are generally
accompanied by passages of Bach, and a high level of movement is often

present within frame. The camera is stationary in the intercuts, which underlines the movement in frame and this of course contrasts with the frequent use of the moving camera within the flat. What is odd perhaps, is that Tanner very often 'bleeds' music over the actual cuts between flat and outside thus reducing slightly their impact.

The pace of the film speeds up at the end of section-two, after the decision not to go has been taken (scene 75). To achieve this extra pace we have more action on the screen; for example, Vincent outdoors on a bike, which contrasts with his previous inactivity indoors, and there are marked time jumps between scenes. Similarly Emilio's departure is made via editing to appear very rushed. However other features of these cuts are unremarkable, with the narrative flow remaining uppermost in importance.

The third section of the film is nine months later and starts at scene 82. It opens with the announcement by the voice over of the time lapse, and the changes in the tree and Tanner cuts to a shot of the tree; not to the couple in whom we are most interested, but to a symbol of growth and passing time. The sound in this cut is also striking; a cut from relative silence as Vincent and Françoise are shown leaving their appartment, to the noise of many families living in crowded, cramped conditions. The next cut is very striking and again relies largely on sound for its effect; we see a building site, and as the camera pans over the site, the noise of construction is drowned by the awful noise of a jet passing close overhead. This is to be Vincent's new home, the out of town high-rise for workers. It is even less congenial than the 'humanly' noisy environment of the migrant workers. The cut from 83 to 84 is a logical one; it takes us inside the H.L.M. and into the modern flat. In a series of cuts, starting with Françoise this time, Tanner then proceeds to show us in a way reminiscent of section-one, the elements of the present life and working days of the

two. At 85, the cut is to the girls at the Post Office, and the camera proceeds to track around them, and in 86 the lateral tracking movement is repeated but over Vincent's workmates this time. And then we cut back to the girls, the cut followed by the distinctive lateral tracking movement again. Tanner then cuts to the discussion between the couple on the tenancy issue, again the guiding principle being the sketching in of their new lives and their more active involvement. The next cut from 88 to 89 is interesting in that it denies our expectation, with the last line of 88 'let's go and see what the other tenants think', not being followed up. We are presented with Vincent's bearded friend sending a telegram of the words of Césaire to his mother. The significance of the cut may be read as the balancing of beginning political action on the part of Vincent (88) against the taking up of Césaire (that is of words as action substitutes) by his friend. We then, at 90, cut to what we expected at 89, the tenants in discussion. At 91 we cut to the couple in their flat and the taking of another major positive decision to make a baby, an 'enemy', to carry on the struggle after them. A series of quick cuts, close-ups, leads us to this decision, and then a cut for a brief scene of the two making love. It is interesting that a cut that is overtly symbolic follows this, namely of the tree being felled. Tanner is presumably indicating the impossibility of quelling radical forces; one hope is cut down, another is being made. This symbolism may be a little obvious for comfort, but the editing of 92 itself is very effective; the cuts are fast, underlining the brutality of the act and we move speedily from establishing shot to trunk, to axe chopping, to each face in turn watching. The faces are delightfully chosen to represent the pure stupidity of the minions of the state. We then have a very dramatic jump to scene 93 and an awful urban wilderness with a jet tearing across the sky. Music has in fact linked the tree chopping to this

scene, perhaps linking one kind of sacrilege to another. The last three scenes 94, 95 and 96 are devoted to the question of who will care for the coming child. Dialogue - for it is almost a continuous conversation over a couple of days - blurs over the fact of cutting, as does music which links the scenes together. It is as if Tanner wants us to concentrate on the issues, which are of course vital to the messages of the film.

What should in general be said of the editing of this final, third section of the film is that it is smooth and conventional at times, yet at other times offers startling jumps. This perhaps gives an overall jerky and nervous effect, in keeping with the stressed efforts of Vincent and Françoise to hammer out a new and more positive life amid appalling conditions. The cutting does not lead us along a conventional flow of events however. It is rather descriptive, thematic or overtly symbolic in its effect. The time lapses between scenes are hence often completely uncertain. By its very jerkiness, the editing may lead us to be aware of editing as a facet of film, but its chief aim appears to serve the theme and the ideas propounded in the film itself.

It has been clear in the overall analysis of Tanner's editing practices in the film that the viewer has a great spectrum of editing possibilities shown to him; conventional patterns are juxtaposed against creative and daring editing, the total effect being one of unpredictability. In this respect the editing could be said to be self-conscious, experimental, leading the viewer to an awareness of editing itself. Tarantino argues that 'only when the viewer acknowledges the elements at play, both formal and contextual does the process of reading begin. It is at that juncture, at the level of questioning, as opposed to acceptance that the work is set in motion, that the outer process, the work itself commences.'[5] Whilst I would

not in general agree with the conclusions of this article with respect to __La Salamandre__ - Tarantino argues for a far greater level of the self-reflexive in that film than I find evidence for - it would seem that his statement applies more nearly to __Retour d'Afrique__, where work at this level is more truly begun.

Camera Usage

We turn now to Tanner's use of camera, with a view to assessing the work on the language undertaken in this aspect of the film. The central importance of camera has already been touched upon, and we note that camera is given equal weight with the couple and the spectator. Tanner states that:

> Le __Retour__ est un film à trois personnes, le couple
> F/V, la caméra et le spectateur ... le film n'existe
> que lorsque le triangle peut se fermer, c'est-à-dire
> lorsque s'établit le rapport F/V-C-S, c'est-à-dire
> encore lorsqu'il a été vu au moins par un spectateur
> et que celui-ci sait (ou devine) qu'il est la pointe
> du triangle ce qui signifie qu'il comprend qu'il ne
> doit pas simplement regarder F/V, mais F/V vu par C,
> qui s'efforce de son côté de le lui faire sentir,
> afin que S ne se croit pas dans la rue mais au
> cinéma. Le triangle repose donc sur une base de
> nature dialectique. Afin que F/V ne soient pas la
> pointe supérieure du triangle, on a choisi
> d'inventer pour eux une histoire aussi simple
> qu'édifiante. (6)

There follows his claim that we have quoted before that the film is finally the commentary of a film upon a story. He goes on to say

> grâce à C, le spectateur pourrait peut-être devenir
> le citoyens un rôle que malgré certaines apparences
> il ne joue plus guère au-dehors. D'où l'importance
> du cinéma et celle de s'efforcer de lui donner une
> forme triangulaire'. (7)

This statement by Tanner is of course very interesting on several wider levels than the question of the use of camera. It raises the whole issue of Tanner's concept of the art work as being open rather than closed, continually being re-made, evolving, and the attendant role of the spectator in such an artwork. The implications of this are

political as he intimates. Also underlying Tanner's statement is the

global issue of realism in cinema and some interesting pointers to the

role of narrative.

In another interview the director gives further important insights

into his use of, and attitude to, camera.

> Dans les autres films   de fiction nous étions
> limités par les   conditions   de tournage.   Par
> exemple, pour La Salamandre nous avons filmé dans
> des intérieurs réels si exigus que nous devions
> placer la caméra au seul endroit possible ... ici
> la démarche était inverse, on a d'abord placé la
> caméra où nous le désirions. La caméra bouge quand
> les acteurs sont statiques, elle est statique quand
> les acteurs bougent. Mais nous avancions à tâtons
> sans théorie préconçue. (8)

He cites for example the scene of the postières to be an experiment, and

discusses what was achieved;

> J'ai un peu voulu utiliser la caméra comme une
> gomme. Un montage sur   les filles aurait été
> ridicule parce qu'il y avait un tel hiatus entre ce
> que peuvent être de vraies postières et ces 4
> filles, ces 4 actrices qui sont là un peu comme des
> chorus girls ... je me suis rendu compte qu'il ne
> fallait absolument pas se préoccuper du texte; la
> caméra se contente d'effectuer ses aller et retour,
> de façon très irrationelle et le résultat est, je
> crois excellent. (9)

The scene was shot eighteen times, the actresses setting and exploring

the tempo. And Tanner concludes by noting that distanciation marks the

tone of the film and that the camera is one of the chief agents of this

distanciation.

We have noted that in the prelude the editing is daring and

obtrusive and the use of the camera is also immediately striking.

Tanner begins his film with a long lateral pan over the faces of the

friends in the cinema, and after a 'punctuating' static shot in the

café, the camera immediately takes up the figure again and moves over

the faces of the same friends, but this time continuing and moving back

and forth over the line of them as they discuss the film just seen.

This treatment of a conversation is repeated a number of times during

the film and the effect on the viewer is obtrusive, particularly cumulatively. We note that in this early example of the figure, the movement of the camera is not related to dialogue; sometimes the person who is speaking is momentarily in view, most often not, and in any case the camera stops nowhere for any time. One cannot but be aware of the use of the camera which is behaving in an entirely unconventional way, seeming to have an independent and perverse existence of its own. We are used to camera being entirely at the service of dialogue and narrative. This scene is followed by a lateral aerial pan over the city, very lengthy and doubling back and upwards finally to the cathedral on the hilltop. The effect on the audience of the use of camera in these early scenes must presumably be cumulative. As we enter section-one, which depicts the deadly routine of the couple's lives, it is noticeable that the camera begins to behave more conventionally, often static with a good view of the actors, or moving a little to accommodate them. It is in fact unobtrusive until the conversation of the three gardeners and the patron about the work to be done that day, and here again we have the insistent lateral travelling over the faces ranged in a line, back and forth numerous times. Oddly enough, on closer study of this scene, it emerges that the camera keeps nearer to or is often actually on the speaker more of the time than in the previous instances of this figure. The patron in fact does most of the talking and he is usually in view as he talks. Perhaps this is explained by the general leaning of the camerawork in this section towards the conventional and the unobtrusive; for example the scene where the maid brings them tea, the camera tracks a little to keep the girl in frame. Also conventionally, the camera backtracks in front of Vincent's car as he returns from work, or moves into a close-up at important points of a dialogue, e.g. when Vincent and Françoise's discussion moves from generalities about Hindu marriage to the subject

of their own marriage and children, the camera moves up into close-up. It is perhaps the juxtaposition of the conventional with the occasionally unusual that sums up these early scenes, and perhaps by virtue of the juxtaposition, awareness of camera use is awakened. And conventional camerawork leaves the field open for the developement of theme, mood and story. The pace of the narrative quickens (scene 29), Vincent and Françoise being free at last, having sold their furniture and arranged to go. The camera echoes this sense of freedom by moving along with them, for example as they walk along by a river in the countryside. Most of the feeling of exhilaration created in these scenes is of course created by editing, as we have pointed out, but the use of the moving camera does also contribute.

As section-two begins, Françoise and Vincent have 'stopped', they are caught, having been told not to come yet in fact in practical and in spiritual senses having 'left'. Paradoxically, apparently, the camera starts to move, which helps to slow the pace and hence aids the mood the director wishes to create. However the camera also begins to behave unusually: at the party, it tracks slowly around the room, over the seated friends as they talk to, and sometimes about Vincent, about the Third World and about Switzerland. The dialogue is not always audible above the music and the general chatter, and the camera wanders about scrutinising faces with no regard to it, although occasionally it may be noticed that it is on the relevant face. Oddly enough, at other parts of the scene the camera dutifully follows Vincent, i.e. behaves conventionally. In scene 35, a different kind of obtrusive effect can be found, again due to camera movement. The couple talk about the lack of food and what to do generally. Vincent speaks first and the camera is directed at him, but as Françoise replies the camera starts to slide down towards her (she is on the floor). It does not reach her in time to see her utter her reply but by the time it reaches her Vincent is

speaking again. This 'lagging' effect is observed twice in this scene and is very noticeable. The camera is unwilling apparently to afford 'the best view' that it generally gives the audience; it is not generally wandering in space as someone speaks, but on the person speaking, or failing that on a reaction shot. A certain frustration at the tardiness or the 'inefficiency' of the camera is felt. Other parts of this same scene however have conventional camera usage. Many of the scenes that follow employ a static camera, perhaps reflecting the static state of the couple ,and of course the camera is obstinately still during the city intercuts, despite the fact that the people in the street virtually bump into it. This is a disconcerting and unusual effect. The lens is actually blocked by people passing very close by. Sprinkled within these static camera shots of section-two we have noticeably erratic and unconventional movements, for example, in one scene of the couple in bed, the camera, for no apparent reason backs away and circles left (scene 42). The impression created by this scene is that the camera is inefficient and clumsy. This, Tanner would argue, is revealing of the true nature of the camera, it is awkward and heavy, and the director denies us the slick artifices that generally cover up this fact. On another occasion, when Françoise has decided to go out, she moves about agitatedly and the camera lags behind her movements unable to keep up, and on occasion slides off to Vincent when she is talking. She, as it were, catches it up, and she is in frame at the end of the scene. Very often the camera noticeably does not centre the actors but slides past them, not according them the centre position of importance. So, the unconventional and the ordinary are in fact juxtaposed in section-two of the film.

The third section could also be described as reiterating this juxtaposition. At the opening of the third section we have a dramatic lateral pan over the building sites and new housing blocks, with a

plane tearing over the sky. It is reminiscent of other long lateral movements by the camera. The effect of this one is of a cool eye surveying the desolate landscape. Oddly enough there is a cut in this lateral pan, though the cut is entirely smooth and matched, so much so that it is hardly detectable. Tanner wishes us to experience the scene as one movement and uses a device that he otherwise disapproves of. Some unusual camerawork is seen at 87, the Post Office girls being introduced by static shots of each and then a cut to the next girl. However when it is Françoise's turn, it arbitrarily breaks the expected pattern and slides across to her, actually sliding across someone's back obscuring vision and creating a disturbing effect. Tanner is obviously attempting to build up a general awareness in the audience of the possibilities of presentation at particular junctures. Scene 88 is the twin to scene 87 in that it pans across her until it comes to Vincent and his friend. It is as if the girls are given 'individual' introductions in their scene; indeed it is the women who play the major role in this third section of the film. Scene 87 is the scene that Tanner discusses in his interview with Marcorelles. This scene is arguably the most 'Brechtian', in its chorus effect and one of the few scenes that can lay claim to be effectively distanciated. Tanner claims the results in this scene as 'excellent'. Whilst the camera does finish up on Anne's face, as at a moment of crescendo, it slides back and forth prior to this with scant regard to who is speaking. Many critics have argued that this camera work is pointless and irritating and worse still plagiaristic in that it draws too overtly on work by Godard. These criticisms I think are missing the intention of the director and they fail to respond to the cumulative effect of the scene. Tanner claims the camera acts like a rubber, by which I take it he means one speculation/set of ideas voiced by the girls is 'rubbed' out by a movement of the camera, and another one tried, and so on until

the final pronouncements of Anne. The scene gradually builds up to this climax, the music coming to a crescendo at this point also. Whilst the camera does not 'follow' the dialogue in a strict sense it uses Anne as a focal point, the pivot of its movements. The combination of movement of camera (and the rhythm it creates), music, and the flow of the dialogue, create a celebration, a hymn of faith in the future generation and the progress it will make. The whole effect is inspiring in its optimism, and looks forward in spirit to Jonas. Critics generally, fail to note the contribution by the camera to the poetic elements in the film, indeed these elements are hardly ever acknowledged. F. Steiner in Travelling is the one exception I have found. He says:

> Le Retour se différencie des films précédents de Tanner. La caméra ne se contente plus d'enregistrer elle devient signifiante. L'image "parle" autant que les mots sinon plus. Il y a une recherche plus poussée dans ce film. Renato Berta fait des prodiges avec sa caméra, donnant à l'image une dimension poétique d'une grande densité, sans jamais tomber dans les pièges de l'esthétisme gratuite. (10)

Most critics do not mention camerawork, or the hoped for self-reflexiveness of the film, speaking only of 'content'. G. Lellis says 'the film is unobrusively edited' and comments that 'apparently one doesn't talk about the compositions or the camerawork in a film like the Tanner work, one talks about content'.[11] One wonders if this means that the core of Tanner's purposes is being entirely missed by most audiences? (Albeit his purposes are not as fully developed as he hoped.) The director certainly agrees that he demands a good deal of his audiences.

The ideas of the last scene of the film are often discussed by critics but again the poetic effect of this scene is unacknowledged. Vincent and Françoise sit each side of a table and toss the coin to see who will look after the baby that is coming. The camera slides back

and forth between them, independently of the dialogue, creating by its movements a sense of the newly achieved balance and equality between the two, and a sort of questioning to see which one of them will shoulder the coming responsibility. The camera here is an overt contributor to the mood, the ideas.

Finally, the camerawork finally in _Retour_ attempts to achieve a variety of purposes. The camera quite often behaves conventionally (perhaps to contribute to theme) but is obtrusive and erratic at times, leading as Tanner hopes to some questioning about the camera itself in films. Since these examples are limited there is little distanciation achieved. However, as just pointed out, some instances of obtrusive and unusual camerawork lead more directly to enrichment of theme, ideas and poetry. In this we therefore find Tanner's stated ideas and intentions with regard to camera not fully articulated in practice.

The Use of Music

The use of music in _Retour d'Afrique_ is a very positive element in the overall exploration of film language. Conventionally, music is composed for the film and is secondary to the image and it serves to reinforce the visuals. Jeffrey Dane says of film music that its significance is to 'supplement the action on the screen but also to tell the same story in its own language'.[12] Such a statement would represent the conventional view. A more modern approach to film music would be to separate it from the film image and to give it its own independent existence. John Cage argues that visuals and music should proceed free of one another and says 'I know that music loses virtue when it accompanies (in film). Nothing in life or art needs accompaniment because each has its own center'.[13]

It is clear that, according to Tanner, the music employed in _Retour_ (passages of Bach), is intended to be both unconventional and self-conscious in its usage and also distanciating. He says

> quant à la musique de Bach, parfois utilisée
> totalement à contre-courant, par exemple sur les
> plans de circulation à Genève, parfois voulue comme
> musique de film illustrative, mais en ce cas avec
> un léger décalage qui permet de créer un climat
> bizarre, son but était aussi de donner un ton un
> peu plus grave à l'anecdote. Le Retour c'est une
> tragédie, une tragédie légère. (14)

The positioning of the music can be seen on the narrative diagram in
Appendix 1. It is certainly clear that the use of music and sound is
interesting and exploratory in a self-conscious way, though I would
dispute sometimes that the resulting effects are such as Tanner wishes
to achieve.

The use of music and sound in the film of the prelude, the film
within a film, is an interesting one in the context of Retour. We do
not see the film that the friends are watching but we hear the
soundtrack and the music, which is an interesting reversal of the usual
priorities when watching a film. From the screams, voices, car tyres
screaming we note that this is a film of spectacle. Most films are,
after all. We have strong rock music over the ending of the film, in
keeping with the general excitement of its tone. In a word, a
conventional use of film soundtrack and music - against which,
presumably, Retour is to be measured. It is also interesting that at
moments at the end of this 'film within a film', the projector can be
heard turning, which might have served as a useful reminder to the
friends that they were watching a film, an artefact, were they not so
absorbed. The music of Bach begins softly, as they are discussing the
film in the café afterwards, and bleeds over the cut to the aerial pan
of the city, thus de-emphasising it. What is more curious is that the
music stops for a few seconds of this lateral pan and city noises
faintly emerge in its place. It then re-starts softly, no apparent
reason for the break. The music builds to a crescendo as the church is
reached, apparently underlining the weight of the Establishment. The
effect of this slow passage of Bach is sad, affective, pointing perhaps

to Tanner's air of 'light' tragedy. Again at scene 5 the use of a more
solemn, even gloomy passage of Bach, heard as Vincent recites Césaire
and drives home through the still sleeping city, is very sad and gives
an air of gloom and hopelessness. We could cite also the extremely
affective use of music over the shots of Antoine bearing the fateful
message.   There are many such examples where the music gives an air of
sadness and is thus used fairly conventionally. As for the 'léger
décalage', this is more doubtful but our experience of film sound and
music has changed from that of ten years ago and it is difficult to
judge.   Apart from frequently assisting the narrative, in the sense of
its being used affectively, the music quite frequently aids narrative
expectations (e.g. the music over scene 26 blending over into 27) that
are then thwarted.   In this instance the music softly begins with
Vincent's workmate friend offering to pay for the farewell drinks and
bridges the cut, not to the expected scene of this happening but to the
couple emerging to go shopping.

It is worth pausing for a second to consider the diegetic sound
of section-one of the film, which is most notably that of the North
African music that Vincent incessently plays while he waits and dreams
of his escape. Its rhythms and qualities are obviously fairly distant
to the western ear and contrast nicely with the Bach, a pinnacle of
western classical music. It should also be noted that Tanner uses the
contrast between noise/sound and quiet very effectively in this phase
of the film; the noise of men talking, Vincent's radio, the lorry noise
versus the total silence (and loneliness) of Françoise's days.   Finally
it should be said that Tanner very skillfully manipulates the use of
the sound of the church bells throughout this section.   The
implications of this small sound are soon recognised, once Vincent has
sung out his bitter little verse to the sound of the bells at scene 4
('politiciens et marchands en rangs serrés derrière le fric'), and at

scene 17 for example, when he is at his lowest ebb, the bells mock his failure to act.

In section-two of the film, it can be observed that the non-diegetic sound, the music of Bach, appears erratically, with no really observable set patterning. It appears for example in scene 35, as Vincent and Françoise consume a pot of jam, and bleeds over into the aerial shot of the city, a positioning that appears to be quite arbitrary and unconventional in usage. With regard to the series of intercuts that we have in this section, they are sometimes silent, sometimes have city noise and sometimes have music over them. Tanner considers the passages of Bach over the traffic to be entirely 'à contre courant', but I think it would be necessary to exempt from this description, the scene at 69 where the music powerfully aids the sense of the visuals and complements it; we see traffic in fixed and huge lanes, heavy sombre music echoes the fact that Vincent and Françoise's fate is sealed. They are not going. On the whole, it is clear that the music is only affective in a conventional sense on two or three occasions in this part of the film, including the instance just cited.

Again there is a play between silence and sound; the noise of the streets, the silence of the room. The exterior noises that come into the silent room are a shock or a threat, for example the sudden ring of the telephone, or the radio propaganda about subversives. This pattern of silence inside/noise outside is once reversed, with notable effect and we have Arab music in the room then a silent shot of the street.

In section-three (scene 82 to the end) the music is seen to be often positioned where we do not expect it; there is an obvious actual discord between music and visuals, for example the soft music over the chopping of the tree, the latter act to be seen as a cruel and pointless re-assertion by the Establishment of its power over those who try to go their own way. At other times there is apparently no point

at all for the music being positioned where it is - not even the creation of discord - for example, the soft music as the tenants discuss their strategy with regard to the landlord and the compulsory sale of the flats. The one instance where the music is affective and very appealingly so, is during the scene with the four postières which begins with the announcement by one that she is pregnant. This scene is both comic and lighthearted and yet moving and fundamentally serious. (A literary parallel could well be the moving though faltering speech of Tom Brangwen in The Rainbow on the occasion of his marriage, where he struggles towards the verbalising of truths that are fundamental to the messages of the book, amid anecdotes and ribaldry from his audience?) The music stops in the middle of the scene and later starts again with the words of Anne 'everything changes for the better...', and continues and increases in volume until it reaches a crescendo with Anne's final joyous statements about the future and the importance of the child, serving to emphasise and engage our sympathies with this message which is among the most important of the film. A poetry is created between the camera, visuals, music and dialogue. The music of the last three scenes (94, 95 and 96) is seen to stop and start erratically but it does come to a crescendo right at the end as the coin is tossed and the image is frozen to give an air of finality to what is in fact manifestly a very open ending. With regard to sound within the film frame in this third section of the film, it must again be noted that noise, that of building sites, aeroplanes, i.e. the noise of modern urban existence, is very important; it permeates the whole section as it is an integral part of the urban environment the couple have chosen to face.

One might finally argue that in the 'mix' of unconventional and the conventional elements in the music, conventional and affective usage is more pronounced than Tanner leads us to believe. One can argue that it

is affective at moments when the director claims it to be 'à contre courant' to the image. The music could not claim either to be distancing; the Bach is moving, affects our viewing of the film, tending to draw us towards it with sympathy rather than to distance us from it. Where, on careful listening, it can be heard to stop and start rather erratically within a scene, this is very gently done and the stops and starts are barely obtrusive. The existence of the Bach enriches the film, lending an air of sadness and dignity to a small 'tragedy' that has wide implication for all. If one thinks of the concept of the triangle that Tanner used to describe camera usage in the film - i.e. 'F/V' (the images)-'C'-'S' - then this concept can be employed with regard to the use of music. In the triangular relation 'F/V'-'M'-'S', then the music may be seen to relate to both other points of the triangle but perhaps the link between 'M' and 'F/V' (i.e. images) is closer than Tanner envisaged, and more dominant.

Narrative Strategies

In the light of Tanner's stated intentions of exploring cinema language in this film, claiming it to be 'même le commentaire du film d'une histoire', we shall now look at the narrative strategies the film employs and endeavour to assess the level of their contribution to the overall self-reflexive desire to highlight and work on the formal elements, the language of film. Classical Hollywood cinema, as envisaged by Tanner and by left-wing perspectives at the time, was regarded as the dominant mode of narrative form and it is against this dominant, conventional style that Retour is to be measured. This classic Hollywood style has also been called the continuity style, and what Noel Burch in his book Theory of Film Practice damningly calls the 'zero point of cinematic style',[15] predominant in the '40s and still a dominant mode today. In terms of narrative, the dominant mode has a general structure of rising and falling action, this being broken down

into exposition, complication, climax, dénouement. The narrative is tight and economical, each element having a clear narrative motivation and fitting into a cause and effect chain which is the main feature; in effect each narrative element neatly hooks into the next. Time and space are organised in such a way as to serve the cause and effect chain. This is a narrative form that captures the audience, ensuring its involvement. The story itself is emphasised and the work, the actual process of narration, is not noticeable. The ending of such a narrative is closed, the cause effect chain having been completed, no loose ends being left.

The narrative strategies of Retour may be unconventional in the light of the above perspective, but it could perhaps be usefully stated at the outset that strong narrative interest is at the heart of the film. Tanner calls his film 'une tragédie légère qui prend naissance dans le huis clos de la chambre, s'amplifie lentement à mesure que le temps coule, prend sa forme dans le trou de 9 mois "off", pour éclater enfin dans le cadre de l'H.L.M.'.[16] This statement is odd in the sense that, with regard to narrative structure, it sounds a rather conventional note, and secondly, the movement of the actual film can be hardly said to be a tragedy, rather it is optimistic. Tanner also says 'la fonction du récit c'est de montrer le passage du temps à travers des êtres qui changent et dont les rapports évoluent. Ce qui est encore plus marqué dans Le Retour que dans mes deux autres films, puisqu'ici la narration se déroule entre deux moments bien définis".[17] The time scheme is generally very precise - e.g. fifteen days in the room. Vincent and Françoise are monitored over a precise period of time, we witness the changes in them. We desire to know, not what will happen so much in external events (there is virtually no action in the conventional sense), as what will happen within themselves and within their relationship. Despite the strong, indeed

fundamental narrative interest, Tanner claims that the story is 'aussi simple qu'édifiante ... afin que F/V ne soient pas la pointe supérieure du triangle'.[18] (The other points are spectator and camera.) Whilst there is a strong narrative Tanner himself points to one most striking aspect of the narrative structure he employs. In the interview with Braucourt he claims to fear telling a story directly, tricking the spectator into the idea that this is reality that he is seeing, explaining also that he hence uses distanciation techniques. He goes on to admit that in fact he is caught between two tendencies, one keeping the form of the story and two, chopping it up into fragments. This underlines the fact that there is a strong narrative thrust, yet the important and unconventional facet of the narrative is that it is broken down into small segments. This basic structure is reflected in the narrative schema in Appendix 1 where an attempt has been made to set down clearly these small segments of which the film is made up. The diagram will serve as a reference point in the ensuing discussion of the narrative of Retour. On the whole the demarcation lines between the small 'films' are very clear cut.

The other unconventional main patterning that is observable in the film is that the scene can be grouped into large sections (also marked on the narrative diagram). These sections have already been identified in earlier discussions. On close analysis it emerges that each of the three main sections has different principles of narrative at work and each one is very interesting in terms of its narrative procedures.

It is curious that the opening three scenes of the film, which we have termed the prelude to the main film, where normally we would expect to see a story begin, are non-narrative in one sense, and thus our expectations of narrative are slightly frustrated at the outset. We find ourselves searching for a protagonist among the faces shown

fleetingly in the cinema. The next scene we are equally searching for a protagonist and the start of a story. Neither is given. The prelude scenes consist of a group of people in the cinema watching the end of a film and a group in the café discussing the film afterwards. We hear a voice over which speaks about the subject of the film and we have then an aerial shot of the city and credits. In long retrospect this prelude can be 'incorporated' into the narrative, for example it can be considered as a segment of the couple's ordinary life, and hence linked to the portrait of life in part one of the film, or it can be considered as part of Vincent's 'escape' from his problems. The true function of the prelude lies elsewhere however; one could suggest that the prelude hints rather at the mood with which the film is to be viewed, a self- reflexive mood set by seeing people seeing a film and talking about it. It is a pointer to self-consciousness on the part of the audience about what they are doing so that the viewing of Retour d'Afrique is undertaken more consciously and dispassionately. It forms part of the overall design by the director to engage the audience in a dialogue on the questions of film language. The prelude may also be seen as a warning, in that we witness a group apparently 'captivated' by a film, dominated, but attempting hesitatingly to come to some conscious conclusions after the event. It is interesting to note that as they struggle through the usual platitudes 'it wasn't bad' etc., the only important point that is seen to emerge is one concerning technique or language, 'I like the film - it wasn't flat, not all on the same surface', says one of the friends. But this comment may also be part of the warning in the sense that apparent depth can be seen as a trick, a Bazin type criterion for realism that could lead the audience to think they are seeing reality. Flatness, the opposite of in-depth photography might be more distanciating (for example Godard consciously creates flatness for this reason). It is also noted that the music and

sound of the film within the film is also conventional and spectacular. The use of the commentary also undermines the conventional narrative procedures in that it tells us, even before we apparently have a protagonist, what the film is about. The following shot, an aerial one, also removes us from narrative interest and forms part of a whole chain of exterior shots, aerial ones, street level ones, of the city, which are a poetic evocation of the outside reality that the couple ultimately have to contend with and live in. The significance of this early city shot is not apparent at this stage.

The narrative proper begins at scene 4, the prelude being unspecified in terms of its time relation to section-one. From 4 to 33 we have a depiction of the ordinary, dull lifestyle of Françoise and Vincent, the development of a plan of action to evade this and the saying goodbye to friends. The first few scenes of section-one do appear, interestingly enough, to lean towards conventional patterns of narrative; one scene hooks via dialogue into the next one until the two men arrive at work and plot time is condensed conventionally, with expected ellipsis. However, it becomes clear after a few scenes like this that the narrative strategy alters and that we are being shown short elements of a typical day of Vincent and Françoise, the effect is in fact representative, or cumulative, rather than leading us along a story line that is obviously progressing. We note that from 4 to 14 is day one, and from 15-18 is day two, that is to say Tanner begins the same strategy to show the boring routine of their lives, but he condenses the number of elements in day two to three to avoid audience boredom. Scene 19 is the breakpoint; 'a spring broke', says Vincent, and having decided to go the narrative gathers pace, beginning with scene 21/22 and a daring time ellipsis. A huge chunk of story time, dead time, is omitted. Françoise posts the letter and in scene 22 Vincent's hand is seen taking the reply out of the Sylvestre box.

(This latter scene of course prefigures a whole series of scenes of Vincent at the box.) Scenes 23 and 24 are another day, and more examples of daily events, but again further condensed. Parallel narrative structures can be seen at work in this first section; we see the man going to work and the woman's work and the differences between these work situations emerge strongly in the parallel structure. Another parallel structure is that of Vincent and Emilio on the lorry where the second scene (23) is quickly recognisable as a 'repeat' scene, but the slight differences are satisfying and very pertinent. The last segments in section-one are not related specifically in time and space. They could loosely be grouped under a head of 'getting ready to go' but they do not hook into one another in a conventional way. Sometimes narrative expectations are consciously thwarted from scene to scene.

Section-two of the film, 'waiting' (34-81), is perhaps the most interesting with regard to narrative procedures. Unlike conventional narratives, here particularly, nothing happens. The couple are incarcerated in one room, so there is no change of scene, and they wait for a letter telling them what to do. Everything is bare since all possessions have been sold. They are in limbo, emotionally departed, physically there. The director is faced with a dual problem, that of making the audience experience the waiting and yet avoiding ultimate irritation and rejection of the film. Beckett faced the same issues in Waiting for Godot and broad similarities can be detected in the ways in which he tackled them. Beckett used circular patterns of actions and words, putting on a boot, taking it off again, repeated verbal patterns 'what are we doing ... we're waiting for Godot' and so on. The same tree is always in evidence. But with all these repetitions there are found to be minor important variants. Tanner uses circular patterns for his narrative that progress nowhere. The repetitions emphasise the

lack of progress. The minor variants in the apparent repetitions avoid final irritation on the part of the audience. The whole patterning is formally satisfying. The most obvious circular pattern is that of Vincent going to the postbox, the high point of his days. As has already been pointed out, the first example of this series has been given in section-one, in fact on a high note for Vincent since he takes an important letter out of the box at that moment. The action of going to the box happens seven times in section-two and the action contains a number of basic elements, e.g. Vincent going to the box, opening it, shutting it, re-entering the room and telling Françoise the outcome. Within these elements there are many possible variables involving selection or non-selection of elements and variables of camera angles, music, etc. One important variation is at scene 44 where Vincent slams the box door and looks out into the street. We see a dark silhouette of Vincent shot from behind with the light and activity of the street around him. It is a good shot, emphasising his mole-like retreat into darkness and his momentary temptation towards the light and outside life. At 51, we have a satisfying variation on this, as Vincent slams the box, looks out towards the street as before, but this time Tanner shoots the shot from the light, from the street side, so the light shines on Vincent's face. We get an 'external' view of him, what he looks like from the point of view of the street. Again he retreats into darkness. In fact, via the small variables in the 'going to the box' chain, the ebb and flow of Vincent's feelings and mental state is registered, perhaps showing an overall pattern of resolution/frustration/anger/toying with the 'outside' and finally incarceration and retreat. The general trend it should be said is to condense the elements of 'going to the box', and of course on Saturday and Sunday the pattern of box visiting is disrupted. The visits to the box also provide the opportunity for announcing how many days it is

they have been stuck inside the flat. At scene 64, after eight days, they send a telegram to Max and do in fact receive a response which ironically tells them to wait another ten days till he returns home. The letter does not turn out to be a signal for action.

Other circular narrative patterns emerge on examination of this section in the sense that there are numerous repetitions of the same few activities such as eating and reading the newspaper, sometimes with apparently no time jumps in between; for example, 54 and 57 are the same activity, 55 and 56 are intercuts but when we return to Vincent in 57 he is doing precisely what he was doing in 54. Story time and plot time are very close here. We are hence made to feel the weight of time and of course what is shown is what might otherwise be termed a 'dead' moment and cut out of conventional narratives altogether. Another observable narrative pattern is the balancing of Françoise going out (with Vincent resisting angrily and staying in), with the later shots of Vincent going out and his wife staying in, a significant reversal in their attitudes.

The most striking narrative feature of this section is of course the intercuts - a whole series of shots of the outside, the city, apparently at first glance unrelated to the story. In general it should be said about them that they relate the slow interior time scheme of the couple to 'real' outside time and the life from which they are in retreat. (They provide also for the viewer a visual change from the monotony of the scenery in the flat.) These intercuts form an interesting and a related series. The series began in the prelude with shots of the 'pays natal' to which Vincent and Françoise have to learn to return. The intercuts tend to be of two main types. Firstly, the aerial views that are linked to the one we saw in the prelude. In the first such shot (at 36), a shot of roofs, we have the couple's view presented, the view from their attic window. At 53, in response to

Vincent's comment 'outside is the planet Mars' we have another subjective view of theirs. Other aerial shots in the intercuts, if not Vincent and Françoise's actual subjective viewpoint, can be taken to relate to their general mental view, which is one of dissociation. A separate discussion of the use of music has been made earlier in the chapter but in practice of course all elements work together and most of these aerial views with their music create a sad, indeed a poetic effect. It could also be noted that the camera is always static in the intercuts and any movement is movement in frame. These intercuts of what we may call type-one, often reflect symbolically and indeed very effectively on the fortunes of the couple at particular stages. The most notable such shot is at scene 69, immediately after they have been told not to act but to wait another ten days. This is a superbly effective aerial shot of lanes for traffic with huge white arrows and lines and tiny cars creeping along them. (This shot is used again in Messidor with the same general symbolic effect.) The implication is that after certain decision points, our paths are decided, there is no escape from the directions along which we are moving. The other sort of intercut, type-two, puts the static camera right down at street level, i.e. right down 'into' life, so close indeed that passers-by almost bump the lens and certainly often obscure the view. Here is not Vincent's view, but the reality of city life, cars, noise, bustle, traffic police, people in crowds directed by batons and lights. We are given also two shots of a bridge, but with the same ground level camera position.

The commentary is a narrative device which puts into words what we, as well as Vincent and Françoise know, namely that they are not now going. Words, the commentary explains, have been false and misleading and this decision is hence, on the couple's part, wordless. A new phase of the narrative, 'post waiting', is entered into and this lasts

from scene 75 to 81. In these scenes Vincent attempts to do something
positive, in the first instance for Emilio, finding out that Emilio has
ironically 'already gone' and Emilio's going is real and harsh.   The
section fittingly ends with the couple leaving the appartment; we see
them emerging from their dark, claustrophobic retreat, emerging from
the doors that closed upon them in scene 33 after the farewell party.

    Section-three of the narrative begins at scene 82.   The story
could have ended at 81 as they left their voluntary incarceration and
went to rejoin life outside, but scenes 82 onwards, considered by some
critics to be therefore superfluous, raise and discuss the most
important issues for their personal and political development.   A
daring time jump in the plot is announced by the commentary (not via a
more conventional written title); nine months have passed and this fact
is spoken over a shot of the tree, which the commentary informs us has
grown enormously. In narrative terms this is a shock, after being used
to seeing Vincent and Françoise very often, and over a short space of
story time (fifteen days). Furthermore, instead of mentioning the
couple directly, Tanner focuses on the tree, symbol of hope against the
forces of the Establishment. This creates a question of what has
happened to Vincent and Françoise, a temporarily thwarted desire to
know, a spirit of questioning which underlies the statement that Tanner
himself makes about this 'hole' in the narrative; 'tout le sujet du
film était finalement dans ce trou que le spectateur doit combler en
faisait appel à son imagination, ce qui correspond encore à la volonté
de faire de ce spectateur un interlocuteur'.[19] The nine months is a
settling into Swiss life, the spectator must then call on his own
resources as to how it takes place, what happens, what compromises were
reached and so on.   Since nine months also symbolise a gestation
period, it is clear that their passage is to be viewed very positively.
Section-three of the narrative gives a view of the new life of Vincent

and Françoise, giving sample occurrences from that life. There are obvious parallels with the grinding routines of section-one, e.g. the getting to and from work. Both have new jobs but there is a new emphasis on the work and concerns of Françoise rather than her husband. Françoise is shown to have changed and evolved more and is now the spearhead of the relationship. The scenes do not hook into one another in narrative terms, with the exception of 94 to the end. These scenes are linked in terms of their being fragments of what we are led to believe is a continuous conversation over a period of days, namely the conversation surrounding the question of 'who will look after the baby?'. The ending is open; we do not see how the coin lands and the image is frozen. Revolution is a continuous process. Again in this section of the narrative we have effectively two intercuts (83 and 93) which follow on in the series already mentioned; they show the awfulness of the environment. It is noticeable that, far from being aerial shots mirroring Vincent and Françoise's removal from everyday reality, these shots are ground level and very noisy, the implication for the couple now being the reverse.

It has become evident after a closer scrutiny of the narrative of Retour that apart from a self-conscious toying with conventional narrative at times, e.g. the early scenes of section-one, we do not have a tight narrative chain, one scene hooking into the next, nor a conventional treatment of time and space which serves this, nor do we have the conventional overall shape of such a narrative, nor the neat closed ending. This is also a narrative where 'nothing' happens in the conventional sense and there is nothing of the spectacular. The 'dead' spots are given full weight. It is also noticeable that this narrative is not economical, Tanner puts in episodes that are not strictly related to the narrative line at all (a feature also observable in La Salamandre), for example Emilio in the restaurant or the shot of the

exasperated man outside the phone box as Emilio tells of his puncture, or the little 'after you' sequence of Françoise and the old man at the post box. These show Tanner's love of the small anecdote, a touch of humour that creeps into his film despite his attempting to make this film more austere, colder and giving the audience less to laugh at. (He thought, we remember, that audiences laughed too much at La Salamandre.) These little touches are very valuable in themselves, as little cameos of character and humour that enrich the film rather than needing to be dismissed as digressions. What we do have in this narrative is a quietly inventive and self-conscious exploration of narrative itself, a conscious experimentation that can often be observed to dovetail with the attempted work going on in such areas as camera, editing and sound. For example in the early part of section-one we have conventional editing patterns, unobtrusive camerawork and a brief play with conventional narrative structures. That is to say there is an attempt at achieving an organic quality in the formal structures of the film at given points.

Characterisation

A reverse side of the coin of radical work on film language, and inextricably linked to it, is the whole question of cinematic realism. Basic similarities between Retour and the neo-realist tradition have been discussed in Chapter 1. An important difference however that is revealed when we look at the film in detail, lies in Tanner's conception of character in Retour. The characterisation of Vincent and Françoise is rounded and full. Their characters are not primarily interesting as reflections of society, but more as individual human beings. The whole focus of the film is on them, and their characters are demonstrated by Tanner to develop and alter over a period of time as they face particular issues and situations. Tanner says 'dans cette histoire ce qui m'a intéressé ce sont les personnages à l'intérieur du

couple et à travers leur transformation sur un plan social, plus particulièrement la transformation de la femme'.[20] The narrative charts this development of both the individuals and the relationship between two precise moments in time. In the fifteen days spent in the room, Tanner even puts his characters in a totally bare setting, stripped of all the ordinary things of life thus forcing the audience to contemplate the characters and their mental and emotional development. Quite apart from the fifteen days of isolation, in the rest of the film the two main characters are hardly at any point off the screen.

Vincent is shown at the beginning of the film at a point of stalemate in his life, unable to break away to the Thirc World of which he dreams, unable to have a child and face the consequences of this, unable to face the capitalist 'future-for-two' that Swiss society is seemingly offering him. He is an immature dreamer, flippant and basically weak and negative. A further very important failing of his is involved in his stereotyped male attitudes; he expects his woman to serve him, in terms of general physical comforts as well as sexually. He talks in terms of mock command to her and the tone is not actually a joke, and attempts to take the traditional male role as active leader. As Françoise is in fact the practical one, he picks on her ideas and assumes the leadership with them. An immature and unlikeable character, having decided he is leaving, he goes to ridiculous lengths both to have a party, despite the fact his trip is cancelled, and to not go outside at all during the fifteen days of waiting. He emerges from his cocooned period of waiting, goes out and begins to take on small but positive battles in the environment in which he is now going to remain, beginning with a losing battle to save Emilio. After the gestation period of nine months we see Vincent installed in an ordinary Swiss workers conditions, in a typical H.L.M. outside of town, a

satellite area. In certain senses he has grown and matured. The move is symbolic of a decision to leave bohemian (basically bourgeois) 'youth' (the attic) and join up with the plight of other workers, as is the change of jobs for the two of them to more truly proletarian occupations. Vincent begins some political organising, co-ordinating a campaign against the landlords to resist the compulsory purchase of the flats they live in. It is notable that the desire of Vincent to leave the flats after the issue is won, also fades away, underlining his committment to his situation and his new class. In terms of his relationship with Françoise, growth is shown to be slow. Nine months later, in their new flat, he is still shown to be complaining about picking her up from work, not having clean shirts, and it is Françoise who is teaching him about what male and female roles should be. We do see, in a rather sad breakfast scene, the strains put upon relationships by the battle of daily life. It is however Vincent who decides to have a child and formulates on what terms they can have a child, to spite their enemies, to carry on the fight. Vincent's next point of growth, again led by Françoise, is the gradual acceptance of the possibility of his taking care of it when it is born and giving up his job. It is no matter that we do not see the coin fall, to have accepted the idea in principle is enough. Tanner is evidently saying that small revolutions in the family unit are the necessary precursors to changes on the public and overtly political fronts. Basically Vincent is an active and mature political force now, and he has also evolved into a more likeable personality.

Thus we see Tanner charts in detail the development in attitudes and personality of his central male figure, Vincent, sketching in his quirks, his strengths, and creating a rounded character. There is nothing of the schematic in his character as there was for example in the characterisation of Pierre and Paul in La Salamandre. Vincent may

well represent a certain sort of young radical that Tanner has observed, but he is uniquely Vincent, full of quirks, foibles, enthusiasms and failings. One might also mention the autobiographical element in Vincent's character, as a point of interest. Tanner says

> Le Retour d'Afrique est autobiographique au niveau du récit mais avec un décalage dans le temps, avec vingt ans de recul. Si vous voulez, la première partie du film, le couple enfermé dans la chambre et attendant de partir, c'est moi il y a vingt ans bien qu'avec des différences notables puisque, par exemple, je n'étais pas marié comme Vincent dans le film et la second partie, qui décrit l'installation dans la vie quotidienne neuf mois après, c'est en fait moi aujourd'hui, c'est à dire que ces neuf mois de durée cinématographique correspondent à vingt années de ma propre évolution dans la vie'. (21)

Tanner discovered Césaire at twenty; 'J'ai reçu la révélation d'un grand poème surréaliste et politique qui en outre me donnait le sentiment d'une éclatante évasion hors de mon cocon helvétique'.[22]

Françoise also grows and changes, and is presented as an equally fully rounded character. It is worth noting that Tanner accords more importance to the woman in the pairing, and suggests a reason for this in an interview with Louis Marcorelles, Marcorelles having noted that this is a common feature of Tanner's films.

> Peut-être les actrices qui incarnent ces personnages sont un peu des muses, très inspiratrices, plus que les garçons, mais pour des raisons simplement de sexe. On est toujours un peu amoureux de ses comédiennes. Je crois aussi que si on veut se placer sur un terrain socio-politique, aujourd'hui les femmes deviennent le levier de beaucoup de choses dans la société à travers leurs lutte, puisqu'elles sont les esclaves d'esclaves en quelque sorte. C'est elles qui sont les prolétaires car il n'y a pas de prolétaires chez nous, sauf les Italiens et Espagnols qui viennent travailler dans notre industrie. (23)

With Françoise, Tanner charts in detail a development from a passive, quiet, dominated woman to a woman who is the strong driving force in the marriage. As if to emphasise this early passivity and the assumed male role of Vincent as the driving force, the early scenes are almost entirely devoted to the portrayal of Vincent; we only have brief

intercuts of Françoise. Not till scene 14 do we hear Françoise speak. She emerges in fact, in conversation as a down to earth foil to Vincent's flights of fancy; for example, he indulges in fantasies about marriages which include twelve children and her reply is short 'douze enfants qui ... qui crèvent de faim'. Her solutions and ideas are the important ones and they are generally adopted by Vincent. In the small scene of the writing of the initial letter to Max (20), Vincent, in the dispute about how to address Max, is seen circling around Françoise, gesticulating extravagantly, but coming back to her and quietly adopting her first suggestion! A small scene, but where the movements are symbolic. It is Françoise who is capable of organising the removal to Algeria, of selling things to facilitate the move, but it is Vincent who adopts these ideas as his own, with her passive acceptance. She allows this pattern in her marriage, despite her husband's actual dependence on her. During their voluntary incarceration she shows common sense and dignity and almost nurses Vincent along as he suffers from his fluctuating humours. After the nine month interval, she is more openly assertive, pointing out the selfishness of his attitudes, openly taking issue with him. Françoise has made an important job move, out of the world of her art shop and is now a worker at the Post Office and part of a real group of female workers. It is Françoise who challenges fixed male/female roles, in terms of everyday strain and the looking after of the coming baby. During the course of the film, Françoise has 'found herself' and has come to take a fully equal position in the married relationship.

The only other main character of the film is Emilio, and it is interesting that the characterisation of Emilio shows some similarities to a neo-realist conception of character. Largely speaking Emilio has no individuality and Tanner does not appear to have attempted to create a rounded character. On our first glimpse of Emilio, describing his

nail, we perhaps have conventional expectations raised of this character, but this does not in fact materialise. Emilio as a figure in the film fulfils certain thematic functions; he is first of all a social type, a representative of a whole class of foreign exploited workers in Switzerland, and via him the conditions of these exiles is described. We hear for example of the constraints on them, see where and how they are forced to live. More importantly, Emilio is used to provide a foil to Vincent. An important vehicle for ideas in the film, he is a 'teacher' and voices ideas that are not yet apparent to Vincent. Vincent indulges on several occasions in flights of fancy, e.g. 'let's drive to Spain', and Emilio makes a terse down to earth reply; 'moi je peux pas ... toi tu peux'. Emilio serves as a vehicle for opposing Vincent's ideas on the Third World and what it is to be a stranger in another country, with brutal realism, 'Les exilés ... des gens qui disent jamais rien, qui ne compte pas, qui ne font pas de politique, qui gagnent seulement leur vie'. At least so it is for ordinary folk, the rich can live easily anywhere, Emilio says. Emilio shows total disinterest in Vincent's reading of Fanon and it is given to Emilio to utter the core message of the film, long before Vincent realises it, long before Vincent develops to that point; Emilio claims that international politics does not interest him anymore, and that it is in the interior of a country, in the classes, that the real struggle is. It is interesting to note that this key statment of Emilio's comes at the beginning of the scene to which Tanner has given absolutely no introduction at all. We understand that we have entered an ongoing conversation about politics and people's specialities in general but there is no lead in to the conversation and it is not set in context.

For the central action of the film, Emilio disappears and re-appears only towards the end as Vincent is emerging into some sort of political action. The indictment against Vincent's dreaming is made

even more pointed by the fact that when he emerges he is too late to help Emilio himself; Emilio is considered to 'have left', a harsh criticism of Vincent's playing with the same idea in the previous section of the film; for Emilio leaving is real, and brutal.

It is worth noting that the other worker colleague of Vincent is given some personal character traits, despite the fact that we have only a few very brief glimpses of him. He is shown to be wily and cynical in the ways of the world, but amusing and likeable in his roguishness. He is dogmatically anti-intellectual. The actor involved, Roger Jendly, has made the character live, despite minimal appearances. If one looks closely at the scenes where he appears it is fairly clear that Tanner is using this character to complete a schema of ideas or positions. We have Emilio's love of politics, Vincent's of cinema and the other workers obsessional love of football. 'Off they go, he says, with their shitty politics again' and he sings the music to the football on television so loudly that he drowns their discussions. On could suggest that Tanner is using this character to present a parody of the idea of a pretty average Swiss worker; this is certainly backed up by the remarks of the patron about workers at the beginning of the film as being good for nothing except gaping at football matches.

The portrayal of the patron is deliberately schematic. He is, like the uncle in La Salamandre, just a collection of stereotyped right-wing ideas; e.g. workers are swine, brainless ... therefore only workers. Those with brains can, like himself, get to the top. Capitalist society is a dog fight, everyone tricking everyone else. The patron says 'c'est ça qui fait avancer les choses, le progrès, l'économie'. He takes the stock line that in communist countries there is no incentive, no-one cares and the system does not work. The patron thrives in Swiss society.

Other small characters are used as vehicles for the development of themes and ideas, for example the bearded worker whose role it is to take over the inactive position of quoter of Césaire. The girls at the Post Office are not characterised, but Anne could be said to be an important vehicle for ideas. She voices ideas that are the core of the film, and that Françoise and Vincent have not fully realised at that stage of the film.

The characterisation in the film is a mixture of the full and rounded and the schematic and flat. It is curious to note that one of the fully developed characters, that of Françoise, is portrayed in a curiously uneven acting style. Is this bad acting, or a misunderstanding between director and actor? Numerous critics identify this as plain bad acting, for example Derek Elley 'as Françoise, Josée Destoop is strikingly attractive but an awful actress, totally incapable of handling the role. The clear desire to burst into laughter at several points typifies the slackness which invests the film'.[24] Certain odd mannerisms and slight giggles on the part of Josée Destoop are in fact several times seen in the film and only on one occasion - in the flat as she screams and then giggles as the plane passes overhead - can they be explained by stress within the character of Françoise. It does appear to be bad acting, a certain amount of actor self-consciousness that has no fundamental purpose; it does not appear to form part of a coherent acting policy, Brechtian or other.

Largely speaking the dialogue of the film is realistic. We think of Vincent's elaborate verbal flights of fancy, substitutes for action, and Françoise's short down to earth utterances in reply. However, there are undoubtedly a few scenes where the dialogue departs from realism and could be said to be overtly symbolic. One thinks for example of the Post Office girls talking. The effect of this scene is of a piece of theatre, a chorus, a set piece, bulding up an important

and joyful message. The dialogue is arranged carefully, for cumulative effect, as is the camerawork and music. Also unrealistic, is the scene where the bearded worker telegrams passages of Césaire's poem to his mother. What we are watching is the taking up of Césaire as a substitute for action by someone else other than Vincent, and we are watching this man under the false spell.

Hints of the symbolic intrude sometimes upon settings, but settings are chiefly within the strict limits of conventional practice. The couple's bohemian flat is shown in convincing detail, cafés, workplaces and so on. After the party everything is sold and they exist in a bare flat. Whilst there is nothing unrealistic about this, it is justified by the plot at this stage, the bare flat must also be taken to some extent on a symbolic level. The couple are stripped of the material trappings of their ordinary life and forced to turn in upon themselves and confront basic issues. Equally, whilst we have discussed narrative in the film elsewhere in the chapter, suffice to point out here that there are narrative elements which are not realistic in a conventional sense and which belong to the realms of the symbolic. One thinks primarily of the planting and chopping down of the tree, particularly the latter scene. Symbol of the attempts at the betterment of the environment by the workers, Tanner arranges his scene so that it is chopped by a policeman, a b :ocrat and a worker forced to act against his fellows. Tanner cuts between them. The policeman's face is particularly well chosen, he looks timid, stupid, certainly limited. The whole scene is symbolic in itself, and by virtue of its placement just after Vincent and Françoise make a baby, the implication being that as one area of hope is cut off, so new forces in the radical struggle spring up.

The Relationship between Audience and Film

Tanner claims to have pushed the research into Brechtian distanciation further in this film than in La Salamandre, linking this of course to his desire to limit the appearance of reality on the screen. 'Je poursuis la développement d'une recherche déjà ouverte précédement: celle des techniques de distanciation car j'ai horreur de raconter une histoire au premier degré, de laisser le spectateur être trompé par l'apparence de réalité et donc se couper de toute possibilité de réflexion'.[25] Tanner cites particularly in this article, the commentary, the use of the reading of Césaire and the music as being the chief agents of distanciation in Retour.

The voice over commentary is heard at three points in the film, at scenes 3, 75 and 82 (see Appendix 1). Hence the first voice over is heard very near the beginning of the film, after one brief travelling shot of a row of people watching a film and a second or so of discussion in the café afterwards. In the café the friends grope towards an assessment of the film they have just seen, moving only slowly from the level of 'it wasn't bad'. This conversation could be said to be a parody of 'after film' discussions. Tanner then lowers the sound of the dialogue until it is scarcely audible and interjects with a voice over. In other words the director cuts off their halting conversation about the film and interjects a well-organised and authoritative statement about what the film is about and how it is to be 'read'. It is a very final sounding statement and the contrast is very noticeable. It is surprising that the director's statement of themes and 'reading' is made almost at the beginning of the film, even before we have distinguished the protagonists from the faces we have seen. We will now watch the film with these ideas, expounded by the voice over, uppermost in mind. The voice over sets up a balance sheet of the possibilities of words. Each sentence it employs is balanced -

'what you say to others/what you say to yourself, a word as an act in itself/as a substitute for action', and so on. The commentary concludes by telling us the source of the quotations in the film, a procedure which has a curious 'literary' and 'academic' ring about it. But perhaps this clarity is geared to the fact that Tanner manifestly wishes his messages to be received clearly (perhaps with a view to therefore releasing the attention of the audience so that it can concentrate on the language of the film). The music, that began softly halfway through the first commentary, rises to a crescendo at the end of it and bleeds over the cut into the aerial city view. We have said that Tanner regards the commentary as an agent of distanciation but on examination this appears to be very questionable. The initial impact of the voice may be momentarily to suspend immersion in the filmic world and of course the voice says directly that 'Le Retour est un film en noir et blanc avec des mots', i.e. it makes a bald statement that we are watching a film, an artefact. But one could equally well suggest that the voice involves us with the film, hooks us in at the beginning to the serious issues that the film will explore. As soon as the chief characters emerge we have an involvement with them. We watch them evolve, with this reading of the issues in our minds. This scarcely accords with the notion of distancing and leaving the audience 'free' to read the film and speculate, as perhaps they are free to do in a Brecht play. One could also suggest that the music works in an opposite direction to that of distancing; it is in itself engaging and affective in this context, and the fact that it builds to a crescendo as the authorial statement ends must lend weight to and involvement with what is said.

The commentary is not heard again till scene 75 where it interjects at a key point in the fortunes of the couple. It explains and crystallises in words what is as yet unspoken by them, namely that they

are not now going. It suggests that after so many words, their real decision is wordless; words have been 'corrupt' before and one must be cautious of them. This voice over is spoken again over close-ups and again its effect is not distancing but involves us further with the protagonists, explaining the stage that they have reached. It effectively again hooks us further into the film rather than stepping us back from it.

The third and final instance of the commentary (82) is at the beginning of section-three of the narrative. This time it is spoken over a shot of Emilio's courtyard with its flourishing tree, and merely states that nine months have passed and the tree has grown. (This fact could conventionally have been done with a written intertitle.) This use of the voice over can be said to be purely functional.

The reading or the quoting of Césaire in a sense provides a second 'commentary' within the film. Certainly to quote this poem in the midst of an ordinary mundane situation - in one instance in the film a Post Office - is a shock to audience expectation. Yet as with the quote from Heine in La Salamandre, one could claim that, despite the director's intention, the effect of the quoting is not distanciating but again leads to closer audience involvement with the film. The interaction between the Césaire and the film is very tightly woven indeed and in examining the relationship between poem and film, one can demonstrate the effects gained by the weaving together of the two mediums. And having done this it is difficult to see how the presence of this poetry can be distanciating.

Aimé Césaire's long poem Cahiers d'un retour au pays natal was published in 1939 and despite the obvious disparities in historical and physical context between it and Retour, the two are married together in the film in a very close and productive relationship in terms of theme and structure. Césaire was born in Martinique in 1913, educated in

France and returned to his country after university, becoming in 1946 the Député of Martinique. His poetry is a poetry of the revolt of blacks against their predicament in white colonial structures. As with Senghor in Senegal, his work had great political as well as artistic influence. Cahier is a lyrical meditation of a young black student who returns to his native land and confronts white culture and his own predicament as a negro in that land. André Breton in the preface to the 1943 version celebrated the work as one that broke 'violemment avec les modes de penser et de sentir qui l'ont mené à ne plus pouvoir supporter son existence' and celebrated Césaire as a man with a true capacity for refusal. It is a matter for optimism for Breton that language can still be used to such purpose. He says 'Rien ne peut faire que ce ne soit aux poètes qu'ait été dévolu depuis un siècle de faire craquer cette armature qui nous étouffe'[28] and he heralded Césaire's poem as akin to the Surrealist spirit, in its rejection of stultifying common sense, hated reason, the status quo, and in its liberation of the subconscious. These former attributes of course being politically, the criteria of the oppressors in suppressing the native racial energy. The poem Cahier is rough, brilliant and intense and as relevant today when we read it as it was in 1939, relevant not only in the sense of its explication of the racial predicament but also in its spirit of general and radical dissent and spirit of revolt against the status quo. Those of radical persuasion in western capitalist countries, like Vincent, are drawn by the biting attack and the note of rejection sounded by Césaire.

In the early part of the film, when Vincent is in a state of stalemate, unable to decide to go, unable to decide to have a child, unable to face the future that is offered to him, his reliance on Césaire's poem is absolute. He spits out the poetry as he goes to work early in the morning, 'au bout de petit matin, cette ville plate,

étalée, trébuchée de son bon sens, inerte, essouflée sous son fardeau
géométrique de croix éternellement recommençante'.[29] The epithets
apply equally well to conformist Switzerland in the 1970s. Césaire's
poem paints a violent portrait of a society that is rotten, with images
of death, stench and disease. The power of the native people for
Césaire is like a volcano that is muzzled. Vincent quotes 'au bout du
petit matin, le morne famélique et nul ne sait mieux que ce morne
bâtarde pourquoi le suicidé s'est étouffé avec complicité de son
hypoglosse en retournant sa langue pour l'avaler'.[30] For Vincent,
those whose words and true protests do not cry out are choking
themselves horribly. Vincent's actual speech generally, apart from his
direct quoting of Césaire, is peppered with Césaire type epithets, e.g.
'cette ville pourrie'. He, like Césaire, feels an alien in his own
land. Yet whilst there is much in common between the two men, Césaire
is a proud figure, his weapon is words, he is taking action against the
oppression of his people and rallying others to effort. He has
returned to his own land for the fight. Vincent is only quoting, not
acting, and his negativity spells complicity. While he only quotes
Césaire he has finally misunderstood the basic message of Césaire, that
returning to one's own land and taking up the fight in the best way one
can is the only true action and way to self-respect. Vincent is
dominated by Césaire for the first two of the three sections of the
film, but he grows out of Césaire by the third section of the film as
he himself becomes positive and active. It is now for others to quote
words. His bearded friend takes over that role, quoting the Césaire he
has learned with vehemence and passion. Vincent joins in with him in
one scene as they have their lunch break but Vincent is not involved
very deeply with the poem now. The bearded man's telegram to his
mother, dictated to the Post Office girl, contains the final message of
the film:

> Partir, j'arriverais lisse et jeune dans ce pays
> mien et je dirais à ce pays dont le limon entre
> dans la composition de ma chair, "j'ai longtemps
> erré et je reviens vers la hideur désertée de vos
> plaies". Je viendrais à ce pays mien et je lui
> dirais, "Embrassez-moi sans crainte et si je ne
> sais que parler c'est pour vous que je parlerai
> ... ma bouche sera la bouche des malheurs qui n'ont
> point de bouche, ma voix, la liberté de celles qui
> s'affaissent au cachot du désespoir." Et venant je
> me dirais à moi-même et surtout mon corps aussi
> bien que mon âme, gardez-vous de vous croiser les
> bras en l'attitude stérile du spectateur, car la
> vie n'est pas un spectacle, car une mer de douleurs
> n'est pas un proscenium, car un homme qui crie
> n'est pas un ours qui danse.

Césaire himself, within the poem, explains how he took the wrong road and left his country, how it was a false dream, how he put himself in the position of an exile, unable to vote, a man who could be maltreated even killed, a man with no protection. We think of Emilio in the film and his warnings to Vincent about becoming an exile. Even Vincent's friends seem to appreciate far better than he does that going to help the Third World is a radical myth, a dream. Their words, about taking your own shame and problems with you, about being in a prison for whites, have direct echoes in the Césaire poem. Césaire's prison abroad was 'une petite cellule dans le Jura, la neige la double de barreaux blancs, la neige un geôlier blanc qui monte la garde devant une prison'.[31] It is noticeable that Césaire uses the symbolism of a tree, a tree of his lands, with 'wounds' notched up in its trunk and symbolism surrounding the 'starveling hill'. Tanner picks up both these elements of symbolism. The general movement of both the poem and the film is from hatred and despair to positive action and hope. The optimism of the film at the end is of course more cautious than that of the poem, but nevertheless Vincent, by his abandonment of quotation and his emergence to positive radical action, has made a fundamental breakthrough. It is difficult to see how such a rich and productive enmeshing of film and poem could be in any way distanciating, rather the reverse.

One should also perhaps select one particular scene which Tanner claimed was distanciated, that of the postières, and examine this. According to the director the effect of distanciation in this scene was achieved by a combination of music, obtrusive camerawork and the performance effect achieved by the girls. One would rather suggest that in this scene there is a curious mix of effects in respect of the question of distanciation. It is one of the most effective and affective of the film, contrary to directorial intention. The Post Office girls, including Françoise, discuss the arrival of the child of one of them, the sort of future that is in store for it, the child's future occupation and the relationship between the mother and the child. The scene, with its moving camera, its music and its carefully arranged dialogue is engaging and poetic and sweeps us into its optimistic celebration of the child and the future. It represents a fundamentally important statement on the part of Tanner. The message of this scene is cumulative, it builds up to a crescendo with Anne's statements that things change for the better.

> Anne: L'avantage des mômes, c'est qu'ils te remettent dans le coup, tout le temps. Si tu ouvres les yeux. Tu vois tout recommence, mais autrement. Ça change. En mieux. Tout va toujours mieux. Quand il sera sorti, tu n'as aucun droit sur lui, tu peux seulement lui donner un coup de main. Tu n'as pas le droit de te sacrifier toi, non plus. Ça sert à rien; il est déjà loin devant toi ... Tu peux lui apprendre des choses mais tu ne peux pas vouloir qu'il pense comme toi, parce que tu peux pas savoir comment on pensera demain, dans 25 ans. Les choses ne s'arrêtent pas, ton môme il appartient à demain, pas à toi.

Despite the affectiveness of the scene, it must be said that the audience cannot but be aware of the unconventionality of the camerawork and a theatrical 'chorus' type effect. That is to say that in effect there exists a tension between involvement and distanciation.

Hence we do not find that the film shows clear cut evidence of successful distanciation, despite the director's wishes to the contrary.

We find the film to be firmly rooted in conventional filmic practice with strong hints of the poetic. The level of work done on film language is variable, as we have seen in the detailed analyses of editing practices, camerawork, music and narrative. Guy Braucourt is the only critic to have isolated this 'mixed' quality in the film though I would not agree entirely with his conclusions. He says that we are

> soumis à un incessant mouvement de va-et-vient entre ces personnages d'une fiction donnée à voir et cet écran qui le renvoie à lui-même. Soumis, comme rarement le cinéma a su le faire, au flux et reflux de la sensibilité et de la réflexion. Pris dans un superbe mouvement dialectique de participation et de distanciation. Tout le film dans chacun de ses éléments se trouvant balancé entre deux pôles antagonists, de la chambre et de la ville, du couple et de la société, de la circulation et de la musique de Bach, du romanticisme et du réalisme politique des mots et de l'action. (32)

What we should claim for this film, made in 1972, is the status of a useful and enjoyable subversive film, depite the fact that it is not very fully deconstructed. Indeed, it is simply because it is not fully deconstructed that it does not leave its audience behind. To subvert and change dominant ideas, it is obviously necessary in the first place to establish a communication with audiences. Thus it is now seen that only tiny audiences, on the whole, continue to go to, or to be at all interested in fully deconstructed film. Retour d'Afrique offers conventional pleasures as well as a quiet level of questioning of cinema forms. It also offers positive ideas for the radical struggle, on the question of the place of the real fight against oppression and the nature of this fight, and positive ideas regarding the role that women can play in progress. As Tanner says 'La grande leçon finalement pour Vincent et Françoise c'est d'accepter d'être alienés tout en étant lucides, d'accepter l'H.L.M. avec les avions qui passent au-dessus, mais en se battant contre ces conditions de vie parce que l'on sait qu'il est possible de faire avancer et changer les choses.'(33) Tanner's otpimism, as in La Salamandre is engaging and infectious. The

greatest proof that the film did have 'bite', that it was in fact a useful radical text, came in some contemporary reactions from critics. Tanner says

> certains journaux ne voyant dans Le Retour qu'un pamphlet politique, m'accusant de faire débiter aux acteurs des slogans révolutionnaires, me dénonçant comme dangereux agitateur menaçant les structures et l'ordre du pays ... ce qui prouve qu'ils avaient bien vu la dimension politique du film, mais en lui faisant un sort très particulier! Il y a même un critique qui a isolé une phrase du dialogue entre Vincent et Françoise, lorsqu'ils décident d'avoir un enfant, pour lancer contre moi ce titre accusateur: "un traitre à la patrie"'.(34)

CHAPTER 5 - FOOTNOTES

1. G. Braucourt, 'Alain Tanner', propos receuillis à Genève le 16 août 1973, Ecran, 73:16 (Jun. 73), p. 24.

2. Ibid., p. 25.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. M. Tarantino, 'Tanner and Berger: The Voice Off-Screen', Film Quarterly (Winter 1979-80), p. 43.

6. M. Boujut, 'Interview with Alain Tanner', Positif, 110 (1973), pp. 152-3.

7. Ibid.

8. L. Marcorelles, 'Le Retour d'Afrique d'Alain Tanner', Le Monde: Arts et Sciences (21.9.73).

9. Ibid.

10. E. Steiner and E. Dumont, 'Le Retour d'Afrique', Travelling, 38 (Sept-Oct 1973), p. 55.

11. G. Lellis, 'Retreat from Romanticism', Film Quarterly, 28:4 (Summer 1975), p. 17.

12. J. Dane, 'The Significance of Film Music', American Cinematographer, 42:5 (May 1961), p. 302.

13. J. Cage, 'A few ideas about film music', Film Culture, 29 (Summer 1963), p. 35.

14. Braucourt, 'Alain Tanner', p. 25.

15. N. Burch, The Theory of Film Practice, trans. H. Lane (Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 15.

16. Braucourt, 'Alain Tanner', p. 25.

17. Ibid.

18. M. Boujut, 'Situation et perspectives du cinéma suisse romand', Positif, 152-153 (1973), p. 92.

19. Braucourt, 'Alain Tanner', p. 25.

20. G. Langlois, 'Genève n'a pas d'argent à mettre dans les films', Téléciné (Paris), 177 (Feb. 1973), p. 2.

21. Braucourt, 'Alain Tanner', p. 24.

22. Ibid.

23. Marcorelles, 'Le Retour d'Afrique d'Alain Tanner'.

24. D. Elley, 'Le Retour d'Afrique', <u>Films and Filming</u>, 21 (Sept. 1975), p. 41.

25. Braucourt, 'Alain Tanner', p. 25.

26. A. Césaire, <u>Cahier d'un retour au pays natal</u> (Editions Présence Africaine, 1971).

27. A. Breton, 'Un Grand Poète Noir', Préface (1943) to <u>Cahier d'un retour au pays natal</u>, p. 15

28. Ibid., p. 17.

29. Césaire, <u>Cahier d'un retour</u>, p. 33.

30. Ibid., p. 37.

31. Ibid., p. 69.

32. Braucourt, 'Le Retour d'Afrique ou le triomphe du cinéma dialectique', <u>Ecran</u>, 73:16 (June 1973), p. 30.

33. Braucourt, 'Alain Tanner', p. 27.

34. Ibid.

APPENDIX

PART ONE

COMMENTARY

1	2	3	4	5
friends in cinema	friends in café (MUSIC)	city (credits)	E rings V	V picks up E
6 the boss intercut of	**7** V and E arriving	**8** 3 men + patron	**9** F arriving at shop	**10** tea offered to men	**11** V driving
12 F leaving shop	**13** V driving	**14** V and F in flat	**15** E and V on lorry	**16** they plant tree	**17** V and F in street
18 V and F in flat - bath	**19** V and F driving, parking, the decision	**20** V and F discuss Max - the letter is written	**21** F posts letter	**22** V opens reply and tells F	**23** V and E on lorry
24 V and F discuss map, etc.	**25** V sells car	**26** 3 men 'last day'	**27** F goes shopping V won't come	**28** V and F sell furniture	**29** V and F in country- side 'free'

PART TWO

| **30** telegram A/Hermes | **31** F tells V about telegram | **32** PARTY | **33** goodbye to friends | **34** V and F in bed next a.m. | **35** V and F argue, eat jam |

36 ROOFS

37 V and F waking up V to box

38 V at box (1) tells F

39 V and F eating phone rings

40 STREETS

41 V at box (2)

42 V and F in bed argue about going out

43 STREETS

44 V at box (3) tells F

45 F returns from outside

46 F and V read newspaper cinema fare

47 STREETS

48 V and F in bed radio

49 V at box (4)

50 V and F eating

51 V at box (5)

52 F upset

53 ROOFS

54 V listens to radio F paces

55 TRAFFIC police

56 RIVER building site

57 V reading paper (Sat.)

58 F goes out - argument (Sun.)

59 F outside walking

60 V reading poems

61 F walking

62 F enters

63 F and V listen to radio - subversives

64 V at box (6) tells F decision to send telegram

65 STREET night

66 V and F making love

67 RIVER

68 V and F in bed letter arrives 'wait 10 days'

69 TRAFFIC in lanes 'no escape'

70 V and F in bed

71 V goes out F stays in

72
V and E cross
V doesn't
acknowledge E

73
E at café

74
BRIDGE

75
V and F
COMMENTARY
'not going'

76
V enters with
breakfast - V
to hire a bike

77
V on bike meets
meets E

78
V phones lawyer

79
BRIDGE
evening

80
E is deported

81
F and V leaving
flat

PART THREE
82
tree
COMMENTARY

83
the new estate

84
a.m. V and F
argue over
breakfast

85
F at post office

86
V in new job
with friend
(poetry)

87
F lunch and
chorus of 4
at P.O.

88
V and F - the
landlord question telegram

89
bearded man sends

90
V and F and
action group

91
V and F make
an 'enemy'

92
TREE chopped

93
the awful
environment

94
V and F on
balcony
the baby?

95
V and F driving

96
V and F toss
a coin
(crescendo of music)

CHAPTER 6 - LE MILIEU DU MONDE

Le Milieu du monde, made in 1974, is unique in Tanner's work in the sense that Tanner collaborated with author and critic M. Boujut in the production of a book about the film and its creation, a book that was compiled during and after the shooting, Le Milieu du monde ou le cinéma selon Tanner. The most important element of the book is a lengthy essay by Tanner, based on interviews with Boujut. There is also a script, a day-to-day journal of the events and details of the shooting and the life of the crew, and short statements by the technical crew made on completion of the film, outlining their ideas about the theory and the shooting of it. Many valuable insights emerge. Tanner himself claims to have been hesitant about allowing either the lengthy interview or the book itself to materialise, doubting their value. His comments are worth quoting since they might be said to have a bearing on the work in hand.

> Il se publie trop de choses, on pourrait même dire:
> il se publie n'importe quoi. Le moindre événement
> sans importance fait le sujet d'un livre. Dans le
> domaine du cinéma, les études - dont beaucoup sont
> d'un intérêt tout relatif - se succèdent sans
> interruption. Un réalisateur à peine tourne-t-il
> quelques images, se doit d'expliquer ses intentions
> dans de multiples interviews, et pendant ce temps,
> la nature des choses ne change guère. Les problèmes
> de production et de distribution restent les mêmes,
> les écrans envahis des mêmes films dont un grand
> nombre porte les signes de plus en plus grossiers de
> leur fabrication et de leurs buts. (1)

Obviously he overcame his doubts, and his twenty-four page essay deals with all aspects in detail, particularly the theoretic base of the film. It is clear in fact that Tanner is very much a director who likes to give interviews, wishes to explain and expand on his work. One cannot but say that the procedure is valid and useful; it is fundamental in the cause of freeing the cinema from old modes, since it helps to raise the level of consciousness on these matters. Studies,

it may be said, may perhaps be humbly included in this general aim of education.

The day-to-day journal is interesting for several reasons; it offers insights into Tanner's methods of working, and his manner of relating to his team. What obviously emerges from a reading of this journal is that Tanner is gifted in his ability to choose and to gel a group into a happy and committed working team of people who are 'on the same wavelength', as he puts it. One sees that, as a director, he creates an atmosphere that is non-hierarchical and collaborative. Certain limitations are also apparent; the tendency to taciturnity, the lack of encouragement to actors, even at times a lack of communication with the two chief actors. This, combined with the knowledge of their not being in the 'foreground', any more than camera movements for example, led to problems with both, but particularly with Olympia Carlisi. On a more minor issue, we witness the director's awkwardness with stunt men, stunts being a feature quite outside the area of interest of Tanner films. Also, we hear of amusing incidents; the dinner invitation by the factory owners for example, their reception of 'the artists', and the awkwardness of the latter in the face of men 'more dead than alive'. Much of the value of the journal would be common to any journal of a film; one sees theory rubbing against practice, the realities of shooting impeding important aims, the depressions and elations of the crew, the practical and human problems of a small group of people living very close together for a short period of time. There is not in fact a great deal of original comment from the author, M. Boujut; he confines himself to giving us a record, though he is clearly sensitive to the implications of the choices being made, e.g. on the question of the movement of the film, at the shooting, towards allegory. More useful even than the journal, are the accounts by actors and technicians of their work in the film. It is

clear that the majority of them are entirely sympathetic with the theoretic aims of the film with regard to cinema itself, and the view emerges generally that Le Milieu du monde is a jump far ahead of Retour d'Afrique in terms of work on film language.

Tanner's essay, of course, is the key component of the book. He inidcates the aim of it in the opening sentences, which is to 'montrer comment j'essaie pour ma part de "prendre ce virage" vers une expression à la fois plus libre et plus consciente'. The essay does make it clear that the whole emphasis is on the form of the film, on formal experiment, on work on cinema language. In the director's eyes, everything else is secondary to that. According to Tanner left-wing political ideas incorporated into conventional filmic forms are useless. Conventional forms, 'ordinary films', in fact are ideologically charged and not 'innocent'. He cites Max Raphael as saying 'la signification révolutionnaire de l'oeuvre d'art n'a absoluement rien à voir avec le sujet en lui-même ou avec l'utilisation fonctionnelle qu'on peut en faire. C'est une signification qui est continuellement en attente d'être découverte et libérée ... les valeurs d'une oeuvre résident dans l'activité révélée par l'oeuvre'.[2] Though written about painting, Tanner cites Raphael's statement to describe his film.

The work of Comolli in Cahiers du cinéma has been cited in previous chapters as a tool with which to assess films with regard to their level of work on film language, and as a pointer to ideas in the early '70s about successful radical film making.[3] However, there is a departure with Le Milieu du monde in the sense that the work of Comolli is directly mentioned by Tanner as an important source of ideas for this film. Tanner concedes that his presentation of the ideas of Comolli and his associates may in fact be schematic in the film. What mainly concerns Tanner in this film is the relation between ideology

and film forms, particularly narrative technique. He actually terms this film 'le support de ma réflexion idéologique',[4] thus putting all the emphasis on this aspect.

The work of Comolli that is directly referred to with regard to Milieu is an article entitled 'Technique et idéologie': caméra, perspective, profondeur de champ'.[5] In this article Comolli maintains that at that moment in time it was virtually accepted that film was an ideological product; all films therefore have to do with ideology. He argues however that the ideological dimension is only recognised at the level of themes, production and diffusion, but not at the level of technique, involving the processes and tools that make the cinema. He sets out to refute arguments put forward by Lebel that technical processes are neutral, 'scientific', only a vehicle or transmitter for what the film maker wishes to say. Lebel claims that cinema is a scientific invention and not a product of ideology. Comolli discusses in his article, the actual history of the cinema, and concludes that the vital final discoveries for the development of cinema were actually made when there was an economic demand for them. Many discoveries relevant to the development of cinema were made well before the actual emergence of cinema, e.g. the camera obscura, the discovery of retina persistence, and so on, but according to Comolli all the expertise was brought together in the nineteenth century due to economic pressures and ideological pressures; there was an urge to see, to show life as it is. In effect, he argues that science could have produced the cinema well before it did, there is a clear 'lag' between the abilities and knowledge and the desire to put it all into practice. André Bazin recognises the delay in his writing, and terms it a natural lag, a gap between 'the dream and its fulfilment'[6]; however Comolli does not accept this. Turning from the historical development of the cinema, Comolli proceeds to a consideration of more specific aspects

of cinema. He notes, and accepts the idea put forward by Pleynet and others[7] that the camera itself diffuses first and foremost a bourgeois ideology, 'car elle est minutieusement construite pour "rectifier" toutes les anomalies perspectives, pour reproduire dans son autorité, le code de la vision spéculaire tel qu'il est défini par l'humanisme renaissant'.[8] Having accepted this however, Comolli argues against a tendency that he notes in the work of Pleynet, and indeed in the work of Lebel and in Beaudry, to isolate and focus on camera in their discussions. 'On constate que, sans prendre en considération le tout de la technique cinématographique, c'est la caméra qu'ils visent directement en tant qu'appareil qui structure la réalité de son inscription (celle du cinéma).'[9] Comolli cites this tendency as a problem 'métonymiquement elle représente toute la technique cinématographie, elle est la partie pour le tout ... elle est mise en avant comme partie visible pour le tout de la technique ... c'est ce déplacement symptomatique qu'il faut alors questionner'. He argues that it is not just a question of synedoche but a reduction, which reproduces and confirms the split between what he terms the visible part of cinema, 'caméra, tournage, équipe, sources lumineuses, écran' and the invisible part 'noir entre les photogrammes, chimie, bains et travaux du labo, pellicule négative, coupes et "raccords" du montage, bande-son, projecteur etc., celle ci refoulée par celle-là, reléguée généralement dans l'impensé "l'inconscient" du cinéma'. This reduction for Comolli 'de la part cachée de la technique à sa part visible comporte le risque de reconduire cette domination du visible; cette idéologie du visible et ce qu'elle implique, masquage, effacement de travail'. The idea that what is visible is real is very pervasive and Comolli points out the interest that the dominant classes have in the enforcement of the idea that what is visible is real. He also refers to a historical tendency to elevate the eye over other senses.

Pleynet, in Comolli's view, appears to unwittingly as it were, subscribe to this 'hegemony of the eye'. Hence Comolli argues that there is a paradox, 'que c'est en pointant la domination de la caméra (du visible) sur l'ensemble de la technique cinématographique qu'elle est censée représenter, informer et programmer, que l'on veut dénoncer la soumission de cette caméra, en sa conception et sa construction, à l'idéologie du visible dominante'.[10] Comolli himself advocates a change of perspective, so that this focusing on the camera does not as it were get trapped in the ideas that it is combatting. A materialist cinema must look at what this 'reduction' covers up. To highlight the problem Comolli points as an example to the almost total dearth of studies on the sound track. He cites directors such as Godard, Straub and Rivette, as virtually the only ones to explore the implications of the 'hidden' side of cinema.

Tanner can be shown to have taken up the invitation to consider montage and sound track from amongst the 'invisible' aspects that Comolli isolates, but according to Renato Berta, he is not especially sensitive to the questions of chemistry, filmstocks and so on. The director certainly does not discuss them.

In his article, Comolli then proceeds to choose one example of the workings of the Technique/Ideology link, and he selects the technical effect of depth of field. Generally speaking, this has been considered by critics and theoreticians as a stylistic procedure, and different interpretations have been given to it following on from this. The effect of depth of field, produced by certain lenses, is to provide a clear image of things both near to and far away from the camera, thus giving an illusion of a three dimensional space. Behind it, is the code of perspective mentioned above. (A flat image, with no depth belongs to another code of representation and produces another type of space.) The effect of depth of field was celebrated by Bazin, as it

was seen as a major step in achieving the realist potential of the cinema. In conjunction with the long take, the temporal and physical unity of the scene could be respected, and the ambiguous nature of reality could be reproduced. The spectator's relationship with the image was seen to be nearer to that which he had with reality. The montage style on the other hand, implied the 'reduction' of reality to one reading, that imposed by the film maker and the restriction of personal choice of the spectator. Comolli states that the danger of Bazin's theory surrounding the depth of field effect is; '(elle) vise à abolir la différence entre le film et réalité, représentation et réel, à confirmer le spectateur dans son rapport "naturel" avec le monde, à redoubler donc les conditions de sa vision et de son idéologie "spontanées"'.[11] The camera in fact transforms what it sees, and so an altered realty is presented on the screen to the spectator. Also, the fact of the frame distinguishes film from normal perception. In the case of Welles, the famous examples of depth of field shots have been shown in many studies to be in fact highly manufactured and structured. Depth of field can be shown to be infinitely more 'dangerous' as a carrier of ideological messages than montage.

The ideas expressed in Comolli's article directly underlie then Le Milieu du monde, and the consideration of the film in the light of them proves very interesting. In Tanner's eyes, the film is entirely devoted to work on film language, with the ideological implications that this implies. Despite the fact that there is a political dimension to the story of Milieu, this film is at the first level a love story, and the politics 'proper' are intended to be entirely in the shape of the film; not in what is said, but in how things are said. Tanner states that the film was based on a long period of reflection on the language of films, on what they are 'selling', how they relate to

audiences, how they operate, and how their operations can be undermined. Milieu is meant to be seen as the result of that study.

Milieu is the third film being considered in the present thesis, and it occupies a unique position in the development of the director's work, in that it pursues the work on film language more systematically than the two earlier films. With La Salamandre, theory and practice were seen to diverge, the self-reflexive elements being very hesitant and the ultimate richness of the film escaping the constraints of the theory propounded about it. Similarly, the richness and contribution offered by Retour d'Afrique were often seen to escape the theory stressed by the director. However, with Retour, the conventional, in terms of film forms, was mixed with the self-reflexive and experimental, and the notion of the 'mix' of these two was beginning to be hinted at as a matter of conscious policy. In embryonic form, the usefulness of this juxtaposition is implied. It should be said however that in Retour the theory is still actually in advance of cinema practice.

Whilst Milieu is not entirely deconstructed, it is at this stage of his career that Tanner emerges with a systematic theory of a 'mix' between conventional and self-reflexive elements. At this point in time we find him saying that he still films 'things' whereas he feels by contrast Godard films 'theory'.

> Il ne s'agit pas pour moi de renverser totalement
> les conventions en vigueur dans le cinéma de
> fiction, mais de reconnaître ce que ces conventions
> signifient et de les faire 'déraper' car la marge
> est finalement assez étroite qui permet de faire
> verser le film. Il y a deux raisons à cela. D'une
> part, garder le contact avec le spectateur et
> d'autre part le surprendre d'autant plus que tout
> lui semblera plus au moins 'comme dans un film
> traditionnel' et que donc le décalage n'en sera que
> plus sensible que si le film était totalement
> décodé. (12)

So, by juxtaposition of elements, the audience is retained, and sensitised to the issues. Tanner goes on to term it 'une forme de jeu entre les codes et la façon de décoder, entre ce qui existe et ce qui devrait exister'. He refuses to term this method as a compromise in any sense, but as a conscious and productive policy. Between the oppositions, the 'electric current' of the film is to pass. At other moments, the director refers to the image of a veil created by the irruption of self-reflexive elements, a veil created between the eye of the spectator and the screen.

Keeping the balance is obviously not easy, between conventional forms (and the assenting spectator they create) and the introduction of speculation about these forms (and the active questioning, positive spectator role this implies). Tanner's spectator is meant to be a collaborator, his intelligence and his contribution respected. The film itself is meant to take on life as a result of this interaction.

According to Tanner at this stage, conventional films produce their own ideologies and also other, right-wing ideologies. Conventional forms carry an invisible and dangerous ideology in themselves. They create spectators that are the same the world over, they are researched to give as large a public as possible of malleable consumers. What is offered is easy 'reading' of the film, no trace of 'work' done in the creation of it, and the creation of a transparent effect of reality. The audience accepts what it is shown as natural and real. What is visible is taken to be 'true'. Conventional forms were elevated to the status of dogma and perpetuated by the 'establishment'. They were brought to perfection according to Tanner, in 'Hollywood' cinema, which he terms the cinema of the 'plus de réel'. In this model, the spectator is cut off from what he is actually doing, namely watching a film, an artefact. He is always left contented and even in the case of sad endings, feels that the film is 'rounded off',

'complete', so that when he leaves the cinema, his life resumes normally, unaffected by the film. The issues raised by that film are not considered and are not allowed to relate to the world outside, once the 'entertainment' is finished. This is the general model of films in Comolli's category (a) (see the opening pages of Chapter 4) a category that covers after all, most mainstream films. These are watched by large audiences and hence the chief point of attack of a radical film maker.

Editing Practice

Conventional cutting procedures have been discussed in previous chapters, and they can be said to form an important part of the insidious 'attack' on a spectator. What we notice at this stage in Tanner's career is his stressing of the ideological effects of conventional editing practice. Invisible or continuity editing, he argues, corresponds to a certain vision of the world 'vision privée de ruptures, d'"accrocs", vision en accord avec le monde et les choses telles qu'elles sont'. Against this he describes 'montage visible ... qui signifie rupture, oppositions. Le cinéma, du reste (et l'art) est rupture avec ce qui est, vision et remise en question'.[13] So this view of montage presents itself as ideologically very significant. This analytic look at reality renders it potentially transformable.

Tanner explains that his chief interest in Milieu was in montage between scenes rather than within; the majority of scenes are in fact effected in one shot, the plan séquence. He states that, in the whole film there are only a dozen or so examples of invisible editing within the scenes, whilst in films generally, there are hundreds. His montage between scenes he terms a 'montage de ruptures' and describes the important nature of these breaks in this way:

> le montage s'il se veut oppositions et ruptures n'a
> de sens que si entre les fractions existe un

> rapport. Et de même il ne faut pas non plus que
> ces rapports soient simplistes, grossiers et
> manichéens ou encore mécanistes. L'intérêt d'une
> approche de ce type réside essentiellement dans un
> rapport de nature dialiectique; mieux séparer les
> éléments pour ensuite établir des rapports entre
> eux. Le système du découpage excessif au contraire
> cherche à effacer les oppositions, à relier tous
> les éléments sans établir de distinctions et se
> refuse de la sorte la possibilité de découvrir les
> liens entre les choses. (14)

Tanner goes on to point out that most films and much television
fiction, refuse this dialectic. He cites television serials
particularly as 'véritables spots publicitaires idéologiques'. One
might perhaps cite the words of a contemporary primer on film making by
Roberts and Sharples (1971), on the subject of continuity;

> the film must consider the overall action of the
> scene and how it can be joined to the next scene,
> allowing the images to flow smoothly. Without
> continuity, a film would be a series of jumbled
> images lacking meaning and purpose. As each shot
> came on the screen, the audience would have to be
> concerned anew with what the relationship of each
> image to the preceding one was and what the
> particular image meant to the film as a whole.
> Continuity answers such questions easily and
> instantly. (15)

With most scenes done as plans-séquences, full importance and
enormous weight is given to the cut itself when it appears. At every
stage of planning and shooting, Tanner says it was the cuts that
occupied him chiefly. 'J'avais même l'impression que le film tenait
tout entier dans ce passage brusque d'un plan à l'autre.'(16) All the
cuts were to be cuts in both image and sound, even to the extent of
reinforcing the sound at the beginning or at the end of a scene, in
order to make the break more noticeable. Via this method, the
spectator is made to come awake, rather than being left to his habitual
'somnolence éveillée'. As Peter Wollen says of this sort of text, 'the
spectator must participate in the production of meaning rather than
consuming it. The text becomes the factory where thought is at work
rather than the transport system which conveys the finished

product'.[17]   This is to combat what Brecht saw as a weakness of the

cinema which seemed to him theoretically unsurmountable.   In the

theatre, the public regulates the performance, in cinema there is a

fixed perspective, the audience is shown by the camera-eye what it may

see. Due, according to Brecht, to the fact of mechanical reproduction,

everything tends to present itself as a finished event, constraining

and unchangeable. The public has no opportunity to modify the actors'

performance, and does not find itself confronting a production but the

result of that production, done in its absence. If the spectator is

put into a co-creative role, for example at the level of montage, then

this innate tendency of cinema is challenged.[18]

     Given Tanner's stress on the fundamental importance and the nature

of his preferred type of editing, the work of the actual editor in a

Tanner film is quite different from that role in a more conventional

film.   He is effectively his own editor, but the monteuse does have a

role to play:

> la monteuse doit être tout d'abord le premier
> spectateur du matériel filmé, qu'elle peut juger
> d'un oeil neuf et plus neutre que ceux qui ont
> participé au tournage et pour lesquels ce matériel
> se rattache aux circonstances, aux difficultés de
> tournage.   Il arrive parfois, par exemple, qu'on
> veuille à tout prix conserver tel plan dans le
> montage parce que ce plan nous a coûté d'énormes
> efforts au tournage, mais qu'en fait son intérêt
> n'est peut-être pas à la mesure de ces efforts...
> Pour le reste, c'est une affaire de complicité avec
> les buts poursuivis, une compréhension du style du
> film qui déterminera le degré de participation de
> la monteuse. (19)

In effect a very important and creative role is on offer to an editor.

The editor has two hundred or so scenes to deal with and questions of

restructuring, ordering, of suppressing certain scenes or shots

entirely, of using the seventy snippets of music in the right places

are to be worked upon. (This latter work occupied the editor for the

longest period of time actually.) Obviously this work is done in close

collaboration with the director, but as Tanner says, despite this, 'je suis persuadé que ce genre de travail est beaucoup plus intéressant que de "recoudre" des champ-contre-champ ou des sorties-entrées droite-gauche, même si elle a seule la responsabilité de cette tâche pendant que le réalisateur est en train d'adapter un roman pour son prochain film'.[20] This means also of course that at the editing stage, material cannot be saved or 'fudged' to make it look right, errors may have to stay. Brigitte Souselier was the editor in La Salamandre, Retour and Milieu, and it is clear from Boujut's interview with her after completion of all the stages of the film, that she is entirely sympathetic with Tanner's aims, accepting that the more rigorous and intelligent a director is, the less there is of editing work in the conventional sense. To be an 'exécutante', she regards as perfectly acceptable, indeed she sees her role as fascinating, in the sense of entering into the world of the director and helping to actually create something.

The end product of the collaboration between editor and director is one hundred and twenty short films, each with an autonomy of its own in terms of meaning. It rests with us to assess how successful the 'montage de ruptures' is in terms of its effective contribution to meaning, and to see how far it is removed from conventional editing practice. We shall consider also if the 'mix' technique is evident here, and if the overall results create a self-reflexive spirit with regard to editing practice.

Scene 1 of the film represents a type of prelude, a pre-narrative segment. It is divided into five shots, the first of which is a shot of a plain in summer heat, and over which the credits are superimposed. The cut from shot A to shot B (see scene breakdown diagram, Appendix 1) is immediately very striking since, whilst there is continuity in the sound track (the eerie wail of Pierre Gamet's score), and in the fact

that the credits continue, there is a break in the visuals; we cut from
the field to a bridge in summer. The next cut (to C) is startling in
the sense that we are suddenly shown a film crew on the   same bridge,
unloading equipment, but in   wintertime.   Showing the film crew
indicates of course that this is to be a film where the work done   will
be visible; it is a reminder that we are watching a film, not reality.
But the cut from empty space to a peopled space, and one that is
manifestly a 'non fictional' space also, is striking and thought
provoking.   The cut is also odd in terms of the spatial relationship
between the two shots; shot C is taken from further away from the
bridge than shot B and it is a contre champ. We are used to contre
champs of people, and so the effect is slightly grating.   Having
mentioned several aspects of this cut, we note also that it is
deliberately emphasised by making the sound very much softer as we   cut
from B to C, and then increasing the volume after the third shot, C,
has been on the screen for a second or two. Shot C is of course
accompanied by the voice over explaining that a film is profoundly
affected by where and when it was made. The fact that shot C is of
winter, and the year is given also, locates this film in place and
time.   Shot D does not change season, it is still winter, but it is
very noticeable that this is not the same shot as shot A; it is closer
in, and excludes the line of trees shown in A, and in shot E Tanner
cuts to a close-up of this winter field. We are used to a conventional
establishing shot then a cut to an important person, or thing, but to
cut to a close shot of the earth, the furrows, is apparently gratuitous
and draws attention to itself. There is no 'justification' to be found
in the words of the commentary, which at that moment is speaking about
hopes and 'normalisation'. The music and the commentary continue over
the cuts C/D and C/E, thus creating continuity in some elements, but it
is a continuity that conflicts or jars against the jumps in all the

other elements. The dominant impression of the editing of this prelude (shots A-E) is of thought provoking jumps, of jerkiness; our attention is being squarely drawn to the fact of editing, and we are kept alert. In effect no easy reading is going to be offered in this film.

The music from shot E of the prelude bleeds over the cut into scene 2, thus softening the abrupt switch to a date, the 6th December. Printed in red letters on a black background, it is still a visual shock however, a shock that lessens perhaps, as the viewer becomes accustomed to the appearance of dates; Tanner very often uses the same formula, music bled over from the previous scene into the date, and from the date into the next scene. However, this pattern is sometimes broken at moments when the director isolates the dates in terms of sound, by accompanying them with odd percussion sounds; we are not in effect able to settle down to any pattern of expectations. In terms of one's conventional narrative expectations, it is a relief that in the cut from shot E to scene 2, we cut to diegetic sound, a clatter of voices and a shot of people in a train, the first specific human and fictional interest. Much of the interest of the cut centres on the sound qualities, for not only do we move from electronic, modern music to voices, but the language has changed, to Italian. Taken with the next scene, of Adriana's arrival, the use of Italian here gives the sense of the arrival of alien, possibly threatening elements into the small Swiss town of Mouruz. To begin with a crowd, and then narrow down the centre of interest to one protagonist, is in fact rather a conventional procedure, and having used a moving camera to isolate Adriana from the group of chattering Italian workers, the next cut to a close-up of her is a perfectly conventional and smooth cut. We have heard explanations from the voice over about the story of the film, we see the 'heroine'; for Tanner then to cut to a wall (a cut accompanied by loud eerie music), could best be described, by constrast, as an

affront to conventional editing expectations. Scenes 3, 5 and 7 all show fragments of Adriana's arrival, as she makes her way up and down small streets in Mouruz. But the cut into each of these scenes is a cut to a wall, and on each occasion the camera then moves laterally (twice left, once right) to bring her temporarily into view. Some sort of graphic match is achieved between these three separate cuts. In other words, and one is aware that the formal patterning in cutting, camera and music has taken precedence over narrative. Such editing cannot but be obtrusive. In scenes 3-8, Tanner in fact cross-cuts between Adriana and the A.D.P. meeting (see scene diagram), which is a conventional procedure to raise tension or suspense. Something of this effect is definitely created here, but one has to remember also, the unconventional nature of the cuts involved. One can examine this cross-cutting and see that it is complex and subtle, when viewed against a more conventional cross-cutting for the purposes of tension. In the latter, at the simplest level, we would have a shot of person A, a shot of person B, and so on. In scene 3 of this section, we end with a shot of a wall, Adriana having manifestly been only one of the elements in the scene, and cut to an A.D.P. member saying 'Il s'agit de Paul Chamoret'. The two protagonists are not juxtaposed in an obvious way; we do not even see Paul but only hear talk of him. Similarly, scene 5 ends with the wall and cuts to 'Paul est d'accord', a statement uttered in the A.D.P. meeting in scene 6. The cut from scene 7 to scene 8 begins with 'ceux qui sont pour Chamoret lèvent la main'. Apart from raising, albeit in subtle ways, the level of expectation about the meeting of Paul and Adriana, the cutting highlights the contrasts between the A.D.P. men, and Paul by implication, and Adriana: male/female, middle class/worker, settled men with positions/stranger, Swiss/Italian and so on. The cut from scene 8 to scene 9 temporarily breaks the cross-cutting pattern, and the conventional nature of this

cut is very visible, juxtaposed against what has gone before; at the end of scene 8, the vote goes in favour of Paul, and the President announces he will let the new candidate know the news. The cut to Paul in his office, the telephone ringing, is invisible and smooth. The dialogue has blurred over the fact of the small time lag. When Tanner then cuts at scene 10 to Adriana arriving in her room, we then notice that this is markedly the first time that shots of the two actual protagonists have been juxtaposed, thus an earlier expectation has in a sense been gratified. The silence (and implied loneliness) of this room is noticeable after the voices of the A.D.P. men and the wailing music accompanying her arrival.

We continue of course to cross-cut from scenes of Adriana's activities to those of Paul until the point of their meeting, but the cross-cutting is not done on the basis of a strict pattern. It does however, raise the level of expectation about the event of meeting, as well as contrasting the backgrounds and activities of the two people concerned. Some of the cuts in this section are potentially extremely effective but one wonders if the intrusion of the date at times dulls this effectiveness. For example, scene 10 shows Adriana alone in her room, a woman with no ties, few possessions, independent but lonely; scene 11 is a shot of Paul's wife asking if he wants the car. The latter woman is fixed in a conventional role, bored, dependant, surrounded in luxury. But the date is briefly interjected between the two, the 7th December. The cut from scene 12 to scene 13 is interesting as it is a cut between the two places of work, the café, where Adriana is washing up, and the factory where Paul and the other men are seen coming at the end of the day. Yet we know that Paul is no ordinary worker, and is walking as his wife has the car. The time jumps between these early scenes are not significant, what is significant is the narrative implications, the meanings that are generated by the abrasive

rub of one scene against another, e.g. the shot of Paul posing for his election photographs, cut against Adriana with a very different sort of man in the café. This latter cut is a precursor to an even better example, in the cut from the end of scene 20, when Adriana says to the men who are joking with her in an overtly sexual way, 'I like men who talk like you', which cuts into Paul rehearsing a smooth and articulate political speech. He is a very different sort of man, one who speaks in the polished langauge of the middle-class. One has to work at the cuts, as Tanner intended, but the work is fruitful; the company director handing Paul a finance text, with remarks about simplifying it since 'they know so little of financial affairs', is cut against Adriana in the next scene counting the small change from the day's till takings. The cut is rich in ramifications. Apart from underlining the divisions between Paul and Adriana, there are general points made about who handles the everyday sums of money, despite the fact that the manipulations of economic policy may be a mystery to them. The workers are those affected by these questions, yet they are patronised by ruling élites. It is interesting that the cut also shows the café owner warning Adriana to keep politics and commerce separate. 'La bière elle n'est pas démocrate, curé ou socialiste, elle vaut un franc c'est tout ... si on se met à entrer dans ces affaires c'est le bordel.' It would not be in her financial interest to take sides, but this willingness to eschew politics allows established powers to go unchallenged. The garage owner discovers the commercial risk of backing a party that loses. Some of the cuts are amusing as well as significant; one thinks of the cut from Paul rehearsing the lines (for a speech) 'il faut apprendre à modérer nos appetits ... nous sommes coincés', to the shot of Paul in his expensive car, a man who has no need to moderate his consumer appetites, since he is not a worker, and

a man who does not moderate his sexual appetites either. The general political point is not lost behind the personal anecdote.

One is becoming successfully sensitised even at this stage of the film, to the marked contrasts in types of cutting, the 'bread and butter' smooth cutting of more conventional films, conventional cutting procedures (for example, cross-cutting to raise narrative tension), mixed with the abrasive and productive cutting of the 'dialectic' sort, examples of which have been discussed above. Of the former kind, there are numerous examples. Paul arrives in his car at the café, we then have a cut to Paul at the door, and then a cut to Paul and the audience at the meeting inside the café. The cuts isolate small narrative steps, there is no 'work' to be done on them. Equally conventional is the cutting of scene 27 where Paul enters the café and Tanner cross-cuts numerous times between Paul watching, captivated, and Adriana working. Gradually, as the cuts progress, we see Paul's face closer and closer up, and so we observe very closely the emotions registered on his face. Narrative tension is undoubtedly created in this fairly fast paced cross-cutting pattern. Whilst being conventional in its cutting, the scene is also noticeable in the sense that it has such a lot of cuts within the one scene, a procedure that stands out among the plan séquence pattern of most of the film. However, in sharp contrast to the conventional forms of cutting mentioned, where narrative steps follow an ordinary and predictable pattern, cuts are suddenly seen that totally deny narrative expectations, e.g. in scene 25 Tanner cuts from a close-up of Paul's face, as he watches Adriana serving drinks, to a field and silence. In other words, he denies us the normal following shot of what or who Paul is looking at.

There follows a series of scenes, from 26-35, in which a sense of frenetic activity on the part of Paul is successfully captured via

cutting. There are a lot of cuts, a lot of short scenes and the pace of the film quickens. Narrative tension is thus generated. Paul, captured by passion, travels to and fro seeking out Adriana at the café. Much of the material is entirely repetitive however, as Paul's actions are in fact at this stage; he makes no progress. One is aware of the same cuts used several times, a procedure which perhaps conventionally would not be acceptable; for example, the cut to the shot over Paul's shoulder as he is driving. The time-jumps over the cuts are quite large, whole days in some instances, but the narrative thread, the pursuit of Adriana, is very strong. After this period of frenetic activity on the part of Paul, Tanner makes an enormously striking cut; he cuts suddenly to a close-up of Adriana naked and asleep in bed. After the sense of urgent activity generated in the previous shots, by editing and by movement in frame, the sudden shot of the 'pursued', and the stillness and quiet (coming after the radio in Paul's car and general noises) in the shot are striking. Equally, we note that the cut has been to a dramatic close-up, from the mid-shots of Paul in the previous scenes. This is what Paul is pursuing, seen before he 'arrives' there of course. It is noticeable that this sudden cut to Adriana is merely a single shot of the 'pursued', and the director goes straight back to Paul's activities, driving, entering the café, driving again. At scene 40 he cuts to Adriana again, a close-up of her opening her door to Paul and facing the man who is pursuing her. Again the cut is striking since it is a close-up, after mid-shots of Paul, and in the sense that it is the first time that Paul and Adriana have been seen in frame together. It is very noticeable that Tanner here uses, as nowhere else in the film, a conventional pattern of champ contre champ to cover the ensuing conversation; he cuts from Adriana as she opens the door, to Paul as he explains why he has come, and then back to Adriana over Paul's shoulder, to see and to hear her reaction.

One wonders if this most conventional of editing practices, an accepted code in the conventional narrative cinema that Tanner is attempting to undermine, is an aberration on the director's part. Champ contre champ is generally taken to ensure and promote identification with characters on the screen, and to be an important code in illusionist cinema. One could also cite the point of view shot as being basically identificatory, and Tanner uses this, surprisingly, on occasions; for example, when Paul watches Adriana at work in the café before he has spoken to her. The shots of Adriana are seen from the point of view/the position of Paul.

From this conversation at Adriana's door, Tanner cuts to the actual meeting they had arranged, with Adriana saying in amused disbelief, 'tous les jours!'. The cut is amusing since it picks up Paul's own words at the end of the previous scene, and apt since it highlights the important point, namely that Paul must see her every day from that point onwards. A series of very quick cuts follow. The music which began at the end of the scene of the meeting, flows over the abrupt cut to a field in flower, a date, Adriana coming out of the café and entering Paul's car. Non narrative elements fly past, together with elements in the narrative sequence proper.

There follow two scenes which feature the trains by the café where Adriana works, which are very interesting with regard to editing. Tanner shows first of all Paul and Adriana facing the level crossing, their backs to the camera, as a train hurtles past, and then he cuts to the couple on the other side of the level crossing after the gates have been opened, coming towards us. Paul is explaining the Doppler effect, the change in the sound as the train passes and Adriana comments that 'everything changes'. The Doppler effect and the moving trains become, during the film, motifs of change. One wonders if the cut just cited is meant to mirror the idea of 'before' and 'after', in effect of

change.   There is a twin pair of shots a few scenes later when Tanner

shows Adriana looking down from a window as a train is heard to go by,

and then cuts to a shot from behind her, from inside the room; we see

her in silhouette in the window, looking out.   Interestingly, this is a

reversal of the earlier pair of shots. Tanner is evidently trying to

intimate that Adriana is changing due to her relationship with Paul,

she is prepared to change. She has listened to what he said and is

observing something in her everyday life differently as a result.   This

ability to change is nowhere observed about Paul of course.

Apart from examples of challenging and fruitful cutting, such as

the ones above, one is very much aware, in the central sections of the

film, of the use of cutting to jump between events and days, to

condense time. The size of the time gaps is often not clear.   Tanner,

for example,   cuts from a scene of Paul and Adriana where Adriana is

speaking about her scar, to another scene of the two still talking,   in

the same place. A sense of their continuing flowing dialogue at the

beginning of their relationship is created. Some time has in fact

passed between one scene and the next, their clothes are different,   but

we are uncertain how big the time-jump is.   From about scene 52

onwards, we observe that Tanner cuts between elements in the story of

the relationship of Paul and Adriana, and many of the cuts appear to

lack extra significance, appear to lack the extra 'dialectical'

dimension,   the fruitful rub between shots that we have been observing.

Sometimes the narrative link between shots is very strong, for example,

Paul asks Adriana whether she can arrange her hours with Juliette,

followed by a cut to a shot of the two girls making the arrangement.

Or we think of Paul deciding he is going to be ill so he can spend the

night in a hotel with Adriana, and then the cut to Paul on the

telephone with the words j'ai dû prendre froid'.   The time and space

jumps in these cuts are quite large, but this is blurred by the strong

narrative link. Often however, the cuts simply isolate separate elements in the narrative chain, small fragments of the ongoing relationship of Paul and Adriana. The narrative policy of this central section will be discussed later; it is one generally of omissions, inclusions of insignificant moments, equal weighting being given to elements of great narrative significance and those of little significance. Elements are repeated. It is perhaps not surprising that the editing policy is blander than in the earlier part of the film. One is very aware however of jumps between the scenes.

In the later analysis of narrative strategies used in the film, scene 95 onwards is designated as a new phase in the narrative, and it is in this penultimate phase of the narrative (where Adriana becomes the prime mover in the relationship), that the editing becomes challenging again. One very interesting example of this is the cut at scene 106, from Paul in the factory to a shot from inside a shop looking out of the shop window, through cameras and framed portraits, to Adriana paused outside looking in. Paul has given her a ciné camera and offered marriage, and Adriana pauses in front of the cameras and wedding photos as if her decision is not finally completed. The shot is odd but effective since the window frame makes a 'frame' round Adriana, suggestive of placing her in the role of wife/bride (and serving perhaps to remind us of the fact of the film frame). This effect is created retrospectively since the reverse shot, the shot of what she is looking at, shows us photographs of happy wedding couples. Tanner then cuts to a tracking shot of Adriana walking over a bridge, her mood happy and the movement suggestive of freedom and refusal of conventional roles. The final decision is presumably taken.

It is significant that Tanner then cuts to Adriana and an old man on the train home, he offering her a knife for her orange. The pattern of cutting is not the same as in scene 2, where a parallel scene was

depicted, since Tanner then cuts to a close-up of the old man, but the actions and gestures are sufficiently similar to scene 2 to give a hint of 'the end of the story', a story that has been 'framed' by two similar events on a train. Quite why Tanner gives this close-up of the old man is unclear, and one would suggest that it is a vestige of his old tendency to put in material he finds amusing, interesting, odd, thwarting by doing so the idea of narrative economy that is so important in more conventional films. There are several small instances of this in the film; for example he also dwells on the face of one cretinous yet sly looking member of the A.D.P. committee, as if he can't quite avoid a humorous dig at the ossified members of the reactionary party.

Also worthy of note in the latter part of the film is the cut from the two girls on the station to a long shot of the train going over the plain. Tanner has set up the motif of the train and the Doppler effect. This time Adriana is on the train, leaving as she arrived; she who was capable of change is proving herself yet again to be so. The train passes over the plain, the Middle of the World, with its associations of stalemate, no change, and compromise. As we watch the train and listen to the distant noise, is the director inviting us to consider whether we, the spectators, have modified our perceptions at all?

One would say in conclusion that the editing, the 'montage de ruptures' is highly successful for large sections of the film, particularly in the first and the final thirds of it. The rub of one scene against another is superbly productive of meaning in many cases, and the audience could not but be aware of an unusual and exciting form of editing practice. Some of the editing is even more obtrusive, in the sense that it highlights editing as a practice first and foremost, and contributes less to narrative meanings; one thinks of the cuts to

furrowed earth, or the cuts to a wall as Adriana is arriving in Mouruz. For the long central section, the editing could still be said to be very unconventional, since it jumps so startlingly between narrative elements, although it is not so powerful in terms of the production of meaning. The 'mix' technique, the juxtaposition of conventional and non-conventional elements used to sensitise audiences to the issues of film practice, is scarcely in evidence in the editing. As we have shown, there is very little invisible editing at all, and whilst certain conventional procedures are referred to, or 'quoted', e.g. cross-cutting for narrative tension, they are done with a difference. The cutting of the film must be seen as effectively creating a self-reflexive spirit with regard to editing as a film practice.

Camera Usage

The use of, and attitude to the camera forms a fundamental part of Tanner's overall strategy of working on the language, combatting what he terms the cinema of the 'plus de réel' and bringing the spectator to an awareness of the workings and the implications of conventional cinema language. Tanner recalls that as far back as 1971, he had termed the camera enemy number one in cinema. He takes up this point again in his essay 'Le "Pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"', and says,

> à l'époque de La Salamandre j'avais dit sans
> hésiter que mon ennemi numéro un lors du tournage
> était la caméra. Trop longtemps la critique a
> répété que la caméra était un regard, et cette idée
> s'est encore renforcée avec le cinéma 'léger' et
> direct. Et en pratique tout ce qu'on a pu
> imaginer, regarder, prévoir se défait immédiatement
> lorsqu'il faut le faire passer au travers de
> l'objectif de la caméra. Malgré tous les efforts
> vers une plus grande souplesse, une plus grande
> liberté de la prise de vue et de ces instruments,
> il n'en reste pas moins que la caméra n'est jamais
> un régard. Le cadre reste aussi arbitraire que la
> scène du théâtre. Il est donc illusoire de vouloir
> à tout prix effacer la présence de la caméra. La
> caméra n'est pas un regard, ni un oeil. Je
> l'appelle parfois 'la grande infirme'. Et cette
> infirmité est partie intégrante de l'écriture. (21)

This 'infirmity' is, according to Tanner, covered up in the cinema of
the 'plus de réel', the transparent, conventional cinema, chiefly by
means of invisible cutting and camerawork, the effect of realism
created by conscious artifice. A 'douce violence' is hence practiced
on the spectator. The director is very conscious that the strategy of
a 'visible' and intervening camera, one that is used in ways contrary
to conventional usage, as he attempted to do in Retour, requires very
careful handling 'afin que le spectateur ne décroche pas complètement
et reste intérieur au récit'. An equilibrium has in fact to be found
between the narrative and the irruption of technique, and the role of
the intervention of technique is to create what he terms a sort of veil
between the spectator's eyes and the screen. The metaphor Tanner uses
is interesting. It implies a modified relationship with what is seen
on the screen. The story, characters, are still there but technique
also, which, according to Tanner, is an honest way to present a film to
an audience.

In Milieu, and working with Aldo Ricci again, Tanner claims to
take up the work with the travelling camera again, but in a slightly
more restrained fashion than in Retour. Apart from

> des travellings qui recadrent la scène ou
> accompagnent les personnages (qui ne sont pas de
> vrais travellings mais qui sont parfois
> indispensables dans les plans-séquences) tous les
> autres sont parfaitement 'gratuits'. Moins
> visibles que dans Le Retour ils ne servent aucun
> but dramatique précis. Je pratique alors sur une
> base théorique qui est l'intervention du
> personnage-caméra dans le jeu mais beaucoup par
> l'intuition. (22)

He describes the effect created by the travelling camera as a 'rub' or
'sliding sensation' in the eye of the spectator, a feeling that has
nothing at all to do with what is happening to the characters in the
film. One thinks again of the image of the veil. There is perhaps
with this film a more developed notion of what obtrusive camerawork
actually creates, whereas in Retour, the emphasis was perhaps more on

intrusion, display of the nature of the apparatus itself. When one is examining the role of the camera, the director's statements can be borne in mind. And one can also relate the use of the camera to the formal principles of the film as a whole (e.g. the core principle, the relationship between movement and stasis). Perhaps, prior to the analysis of the use of camera, it would be useful to state that there appears to be a greater perception by the director in interviews that there must emerge a gap between theory and practice. He quotes Brecht as saying that 'la théorie doit être globale mais la pratique n'avance qu'à petits pas'[23], which may perhaps be particularly true of cinema. However, having said that, the gap is not perceived in detail by Tanner in the interviews collected by Boujut both during and shortly after the shooting.

One is hardly aware of the static nature of the camera, which is used in the early shots of the film, shots of a field, a bridge in winter and summer. The shots are very striking from other points of view, not least of which is the actual sight of the film crew with all its heavy and unwieldy equipment, a pointer to the self-reflexiveness of the film. But in fact, one becomes cumulatively sensitised to the oppositions set up between static and moving camera during the film. The intercuts of fields, the plain and so on are always static, and the static camera has also a vital role in the main narrative. Stasis and movement form an interesting principle to observe at work in Milieu. One notices, to begin with, in juxtaposition with the fragments of scene 1, the moving nature of the camera in scene 2, which depicts Adriana on the train journeying to her new job and life. Instead of a more normal procedure of an establishing shot of the whole train carriage, then a cut to pick out the central figure, Tanner begins with a shot of several men, and then, instead of a cut, slides his camera left at a noticeably slow pace to see Adriana and another man who is

offering her a knife to cut her orange. The camera in effect 'searches out' the protagonist, and the subsequent cut to a close-up confirms our interest in her, her status in the narrative. This status is also underlined by a voice over beginning at this point. Scenes 3, 5 and 7 are very startling from the point of view of camerawork, which is clearly both unconventional and obtrusive. Conventionally, camera movements are used to follow characters in frame. In these scenes, the camera moves on a path of its own and, very strikingly, on a path that is a right angles to the direction that Adriana is taking. First of all, in scene 3 we catch sight of Adriana coming up steps towards us, in scene 5 coming down steps in the same line in the frame, and in scene 7 going downhill again in the same direction, i.e. a vertical with regard to the 'walls' of the frame. The camera however tracks from right to left in 3 and 5 and right, a reversal, in scene 7.   Thus, a marked formal patterning is created. What is also very noticeable is that the camera starts and finishes its tracking in an arbitrary spot, a wall, a place that is irrelevant from the narrative point of view. The three 'sweeps' of the camera are also noticeably fairly fast.   They catch glimpses only of Adriana as the camera trajectory intersects her path.   What the director could be said to be doing is highlighting the camera as an independant apparatus and decentering narrative and protagonist, flouting thereby conventional assumptions on the part of the spectator. This is a feature that was well recognised by the actors themselves; and some problems during the shooting stem from this, since actors are normally the centres of attention. This is in contrast to Tanner's rapport with his technical team, who seem to be almost enitrely in sympathy with his theoretic aims. For example Luc Yersin, clearly appreciating that the camera is meant to be noticed, says 'c'est sa manière à lui de démythifier le cinéma ... la caméra

devient elle-même un personnage, qui dialogue avec eux (les caractères), qui les isole quand elle le veut'.[24]

We have noted Tanner's comment that the majority of camera movements in the film are gratuitous and serve no precise dramatic end. The camerawork in scenes 3, 5 and 7 is foregrounded, at the expense of narrative, but it does not appear in this instance to be correct to say that it serves no dramatic end. A major narrative and dramatic effect is in fact created via the interaction between the workings of camera, editing, music and the narrative, the reverberations of which are carried on right through the film. The camera, the movements of which have been described, might be seen to be 'running away'; Adriana, just glimpsed moving along streets, might be seen to be threatening, unstoppable. The eerie music could be seen as adding to that effect. Such a combination of elements might have been used in a thriller, a woman noticeably, in the menacing role, and no other 'character' but the camera in the scene. The thriller is of course a red herring. We are to see a love story (Tanner played with the idea of genre in the opening sequences of La Salamandre, and such playing induces a heightened awareness of film strategies). But the effect here is to lead us into the dimension of allegory; we see Fate advancing in the person of an Italian worker who will intrude upon the ordered life of Paul Chamoret.

The scenes of Adriana's arrival in Mouruz are cross-cut with the A.D.P. meeting that selects Paul as a candidate. The camerawork used in the A.D.P. meeting is a mixture of the conventional and the unusual; in scene 4, we see a semi circle of A.D.P. men and the camera, oddly, tracks back slightly and swings a little right, thus excluding some of the men and reframing those of the right of the table, irrespective this is of whoever is speaking. Scene 6, by contrast, is conventionally done in the sense that Tanner cuts between members,

albeit more often than not we see him cutting between listeners rather than between speakers. The scene in Paul's office, where he is informed of his selection, offers nothing unusual in terms of camerawork, the camera merely moving to keep Paul in frame. The moving camera is again in evidence as we see Adriana sitting in her room. The subject is stationary, but the camera slowly approaches her and comes round to the front of her, an approach and a half circle tracking movement, as if it were a curious person coming round to have a look at the new arrival. So the camera again acts independently, obtrusively, but this time, unlike scene 3, 5 and 7, the character is the object of attention.

Gradually, the idea of movement and stasis is being developed. The shot of Paul that follows, scene 10, is noticeably static; the actor is stationary in frame, the camera merely a static registering device. When Paul then leaves his house, it moves only in so far as is necessary to keep him in frame. As the film progresses, the moving camera is seen to be equated with scenes containing Adriana, the static camera and more conventional movements, with those containing Paul. Thus the camera is contributing to the idea of Adriana as mobile, able to change, and Paul, as fixed, unable to change; in other words, contributing to the analysis of their relationship. Paul, significantly, poses for his election photo, and the photograph is used throughout the film to suggest fixity, inability to change (unlike photographs of Rosemonde, where the still photo was a failure in trying to capture her fluid and changing personality). The Doppler effect metaphorically underlines the link between movement and change. It must be said however, that whilst the moving camera is generally associated with scenes of Adriana, the static shots with Paul, this is not developed into a total or rigid pattern for the whole film. It might rather be said that the camera at times creates this opposition,

and where this is the case, this must run counter to Tanner's theory with regard to camera.

In scene 12 we have an example of conventional travelling camera in that the camera follows a character, in this case Juliette as she is working. The scene is worth noting since it is very effective. Adriana is at the counter and Juliette comes and goes from that fixed point. Each time she is with Adriana she questions her, offers advice, probing to find out more about the stranger. An analogy perhaps to the enquiring camera movement of scene 10, this camerawork aids the feeling of busy questioning.

In scene 19, the camera again appears at first glance to move gratuitously, but in a way that, on closer inspection, creates a definite dramatic effect. Again we have a moving camera in a scene pertaining to Adriana. She is counting money and the widow comes and sits down in frame to her right, thus giving us a half shot of the two of them at the table. The camera backs away then and moves left, very slowly, until the head and shoulders of a man at the next table is brought into frame. He turns and glances in their direction. The camera movement is actually very effective in that it re-inforces exactly what the widow is whispering to Adriana, namely that getting involved with politics is dangerous, since it catches someone apparently listening in to their conversation in a slightly sinister fashion. The red herring tone of the thriller is momentarily re-inforced.

The scene that follows this, scene 20, does perhaps, by contrast, offer an example of a camera tracking movement that is entirely gratuitous. Adriana, now accepting to sit with the men in the café, allows them to banter with her. The camera moves three quarter circle around the group, at shoulder level, passing behind the backs of some, sometimes catching sight of a speaker, most often only framing

listeners.   The movement is fairly fast.   The camera does not get the
'best' view of the conversation as we conventionally expect it to do,
indeed often quite the opposite. The tracking does not serve the
narrative, since it creates no effects related to the narrative.
Whether or not it irritates the viewer, the 'rub' or 'sliding'
sensation that Tanner spoke of can be seen here and the effect is
obtrusive enough to foreground camerawork and raise questions of cinema
technique in the minds of the audience. Perhaps in this scene, the
limitations of the camera as a recording device are being stressed.
Despite this gratuitous wandering of the camera, we do notice however
that, where the camera comes to rest, namely framing Adriana's face
between the shoulders of two of the men, has dramatic significance.
She is saying 'I like men who talk like you' and the differences
between these men and their speech and Paul and his, are set up. It is
noticeable that the cut to Paul in the next scene, finalising this
point, is static; no movement in frame, a static camera, as if to
underline the other fundamental difference between them, his relative
fixity, her willingness to change.

        There is also in the film some static camerawork that is purely
obtrusive. Frequently in Milieu, Tanner leaves his camera upon the
scene for a noticeable length of time after the actors are gone. The
camera 'lags' behind in a way that the audience is bound to notice.
The camera conventionally follows and centres upon actors, and by doing
this Tanner draws attention to camera usage, and decenters the actors/
characters.

        Scene 23 is interesting in the sense that the camera, from simply
recording the girls getting the café ready for the political meeting,
begins to leave the girls and slowly draws nearer to the poster of Paul
on the wall. Adriana is then drawn into the frame with 'Paul' and
pretends to make a speech, thus the two protagonists are in sense

brought together. In this movement the camera can be said to act as a sort of omniscient narrator, becoming interested in the man who is coming, and creating the link between the two people. The movement may be unconventional in that the camera acts independently of the figures in the scene, but the movement is a narrative based one. In the actual scene of the meeting, when Paul first sees Adriana, the camera moves across the audience at the meeting, catching sight of her moving amongst them with drinks. This is not strictly speaking a point of view shot, since the camera placement is not correct, but the camera may here be said to behave as 'another eye', sweeping over the audience. Again here, the camera does not conventionally follow character, but it is tied to the concerns of narrative. This camera movement is followed by a reaction shot of Paul, a mid-shot of him looking with fixed interest, presumably having singled out Adriana by this stage.

One detects at this point of the film, a building up of static camera work with regard to Paul. This is an apparent paradox since Paul is now constantly on the move to and fro in his visits to observe Adriana. Static camera set-ups show him arriving at the café, his car leaving, and often we see him driving, either from a side view or from behind the shoulder, the camera placed on the back seat. These scenes, and camera positions, are repeated time and again. We also see him sitting in the café watching Adriana move about, and the camera tends to follow her about during these scenes. If the camera is suggesting their fundamental attributes as people, and the incompatibilities of these two people, prior of course to their union, then it is clearly not being used in the way that Tanner theoretically intended. It is acting as a subtle tool of the narrative, and in this group of scenes (26-35) does nothing to draw attention to itself; its role is therefore conventional and unobtrusive.

Scene 36 is bold and surprising in that it begins with a close-up
of Adriana naked in her bed asleep. The camera tracks backwards slowly
away from her, thus revealing more of her room. The camera movement is
noticeable since it is obviously not following a character, but is
behaving independently, as an inquisitive person, wishing to know more
about her. (In this sense of course it aids the narrative.) The
camera movement is, oddly, a reversal of the order we would expect,
namely a general view, then taking a closer look, i.e. moving nearer
the main object of interest in the room.

The camera is equally obtrusive, acting as an independent gaze, in
scene 46 where Paul and Adriana are speaking of themselves, she of her
scar and past history, he of his background. After she has spoken of
her accident, there is a slow sweep of the camera across, horizontally,
to Paul. The camera returns to her, she speaks of changes in herself,
and the camera slides again to Paul. (Paul's actual replies   indicate
that, despite his passion for Adriana, he has not taken in what she is
actually saying to him.) M. Fonjallez (script) makes several
interesting points with regard to this scene. She speaks of the camera

> balayant chaque fois l'espace qui les sépare. Il y
> a là, dans ce passage 'à vide' toute la durée du
> regard, et surtout la présence sensible de la
> caméra. Ce temps vécu par le spectateur lui
> permet de garder une certaine liberté de jugement
> face à l'histoire qui lui est racontée. Il la
> regarde, il l'écoute, il ne la vit pas comme si
> elle était la sienne. (25)

Hence, this scene forms an   example of Tanner's camera strategy
successfully at work, and this includes an element of distanciation.
The camera movement acts as a 'punctuation', allowing the spectator
freedom of thought. Quick cutting for this conversation would have
eliminated this 'free' space but would have eliminated of course what,
in a more conventional film, might have been described as a 'dead
spot'. The camera work in scene 53 is very similar. The couple are at

a table in the Middle of the World restaurant, and from a long shot establishing the scene, the camera slowly tracks closer to the two, and gradually in to Adriana, then sliding slowly from one to the other as the conversation progresses. Although the camera rests on her, (as Paul explains that a man can look directly at Adriana, or at waitresses), the camera work is not subjective, the view belongs to neither Paul or Adriana, but is another objective gaze, albeit a gaze that follows the ebb and flow of the conversation.

It is interesting that the camera work in scene 59, though conventional in terms of its movement (it moves with Juliette as she flits to and from the bar where Adriana is pouring drinks), does create a formal parallel with the earlier scene, 15. The effect is the same, namely of people trying to discover more about the stranger Adriana; the movements of Juliette and the camera create a sense of busy enquiry. Adriana actually remains an enigma to Juliette, and this questioning is seen again in the scene where Adriana leaves. The camera is static here however, and there are only the verbal enquiries. The formal parallels, in the earlier two scenes quoted, of course have implications for the narrative.

A formal parallel is also created in scene 66, as Adriana comes out of the station in the village where Paul lives, having come to get to know a bit more about him. She exits from the frame, and the camera, rather than follow her, slides across to Paul's photo. Though a slightly different permutation of shots from scene 23, the similarities would be noticed, and the implications vis à vis camera, as well as for the narrative, must be considered by the spectator. When a moving character passes a static point, the Doppler effect is also called to mind, and with it the motif of change. The camera is an active, creative agent in the scene, an overt contributor to meanings, not a recording tool.

One notices in scene 70, an interesting oddity of camera placement, with a resulting strange framing. The couple are at the expensive hotel for 'rich American tourists', and the food, on an elaborate trolley, has been brought in. The camera is placed so that the prime place in the front of the frame is occupied by the food, with Adriana and Paul dwarfed on the bed behind. This is especially odd since it is the moment that Paul chooses to tell Adriana he loves her and wants to marry her. (The camera only gradually draws closer to them as he goes on to tell her details of their joint future.) This is a very obtrusive camera placement, and it perhaps underlines in fact the issues that separate Paul and Adriana. We have 'luxury' in the foreground and people and relationships in the background. He offers her maximum luxury, yet their relationship is swamped in this, and the human relationship he offers is unsatisfactory. In another scene where there is a blatantly odd framing, namely scene 79, we find very sound narrative and thematic reasons for it, and the shot is consequently very effective; it shows the interior of the café, a couple kissing in the foreground, a political discussion going on in the background. Politics is dwarfed by passion, as in Paul's particular case. And even the political discussion going on in the background of the scene gives way to a sexual joke amongst the participants. One notices other odd framings in the film - e.g. as Paul gives Adriana the video camera. He fills the frame, we cannot see her properly, and yet Tanner's camera refuses to move to accommodate them both. It is as if Tanner is highlighting the camera's limitations.

The ramifications of the static camera in scene 78 are interesting in the sense that Tanner is using his camera, together with other aspects of the scene, to ape the theatre stage. He uses a static camera, with its straightforward recording eye. We have an empty stage, the garage workshop, and the two friends enter from different

sides of the frame, like the wings of the theatre. They perform a mock playlet of two gossipy women indulging themselves on the subject of Paul Chamoret's affair, they then perform a dance routine and then leave the 'stage' empty. This is reminiscent of Brechtian practice and the scene could also be said to be potentially distanciating, since it breaks the dramatic illusion; it raises the idea of the actors performing for an audience, for us the spectators. It implies also that, in the theatre, we have a fixed perspective and, by definition, a potentially more distanciated art form.

Scene 80 shows an A.D.P. meeting where Paul is discussed, and the question is raised of how he can be fetched. This scene presents us with one of the few examples of entirely gratuitous movement of the camera (others are scenes 98 and 101). The movement in this scene is entirely obtrusive and functions quite separately from the needs of the narrative. The camera starts between the shoulders of two men, actually catching sight of the speaker, then travels across backs, obscuring the view entirely, and performs in all a three quarter circle movement. It does catch the President speaking, but otherwise we do not actually see the person who is talking at all. Tanner uses this circular movement of the camera several times in the film, to record group conversations. This pattern forms a marked contrast to the placement of people in a line for conversations in Retour, where the camera pans horizontally along the line, thus giving a sense of flatness and possible attendant distantiation, as well as being basically obtrusive. Circular movements can, in some films, emphasise depth and space, and hence can be seen as more illusionist; the circular movements in this film do not stress depth and space, but rather call attention to the obtrusive nature of the camerawork and its separation from the demands of the narrative or the characters.

In conclusion, one should say of the camerawork in <u>Milieu</u>, that a mix is achieved between conventional usage and a visible and intervening camera. This is not to forget the problems of assessing the unconventional of 1974, since our viewing expectations have radically changed. This is why a book like Boujut's is very valuable; it contains contemporary (to the film) ideas and assessments of the level and types of experimentation undertaken. If one looks on the other hand at reviews of the film, written in 1974/5, it is significant that, of the wide spectrum studied, scarcely no attention is paid to the self-reflexive elements in the camerawork, despite the initial sight in the film of the film crew trundling heavy cameras and equipment to the shooting area. Tanner obviously does not achieve everything he sets out to achieve, since some of the intended obtrusiveness of the moving camera is lessened by a narrative charge associated with it; however, over the whole of <u>Le Milieu du monde</u> a mix is achieved in the camerawork.

Narrative Form

It is in fact in the sphere of narrative that the research on film form and the experimentation is most striking in <u>Milieu</u>. Our chief interest in stories is, conventionally, to find out what happens, and Tanner claims to shift emphasis entirely away from this, 'déplacer le centre névralgique du film de la question "qu'est-ce qui va se passer?" à la question "pourquoi est-ce que ça se passe comme ça?"'.[26] The spectator's way of relating to and receiving the film is to be modified, but taking account of his old habits of viewing, and by means on 'un jeu éminemment dialectique entre les formes traditionnelles du cinéma-spectacle et la technique pour les faire déraper'.[27]

We have discussed in previous chapters conventional narrative forms, perfected in Hollywood. To undermine these forms is for Tanner of fundamental importance since he accepts that they are ideologically

charged. The cinema of the 'plus de réel', as Tanner calls it, combines conventional narrative structures with fast and invisible editing. The ideological effects and significance of this type of cinema have already been discussed.

In terms of its general shape and principles, the narrative of Milieu can be seen, contrary to the conventional shape of rising and falling action, to have two main features; firstly, it can be divided into broad phases, and secondly the whole narrative is also seen to be fragmented into little bits. These two features were also observed in the structure of Retour. The plan-séquence is of course used for the greater part of the scenes and, in consequence, the film appears to be slow paced generally, and jerky between fragments.

Milieu is straightaway striking with regard to narrative by virtue of the fact that, paradoxically, it eschews narrative to begin with, foregrounding not story, but film itself. We have effectively a pre-narrative section to begin with, consisting of five shots. No fictional characters are seen. The credits appear first of all over a shot of the plain in summer and then Tanner cuts to a bridge, continuing the credits. An audience will perhaps look for the character to appear, or assume that the director is sketching out the territory where the narrative is to take place. The cut to a series of winter scenes is surprising, an odd and apparently unmotivated time jump. It is noticeable that the first people we see are the film crew, and the first voice we hear is one that is not from inside the fictional world; it is a voice over discussing film itself, 'le récit et la forme d'un film dépendent dans une large mesure de où et quand ce film et fait et dans quelles circonstances'.[28] The voice over goes on to develop the idea; it is winter 1974, it outlines the political climate and so on. The cut to the winter scenes that we have just mentioned can now be seen as significant for the film, its story and

its form. A modernist tone of self-reflexion has been set. In films, we conventionally expect to settle into a narrative and, in fact, in the switch from scene 1 (5 shots) to scene 2, a narrative is heralded; the commentary says at the end of scene 1 'les mots, les dates, les saisons changent mais rien d'autre'. Tanner then flashes up a written date, thus linking this general comment with the specific date and with the story that follows. We are now in specific narrative time, and there is a sense of comfort with regard to conventional expectations in the hint that we are getting to a story. The actual fact of seeing the date, so baldly and boldly (in red) flashed up, is in this first instance of its usage, both unconventional and striking, and at the same time conventional. It is reminiscent of 'normal' film procedure, where dates are sometimes shown, either printed over a realistic shot of something, e.g. a long shot of a city, or shown as an actual shot of a calendar with the date on it, the latter being presumably an attempt to bring this procedure within the fictional world. Tanner's date is obviously different - it is meant to stand out, by virtue of the colour used - and one notes there is no attempt made to integrate it 'realistically' into the world of the film. Its dramatic nature is in fact a red herring, in the sense that nothing 'dramatic' actually follows the date, quite the opposite in fact. The dates are used frequently in the film although not all elements are dated. The use of music with the dates also highlights the unconventional aspects of their usage. In the first instance of the use of a date, between scenes 1 and 2, the music and the words of the commentary over scene 1 'bleed' over the date, and both stop as Tanner cuts to scene 2, which is in a train. Very often however, the brief flash of the date is accompanied by jarring percussion notes which make its appearance truly grating. There are two functions of the dates according to Tanner who says

> au lieu d'utiliser le facteur "temps qui passe"
> comme étant purement naturel je le relève au
> contraire comme étant une comp sante de la vie des
> personnages. Entre hier et aujourd'hui, il ne
> s'est pas seulement passé tant d'heures, et vous
> n'avez pas seulement vieilli d'un jour, mais vous
> avez changé (ou non) d'un jour. C'est pour
> souligner - et en même temps pour briser la
> continuité au niveau formel de la construction du
> récit - que dans Le Milieu du monde les dates sont
> chaque fois (41 fois) indiqués par des cartons'.   (29)

The commentary introduced this idea of change in relation to the date at
the beginning of the film. The idea of breaking up
story flow, as part of the general formal strategy, is perhaps of even
greater significance.

To return to scene 2, prefaced as we have noted by the date, 6th
December, we find ourselves looking at a group of men chattering in
Italian in a train compartment. Having avoided narrative in scene 1,
even now we are denied the pinpointing of an obvious protagonist.
Finally, the camera seeks out Adriana and rests on her but this
'satisfaction' is in a sense undercut straightaway by the commentary,
that proceeds to tell the story of the film. By actually giving the
number of days that the relationship between Paul and Adriana lasted,
the implication of its failure is clear. This is to say that we know
the end of the story before it has even begun; one possible pattern of
conventional narrative is now irrelevant. There will be no suspense.
For this film, attention must be diverted to other factors.

In the scenes that follow, scenes of Adriana's arrival and Paul's
selection as a candidate, there is an obliqueness with regard to
narrative development, in the sense that we cut between Paul Chamoret
being introduced by name, spoken of by other people, the idea of him in
effect, and scenes that show Adriana in person. We have argued earlier
in this chapter that the scenes of Adriana's arrival are
unintentionally dramatic in character, and of course cross-cutting is a
conventional procedure which usually raises narrative tension. However

all such tension is undercut by the fact that we know the outcome of the story already.

Tanner further frustrates narrative expectations by proceeding to delay, to put off, the actual point of their meeting and the commencement of their relationship. She arrives on the 6th December, they first see one another on the 16th January, i.e. narrative tension has been raised only to then frustrate the spectator with a delay. One could argue that these scenes (2 to 25) could be called a 'pre-story', and whilst they can be seen to have several important functions, they are not the story proper. The narrative elements that are selected to be shown during this period indicate the fundamental differences between Paul and Adriana, in class, status, education, material circumstances. The scenes also show changes taking place for the two of them, her arrival in a strange village, his selection as a candidate for the local political arena and his assumption of a new role, another 'label', a false development perhaps. It is noticeable that Tanner often shows Adriana at work, but we only see Paul outside work (apart from a fleeting shot of him at a drawing board) and in his role as an election candidate. We also never see very much of his private domestic life. Either these are wilful narrative omissions, or perhaps Tanner is trying to stress his tendency to middle-class role playing; in this instance assuming the role of a local politician/public figure, which is at odds with his peasant origins. Adriana could be seen in contrast as a whole person, not a being who is split.

One would expect the narrative pace to quicken as the meeting of the two approaches, and Tanner does in fact cross-cut between the two of them as if to create this effect; Paul filling his car with petrol, Adriana preparing the room for the meeting, Paul in the car etc., but one also notices that narrative elements are introduced gratuitously

and they serve to delay the expected meeting. Here one thinks of the delightful little cameo shot of the two garage men, stamping their feet, peering out into the snow, and bemoaning the weather. Notions of narrative economy, narrative 'tightness' have no place in Milieu. We see that in this pre-meeting section, there are large time jumps, e.g. 7th December, then 15th December, and that the principles of selecting which elements to show are not conventional; all elements are not strictly useful or necessarily very significant.

After their meeting (scene 25), Paul can be said to be the casual agent of the narrative. There is a hint of the general movement of a 'Hollywood' narrative where someone wants something, there is a goal, he/she pursues it, thus constituting the action of the film. Obviously, this resemblance to a conventional narrative pattern is not strong since this section, when Paul is pursuing Adriana, is only one part of the film. (It could be said to last until scene 95/96, when Adriana takes over as the dominant force, the prime mover.) Scenes 26-40 could be seen to be the first phase of this pursuit; Paul frantically driving to and fro, Adriana pursued but as yet unaware of it. The narrative elements are very short and often repetitive (Paul's activities are by definition repetitive at this stage, as he goes to and from the café, watches Adriana and so on). But the important point is that there is no attempt made on the part of the director to mask this. These might be called 'dead spots' but, unlike in a conventional narrative, they are not cut out to achieve pace and to avoid boredom. A few of them might be explained away as essential narrative connectors, without which there would be uncomfortable jumps in the narrative, but we know that the latter policy is out of keeping with the theory of the film, and their sheer number could not be explained in this way.

It is only at scene 40 that Adriana and Paul directly confront one another for the first time, that is to say, one third of the total number of scenes have gone by before they make contact. This fact in itself underlines the idea that the story is only one of the elements of this film. At scene 40, Adriana opens her door to find Paul there, demanding to see her 'every day'.

Certain observations that we have noted about the narrative so far, i.e. up to scene 40, can be broadened out and considered as general comments on the majority of the film. The affair of Paul and Adriana lasts 112 days; elements of 24 of these days are selected to be shown. Those that are selected are not necessarily those of the greatest narrative significance at all. Scenes of lesser, or no narrative importance, are mixed with scenes of obvious great significance. One would number among the latter, the scenes with the train motif, or Paul and Adriana's first long talk at scene 46. These are mixed indiscriminately with scenes of lesser or no narrative weight, e.g. shots of Paul driving, the car leaving the factory. There is in fact, on scrutiny, a hierarchy of elements, but the director does not signal them himself. Fairly 'empty' moments are given ample running time, so that this is no indicator of relative importance. The spectator has to weigh up the material for himself. The dates perhaps serve to underline the fact that there has been an arbitrary selection of material by a film maker, who chooses what you will see; narratives exclude, as well as include. The process of creating a narrative is perhaps being made more visible to the audience, and the results of that process, in this case, are seen not to be conventional.

We have noted that elements we would not expect to be shown, are in fact shown, and even repeated; conversely, elements we would expect to see are often simply not there. There are a number of very striking instances of narrative omissions; Paul's wife is shown once briefly, in

the early stages of the film. And this shot is highly effective in several respects. It shows the role of conventional middle-class wifehood that Adriana rejects, the bored wife surrounded by comforts, watching the husband go out, expected to do a little public or volontary work. But in terms of narrative, it is most noticeable that Paul's wife is never seen again, and is only mentioned casually two or three times in conversation thereafter. Paul mentions that she has left the house and he shows Adriana his home. She rejects it. All the domestic marital upset on Paul's side is left out. Either the implication is that the domestic crisis has little or no relevance for Paul, consumed as he is with a new passion, or we have a case of deliberate omissions on the part of the director. Paul is certainly shown to be, in most respects, quite heedless of consequences, but he is also shown to be a fairly sensitive and kind man. Hence the former explanation is seen to be the less likely one. And of course, apart from this deliberate omission, there is evidence of other striking narrative omissions; the two men, sent out from the A.D.P. meeting to search for Paul, crash their car on the ice. At scene 82 we see the car overturn, in long shot. At scene 83 we see Paul and Adriana happy together and unaware of this search party. Nothing else is heard of the men or the crash (despite the fact that at scene 90 there is an A.D.P. meeting that is again discussing Paul).

So far, we have seen the narrative as broken into three broad phases; namely, a non-narrative prelude, a pre-narrative phase, and a phase from scene 25, where Paul is the prime mover. Now at scene 95 a new broad phase can be isolated, one where Adriana takes over as the principle mover in the story. As their fundamental discords begin to surface, Adriana begins to act, to be positive. She, sensing the hopelessness of their liaison, rejects his luxurious house, takes days off by herself to roam freely about, scrutinises shops with

conventional wedding photos, passes them by. It is very significant that it is in this phase of the narrative, at scene 105 only, that Paul is shown at work. We see him functioning as a hard, driving boss, both patronising and domineering with workers, the class to which Adriana of course belongs. This shot of Paul at work serves to underline the hopelessness of the relationship, just as Adriana is beginning to sense it intuitively for herself. Adriana, now more positive altogether, becomes more dominant and active in their sexual relationship, a fact which Paul does not accept. She has realised that he does not listen to her, he will not change, he wants her simply to fill the slot as his second wife, and that, in point of fact, he treats her like a prostitute, taking no account of her personally at all. When she offers herself as one such, he becomes reticent and confused, unable or unwilling to see that this is the role in which he casts her. Others appreciate this fact, for example the men at the A.D.P. meeting agree, 'she must be a good lay'. Adriana telephones Paul's work, and meeting him at the café, announces she is leaving for Zurich. The whole emphasis of the film shifts now to Adriana. We do not see Paul after scene 119. The last shot of this section is the shot of the train crossing the plain of the Middle of the World, this time carrying Adriana away. This ending had been prefigured very neatly by the director in scene 106. In scene 106, he repeated the elements of scene 2 of the film, Adriana in a train, eating an orange, accepting a knife from a man in the compartment. The sense of ending, of an episode come full circle, was given in scene 106.

The narrative has one last phase, a form of coda, an 'afterword' on the fate of Adriana. It comprises scenes 123, 4 and 5, and we see her in a Zurich factory, walking back to relatives, and a brief conversation with her sister. The key narrative element of this last phase is the first; Tanner creates an exact replica of the scene where

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Paul marched around his factory, creating deadlines, pressurising workers. But this time it is another 'Paul', a German speaker, and Adriana is a worker in the factory. Tanner's implication is that presumably, if approached by such a man again, she will understand the factors involved better and possibly, on reflection, she will understand, retrospectively, more about her relationship with Paul Chamoret. There is also the wider implication that, as an urban factory worker, she will get a better political perspective generally. (She was carefully shown throughout the film to have no interest in politics.) As with Rosemonde, the implication that she can learn, can change, and is independent, is very important. Françoise in Retour also was able to learn, change and develop. Paul Chamoret is however effectively dismissed as ossified into his role in the system. Audiences were known to have disliked the ending of Le Milieu du monde, since they felt that Tanner had sealed Adriana's fate, settled her down into a boring and hopeless factory situation. But our reading of the ending suggests otherwise; where there is capacity for change, for increasing understanding and possibly for action, there is not hopelessness. Tanner comments in fact that she is in the best place, saying, 'it is always better to be a worker if you are in industry, you have more capacity for understanding society and for change'.[30] The coda, concerning as it does Adriana, also highlights once again a) Tanner's general leaning, being a man, towards his women characters and b) his general belief that when women move they have the capacity to change more things. 'Men have been moving for quite a long time now, without much result ... in the present situation, the structure of society is more affected when a woman moves.'[31]

The coda of Milieu is obviously fundamentally important in terms of the film's meaning. As with the coda of Retour, Tanner leaves us with an open ending, the future for Adriana in the balance. The ending

is not the failure of her relationship with Paul Chamoret, a relationship which ended at scene 119. No more is heard of Paul, the implication being perhaps that he will go back to his wife. (Such was the case in an earlier version of the script, and this in fact happened in the original anecdote upon which the story was based, where the respected Mayor of a local town ran off with young immigrant girl. An enormous scandal was created, and village life only returned to normal when he returned and settled down again with his wife.) An open ending is of course another aspect of the invitation to the spectator to participate in the creation of the film, rather than to remain a passive observer.

We have discussed, so far, a number of features of the narrative of Le Milieu du monde, together with its general shape. Another very important facet, one not yet touched upon, is the existance of, and the function of, the other narrative strands that exist within the film, which enrich it, and make it both more complex and more subtle. Tanner calls them the 'sept autres lignes', and outlines how the story was constructed in the first place. First of all, he worked with John Berger on the characters, their motivation, behaviour and what happened to them, and then, together, they constructed the story, the chronological events, the commentary and the techniques for the narration - or rather the desconstructing of the narration. They made lines; 'nous avons mis en place et travaillé sur les lignes d'un graphique. La ligne 1 pour les rapports de Paul et Adriana, 2 pour Adriana seule, 3 pour Paul seul, 4 pour les politiciens de Saint-Claret, 5 pour les garagistes, 6 pour les femmes du café, 7 pour la nature et 8 pour l'intervention des auteurs, le commentaire'.[32] This was, he adds, just a convenient work-method, but it was practical and made it easier to establish the interactions between the narrative

threads. Having completed, Tanner went away to write the dialogue, and to finalise the structure.

Lines 4, 5 and 6 are each meant to comment, in their different ways, upon the relationship of the main couple. The love story (line 1) and the political fiction (line 4) run along together, are intermingled, and via the process of interweaving, meanings are very effectively produced. There is no doubt which is the main story, and Tanner uses a little cameo shot of the couple kissing in the foreground with desultory 'political' discussion in the background, to neatly emphasise the point. In numerous ways, the political narrative is in fact undercut, e.g. by the total ellipsis of the culmination of the election campaign. This is surprising, since so much film time has been given to seeing Paul as a candidate, his meetings and so on. An anecdote regarding the 'relegation' of the political narrative may be relevant here. Tanner speaking of the reception of the film in Paris and Geneva says

> I had terrible rows with extreme leftist audiences
> ... the reactions of the young were identical -
> against the film. I could see exactly what they
> wanted; they'd like to see themselves on the screen
> with revolutionary trappings. I told them that
> their reactions to the film, their relationship to
> the screen, was exactly that of the peitit
> bourgeois. So, they see revolutionary films from
> South America and feel so happy it is a
> revolutionary movie, although they are sitting and
> living in Paris or Geneva. (33)

Tanner felt that satisfaction of this identificatory kind had been found too much in La Salamandre and it was to be wiped out in Milieu. It seems odd that such audiences should not in fact be sympathetic to the broad political thrust contained at the formal level of the film. Tanner of course also points out that it was hardly realistic to find left-wing activists in a small county town of around four thousand inhabitants, and in any case regards the method of using such characters and putting a few good lines in their mouths, as a facile one.

Although the political strand, or line, is relegated to a fairly minor role, it does interweave dialectically from the beginning of the film with the main love story, from the first scenes where Adriana arrives and Paul is selected as a candidate. In the cross-cutting between the two in these early scenes, the introduction of the political line/thread serves to highlight the differences between the couple well before they meet, differences of class, culture, language, politics etc. Paul's selection as candidate actually makes subsequent failure with Adriana more likely since, due to this, he must adopt a new persona, removed from his original self. In this context, we see the P.R. men creating his image as a dynamic, effective young technocrat. Tanner subsequently moves between Paul in his new role and Adriana in hers, and the contrasts are seen to be very effective; we think of Paul rehearsing his simplified economic text for the masses, and Adriana counting up the real, if small sums, on the table; he is the manipulator, she the manipulated. We think of Paul with his smooth and articulate speech making, and the men in the café with their crude but spontaneous words to Adriana. She is undoubtedly more at home with the latter.

Adriana herself is in no way overtly political; in fact it is stressed that she is not interested in such questions, being a very traditional Italian woman leaving these questions to the men. She only takes issue once with Paul at this level, when he remarks 'on est tous dans le même bateau' and she disagrees with this abruptly but is unable, or unwilling, thereafter to argue the point. It is the wider ramifictions of Paul's politics and political life that have a direct bearing on their relationship; first of all by the development of Paul's new role and its damaging effect on himself, and secondly, via the sort of politics he preaches. A.D.P. politics is status quo politics, no change, cunningly put over as 'no politics', just good

sense and management. In fact, dominant elements are kept in power. The general political tone of 1974 Tanner reminds us, is one of 'normalisation', i.e. where there is apparent dialogue between opposing forces and ideologies but no change, in effect stalemate. On a personal level, Paul sees no need for change in himself due to his relationship with Adriana; she must change, become a middle-class wife and so on. The relationship demands growth and change on both sides, but Paul cannot or will not alter. Adriana on the other hand, is shown as being highly conscious of the need for, and the real possibility of change for them both. Paul is willing to lose the election, create a social furore, but not to change in essentials. He must remain in apparent control, organising and dominating her, planning their life together in his own milieu. There are other levels of his personality, such as a boyish and spontaneous level which surfaces in the early days of their affair (and which via cutting Tanner contrasts with the cynicism of the A.D.P. members) but this level is overlaid by his adopted selves and roles. Hence one sees that the personal and the political levels are inextricably linked in the film, the macrocosm of public politics affecting the microcosm of personal politics.

In terms of narrative weighting, line 4 is obviously the most important of the secondary narrative strands, but one notices that it is not distributed evenly throughout the narrative. It is given equal weight at the beginning with the main story, as we have said, but from scenes 35-50 for example, it is phased out altogether as the two meet and the early stages of their relationship unfold. We then see Paul at occasional public meetings, and the A.D.P. men twice more as a crisis develops surrounding their candidate. Paul loses, and this is not shown, and in the last dozen scenes or so there is no direct mention of party politics at all.

Narrative line 5, that of the garage workers, is an indicator of Paul's roots and background (the shot of the other worker coming out of the poorer side of the inn serves the same purpose); they were at school together, friends as children. They serve to highlight how far Paul has come from his old peasant culture, now that he is a self-made member of the bourgeoisie. The politics of the garage men are naturally left-wing and they take an interesting perspective for example on the question of Paul's candidacy, 'They're (the bosses) squeezing you dry, you're a fool' but Paul accepts that its all part of the work. Of course they have given Paul up as 'irrécuperable ... il a passé de l'autre côté', yet, because of past ties and natural cheerfulness, they retain an easy bantering tone with Paul and are able to mock him good humouredly for his position. These two men also reflect the popular delight in the scandal surrounding a public figure. One notes that Paul, for his part, retains those parts/levels of his personality that allow him to relate to them still (albeit on a limited scale). Apart from the perspective they offer on Paul, and on his affair with Adriana, two of the scenes they feature in are noteworthy for other reasons: firstly, for the tiny cameo of the two workmen bemoaning the weather, and secondly, for the scene where they ape the theatre stage. We have briefly discussed this last scene and how it makes an important contribution to the distanciation created between film and spectator. Despite the brevity of their appearances, the two garage men do undoubtedly provide an enriching feature of the film.

The women in the café (line 6) operate as a sort of chorus (as do the garage men with Paul), situating, and reflecting on Adriana and her ideas. They do however play a more developed role in the film than that of the garage men, and their narrative weighting is greater. They provide other examples of female ideas and perspectives, thus highlighting the different stances that Adriana has. Juliette, a

representative of the pill era, is out for what she can get from men, and out to enjoy herself. She has a low and cynical estimate of men. A jaunty and irreverant character, she appears to be in control, but in fact is still the victim of sexual exploitation. She will fall victim, due to her economic situation, to the stereotyped future of wifehood, despite the fact that she fears it. The only exit from the café is to wifehood. The complete difference between Juliette and Adriana is amusingly reflected in her incomprehension of the motives for Adriana's leaving Paul; 'was he lousy in bed ... abnormal sex ... was there someone else ... was it because he was not Italian?' Since Paul was rich, and a man, she fails to understand any other order of problem that there could be. The perspective and advice offered by the widow, a commercially orientated woman, is 'to get what you can ... feather your nest'. The two of them regard Adriana as a hopeless idealist, and indeed, set against these other examples of working women, Adriana's position stands out very clear and stark. She is seen, in contrast, to be an unusually independent woman; she is not looking for security, has no 'nest' to feather, and states that all she wants of a man is 'quand je suis avec un type ce que j'aime c'est de sentir qu'il n'a plus peur de rien et moi non plus'.[34] In a difficult economic and social situation, Adriana is shown to have unusual strength of mind and self-sufficiency.

Line 7 of the narrative, nature was called by the authors 'le mystère' and it was apparently the most difficult segment of the film to integrate. Tanner says of it 'il fonctionne non pas comme une toile de fond ni comme un rappel de l'éternité de choses, mais comme un temps d'une autre durée que celle des personnages'.[35] However the twelve or so inserts do provide something of a backcloth to the main narrative, in the sense that they do show the area called the Middle of the World where the story takes place. More particularly, they do help

create the thematic ramifications of the Middle of the World. The commentary first signals this thematic dimension, remarking that 'il y a autant de centres du monde qu'il y a des gens'. Paul jokes about this, telling Adriana how this area is scientifically the middle of the world and saying it is so because he was born there. Adriana puts another, explicitly sexual interpretation on the other idea, as she lies in bed with Paul; she says to him 'Ecco le milieu du monde'. Paul replies, 'je ne le vois pas mais je peux le toucher'. The idea of the middle of the world is reminiscent of John Donne's poem The Sunne Rising; the sun is chided in the early part of the poem for disturbing the lovers, and told at the end of it to shine in

> Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere,
> This bed they centre is, these walls thy spheare.

The inserts of nature remind us when we see them, of the personal ramifications of being at the Middle of the World, in a place of stalemate, in the sense that the main question for Paul and Adriana is whether they can emerge from their fixed selves and adapt to another self, another 'middle of the world'. Paul comments in fact that, being at the middle of the world enables him to have a better view of things, being 'neither one thing or the other'; looked at another way however this can mean deadness, stalemate, no committment. Thus, in several senses, the inserts of nature have to be taken as a backcloth, in a geographic and a thematic sense.

There are hints at a romantic or conventional association between landscape and story, but they are often red herrings, meant to flout conventional assumptions. At scene 25, the switch to a summer field with flowers in bloom, could have been a device to express the joy that the lovers are experiencing at this point. This however is undercut by other pairs of scenes, e.g. 101/2 where a summer landscape appears in the real 'winter' of the lover's relationship. One notes that the inserts are predominantly of winter, which is a) actually when

the story takes place and b) appropriately sounds a note of bleakness and gloom which <u>does</u> match a story where two beings fail to adapt to one another, and people are seen as unable to escape from their fixed roles. Such a reading will of course be contrary to Tanner's intention, judging by his comments in the essay 'le "pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"'. There are big seasonal jumps between the inserts, in contrast with the day-by-day tracking of the events of the lovers, a different time scheme from that of the lovers, as Tanner puts it. Possibly more important than this, is the fact that they serve to break up the main narrative further, frequently intervening, for example, within a spate of scenes that take place on one day, or intervening in an obvious progression of scenes. For example, Paul and Adriana arrange to meet the next day (scene 42), and then the intercut intervenes before we see Adriana coming out of the café to get into the car. Also important is the fact that these intercuts could be said to punctuate the narrative in the sense that they provide pauses for reflection on the part of the viewer, thus encouraging a more democratic relationship between film and spectator.

Line 8 of the film is the commentary. It was meant to be more abundant than we see it in the finished version. It was originally intended to be, and still is, in a more limited way 'à la fois la troisième voix du film, celle des auteurs qui devait précéder celle des personnages dans la mesure où ceux-ci ne pouvaient s'expliquer ce qui leur arrive et ou l'interprétation n'était pas possible'.[36] The original commentary was modified after the final editing, since the character of Adriana (due to the performance by Olympia Carlisi and the nature of her lack of communication with the director) had deviated from the original intention. As Tanner said

> le récit restait le même mais le recul pris par
> rapport à ce récit nous permettait de rectifier le
> tir sans rien y changer mais simplement en déplaçant

l'éclairage que lui donnait le commentaire.   Plutôt
que de forcer le sens sur une matière qui ne le
soutenait plus dans les mêmes termes nous avons
finalement preferé recrire le commentaire pour
donner au film un encadrement légèrement different. (37)

(This actually pinpoints the fact that the role of Adriana is one of
the main weaknesses of the film.) What remains of the commentary is a
voice over at scene 1, scene 66 and scene 124.   We have briefly
discussed the first instance of the commentary (scene 1), and we recall
that it sets the tone of the film as self-reflexive, gives important
thematic pointers and serves to severely undercut traditional narrative
expectations.   In scene 66, there is one sentence only from the voice
over, 'ils ont échangé leurs espoirs et espèrent que leurs espoirs
vivront'.   This use of the word 'exchange' neatly harks back to the
opening statement of the commentary in the film 'tout peut être échangé
à condition que rien ne change la nature des choses', and the personal
and the political sphere is linked again. In the one sentence at scene
66, the personal failure to come is intimated.   The last commentary
sums up the essence of that failure, doing in effect what Paul and
Adriana could not do.   'Paul savait où situer ses espoirs mais ceux-ci
étaient fragmentés et n'englobaient pas la possibilité d'un changement
véritable. Peut-être qu'Adriana, elle, savait seulement ce qu'elle ne
voulait pas. Ce qui la conduisit à prendre une décision'. No progress
could be made in this relationship, their hopes were 'normalised'.   The
commentary then widens the issue; 'des espoirs continuent de naître,
chaque jour, et à être échangés mais au lieu de venir se couler dans la
mouvement de la vie, ils vont se briser comme des vagues contre le mur
de l'opportunisme, du mensonge et de la peur'. The commentary in this
film, though slight, is seen to raise issues about film itself, the
medium, as well as to comment upon the story and characters, and also
to sound important themes. The authorial commentary obviously carries
a lot of weight, and will be accepted as 'the truth' about the story.

It will exclude therefore other possible interpretations. In a sense, this is contrary to the democratic spirit that Tanner wishes to foster between audience and film since this audience is told, on certain issues, what to think. This is presumably done however, in order that attention will be turned to the intended dialogue on the question of film form, the medium itself, so that the film is not in the story but 'on top' of it.

The use of the radio should be mentioned in conjunction with the commentary since, whilst it is <u>within</u> the filmic world, unlike the commentary, it is used to exemplify the political climate that the commentary has spelled out. An 'official' voice, and linked obviously to authorial voice over statements, it has something of the weight of the commentary. We hear it frequently as Paul drives to and fro in his car; it has always the same basic message, for example, 'lors de la visite que le Ministre polognais des affaires étrangères a rendu au Pape en novembre dernier, il avait déclaré qu'il souhaitait que les relations entre le Vatican et la Pologne soient normalisées. La Pologne, rappelons-le, est le pays communiste qui compte le plus, etc.' These radio interventions are highly repetitive and the visuals each time it is used are the same (of Paul in the car). Hence they constitute a feature that would scarcely be considered tolerable in a more conventional narrative; however as used here they could be said to force the audience to notice the issue of narrative manipulation.

It should be noted that despite certain similarities between the narrative strategies used in <u>Milieu</u> and those used in <u>Retour</u>, the resulting structure of <u>Milieu</u> is much tighter in one sense. It is highly structured along pre-determined lines. One notices that Tanner was happy to 'digress' in the previous two films, adding touches of anecdote, but this casual digression is absent in <u>Milieu</u>; there is no Vladimir, no Hermes. One notices only that Tanner holds his camera a

second longer than necessary on the face of one A.D.P. member, studying
a face that is both wily and stupid, but this is all. The material of
the film is strictly contained in the 7 lines and each of these has a
bearing in some way on the main narrative.

Despite the many features of the narrative strategy that undermine
conventional narrative expectations, it should be said that many basic
conventional pleasures associated with narrative are retained. As
Tanner says, 'une des notions essentielles aux types traditionnels de
récit est celle du temps, du passage du temps, de la chronologie. Pour
ma part j'y demeure attaché parce qu'elle m'apporte la possibilité de
suivre le changement des personnages (ou l'absence de changement comme
c'est le cas dans ce film) - élément qui est au centre de tous mes
films'.[38] Rounded characters (rather than the flat social types
favoured by the neo-realists) and a story are very much retained in
Tanner films, and he claims to be much attached to these conventional
features. Taking 'story' for a moment - these statements made by the
director appear to rather contradict his insistence at other times that
he reduced his story in Milieu to banality, so that the film should not
be 'in the story' but 'on top of it'. He says for instance, 'le
spectateur aura le sentiment que le récit en lui même n'a aucune
importance mais que l'important c'est la façon dont ce récit est
mené'.[39] This insistence on the true thrust of the work leads Tanner
in effect often to underplay the quality of the story itself. Being
'the oldest story in the world' does not by definition render it less
interesting, quite the opposite. Knowing the ending does not detract
either, since one could guess at the outset that such a relationship
would fail. What is still interesting is the study of how and why it
fails, the pointers to how it might have succeeded, the observations
about passion contained in it, and about social structures. The level
of work, and the original interest in the story itself, are revealed by

two letters that John Berger wrote to the two actors who had been chosen to take the two lead roles.[40] In these, the story, the subject and the characters as Berger sees them, are explained in detail. He remarks that 'although there are thousands of films about love, remarkably few have shown any understanding of the nature of sexual passion'. Berger had recently finished the novel G, also an exploration of sexuality, so obviously, the area of his greatest interest and contribution was here. Apart from denying that the story is banal, these letters are chiefly interesting because a) independent of the film they are an interesting analysis of sexual passion and b) they do give some valid pointers towards a reading of the film and c) they show the relationship between an original design and associated intentions, and a finished product. There is an inevitable divergence.

The story is both interesting, subtle and delicate; it posits a relationship between two complete opposites in nationality, class, education, status, and finance, and it charts in a perceptive and often delicate manner the stages and the facets of this relationship, from the explosion in Paul's world when he first sees Adriana, through pursuit, contact and disintegration. The intital stages of their relationship are particularly well done. They walk on the plain, speaking of themselves, trying to learn of the other. She accepts his passion, there is a brief period of happiness before the cracks begin to appear. There is one specially good, if brief scene, where the two lie in bed together, but removed from each other and silent. She in her way, he in his, struggles at that moment to save the relationship. The differences that finally succeed in dividing them are delicately sketched in at all times of the film; one sees the waiter's slight hesitation as he hears his 'rich' client in the hotel speak in Italian, and as he 'positions' her socially and determines the nature of her relationship to the man she is with. The differences between them are

not in the end shown to have been insurmountable but the need for change on both sides was a prerequisite.

The Importance of Character

Character, and the development of character over time, is also a very important, and a conventional feature of Le Milieu du monde. We watch Paul Chamoret's character over a period of time. He is basically an alienated man, set in fixed roles in society, and divorced from his real self and his origins. He is split. The layers of his personality are at war. It is significant in this respect that all the early scenes present him as being a cypher, as being what other people say of him (e.g. the P.R. man's 'labels' or those of the A.D.P. committee. We notice his willingness to conform to the ideal picture of a local candidate). This holds good until scene 40 and after, when his relationship with Adriana calls forth the old spontaneous self that was once his. Boyishness and spontaneity can still surface in him, as seen in the 'silly present', and the sudden rush off to a hotel he could not afford when a student. Tanner says of him

> underneath he is still capable of something. He is still alive and not rotten to the bone, but he operates in such a society that his role prevents him from changing. His character is dual but it is too late for the human within him to cross the line. An important scene in relation to that is when he stops to piss in a field, but this playfulness is not enough. (41)

His dominant roles, or selves, are acquired; these roles are manager, efficient organiser, someone who can approach problems scientifically, even personal ones. We see him only once in his managerial role in the factory, towards the end of the film, and here it could be said that the other side of the positive epithets used about him (i.e. 'effective', 'energetic') could be seen. We watch him in the factory functioning as a ruthless machine, a functionary of a crushing system, dominating his workers, squeezing them dry, and totally unsympathetic and patronising in his attitude towards them.

As his relationship with Adriana begins to fail, the more Paul falls back into his more habitual roles and ways of thinking, and the 'older', more sponaneous peasant self diminishes. The more she imperceptibly retreats from him, the more he plans and organises their future together. It is significant that Tanner has him press on her more gadgetry; the 'silly present' gives way to more complicated watches and a video camera, which she angrily rejects. In effect, he is trying to press on to her the attributes and technology of his world; things which are irrelevant in hers.

Throughout the film, Tanner builds up a picture of Adriana who is willing to change, to adapt, and Paul who is unwilling, perhaps finally unable to change himself at all. He sees Adriana as his wife, in a bourgeois household, giving him the same secure background as he had before with his previous wife. She must leave her room, get rid of her scar, leave her job, conform to the patterns of a middle-class wife. In effect, he is bent on eliminating Adriana as a person. Apart from their very earliest meetings, when he was at least heard to question her, he never actually listens to anything she says. Even her most serious attempts at self-explanation are only met with endearments from him. He knows her no better at the end of the film. When others assess their relationship in terms of her being 'a good lay', they are in fact very near the truth. Adriana instinctively understands this.

In the end Paul is not a 'loser'. In his chosen roles he will continue to be successful. One sees this after the election loss; he is unperturbed, 'rien n'a changé je travaille bien. J'ai jamais fait barder autant les types, ni aussi bien contrôlé mes affaires, je suis pas tellement du genre perdant'. After the loss of Adriana, he will go on as before. But personally, Paul is arid, a cypher, a loser in the more fundamental sense.

One can see that the characterisation of Paul Chamoret fulfils the
requirements of a rounded character, an integral part of traditional
narrative. The character is well developed and changes over the period
of time depicted in the film. Paul is also representative of an
alienated man in capitalist society, but having said that, he is very
much portrayed as an individual.

If the character of Paul is complex, then that of Adriana is more
so (whether by design or default on the part of the actress is a matter
for debate). From the early stages of the film, one can see that she,
unlike Paul, is not defined by other people, quite the opposite, they
do not know what to make of her. She is manifestly very independent.
We begin to learn about her by dint of her difference, her opposition
to the other women she mixes with. She talks very little, but
gradually a picture is built up; she is poor, isolated, self-contained,
even secretive. There is a certain richness about her personality, in
her contentment and independence. She is accepting of her social and
economic lot, resigned, passive. Paul captures her interest since she
is curious about him, and she is lonely. As she talks to Paul, and
attempts to explain herself, we learn a little more about her, her
family background in the urban working-class and the unions, her own
lack of interest in political matters. This, according to Tanner, is a
conventional woman's attitude in Italy. It is an attitude that in a
way gives Italian women a certain strength, and enables her to resist
Paul's world. Tanner comments of Italian women that they are not
contaminated by the way modern society works.

Adriana is shown however as ready to be changed by Paul. It is
she who expresses the idea of relationships involving change. She is
ready to learn from him; she visits the village where he lives, to get
a better picture of him. She describes the incident that led to her
scarred face, the longest speech she makes in the film in fact, and

explains how, because of it, she changed. The notion of self responsibility, fundamental to her thinking now, was born then. The idea that people don't see how she really is, was ingrained in her after that period in hospital. She does not believe that Paul can get to know her entirely, and yet she attempts to make him see her, and is angry when he doesn't try to know her better, 'tu n'écoutes pas quand ça sort de ton horizon'. She leaves him as she realises that he cannot change, and she does not want her life changed along the model that he proposes. The commentary points out that Adriana, at the end of the film, only knew what she did not want. It must be said that a slight weakness emerges in the film in the sense that we are told that she is able/willing to change but we have little concrete proof of this. She is shown as resistant to what is offered by Paul. The coda is created to show that she has the capacity to learn and develop. If she meets 'Paul Chamoret' again in a Zurich factory, she will have a different view of him, and be able to deal with the situation better.

Tanner obviously favours characters who are instinctive, and also capable of development, like Rosemonde. The responses of Adriana are shown to be instinctive; for example, she decides to sleep with Paul after he has temporarily broken out of his cautious self and taken the step of introducing her to a friend. She does not rationalise, or articulate this decision. She refuses to make love in the 'money bag's bed', but she could not explain why to Paul, or even perhaps to herself. Her responses could be said to be spontaneous and 'unspoiled', 'immediate'; she suddenly acts as a whore since she senses she is being treated like one, but she could not verbalise this.

The problems in the characterisation of Adriana do not arise from the script but from the acting by Olympia Carlisi. Her playing of this part, and her lack of accord and communication with Tanner, proved serious problems during the shooting, and could be said to constitute

flaws in the finished film. The character of Adriana is played completely flat, almost no emotion is registered, and we have a totally negative and passive presentation. One must admit that Berger's letter to Olympia Carlisi before the shooting is somewhat removed from the final resulting film, but having said all this, all the positive epithets he uses about the character of Adriana are gone. The problems between Carlisi and Tanner are on record in Boujut's book; she feeling Adriana to be too close to herself in many respects and therefore feeling 'naked' and 'vulnerable' to an awkward degree, to say nothing of her awkwardness with the love scenes and her total lack of communication and sympathy with Tanner. The resulting performance is very lacking in conviction, very dull and flat, not illuminating properly the character of Adriana as it was origially intended to be.

Tanner has always had this fundamental interest in characterisation, and in this film, despite many unconventional features of the narrative, the development of character and story serve perhaps to 'retain' the audience, to provide the conventional anchor point for this mix that is offered. In a sense, the development of these conventional features may serve to blur over the fragmentary and unusual nature of the narrative presentation. Another ingredient of a conventional 'good' (i.e. 'rich', 'complex') narrative should also be mentioned, as it exists in this film. Certain central motifs are woven into the fabric of the narrative, and their appearance assists in the development of major themes in the film. The most important of these motifs could be said to be that of the train and, linked to it, the Doppler effect with its relationship to the theme of change. Adriana is seen to arrive on a train and, retrospectively, this fact acquires importance as the series of shots of trains progresses. It is at scene 45 that the Doppler effect is explained by Paul to Adriana as the train approaches at a level crossing then passes them by. He explains how

the sound wavelengths vary and therefore the pitch of the note emitted alters. The pitch is higher thus also suggesting the intensity of a new relationship. He remarks lightly that that discovery changed a lot of things, to which Adriana responds 'tout a changé', in other words she signals a wider interpretation of the idea of change. Adriana later explains to Paul that, when two people meet, they should change one another a little; and the Doppler effect in the film is a metaphor for two people passing one another by experiencing an intense relationship, but one that involves only temporary 'change'. Two different positions are involved in the effect, one a moving point, one a static point. Paul is portrayed as predominantly static, Adriana as the moving point.

The motif of the still photograph is also related to the idea of fixity and lack of change. We see Paul being photographed, and we see his photograph several times before Adriana meets him, and as his visual image is fixed for the campaign, so are the roles to which he must now adhere in his new position as election candidate. We notice that Paul takes photographs of Adriana but, as we would expect, she is totally hostile to the idea of having her photograph taken. At scene 106, we see her looking for a few seconds at some wedding photographs in a window, and then walking on and dismissing them. Given the schema of ideas, her hostility to the video camera that Paul attempts to give her is perhaps curious, since this camera cannot be equated with fixity. The video camera is however a symbol of the affluent consumer society which she rejects. The underlying questioning of the products of the camera, still and moving, is of course related to the self-reflexive spirit of the film as a whole; Milieu is a film that works against mistaking images for reality in a simplistic way.

Apart from the motif of the train, and that of the photograph, we have also the central metaphor of the Middle of the World itself, a

metaphor derived from the actual physical environment, the plain, a no-man's-land where opposites meet and talk (Geneva is effectively this) but make no changes. The climate of stalemate is the context of the love story and echoes its main ideas. This could mean that the appearance of the 'nature' inserts, by reminding us of the idea of the Middle of the World and the theme of stalemate, tend to be less disruptive and fragmenting for the narrative than Tanner would have us believe.

It has been shown that, in conjunction with a high level of experimentation, in terms of narrative strategies, there are a good deal of the conventional pleasures ordinarily offered by narrative. These are anchor points which retain the audience in order that the other offerings can be explored. Whether the recipe works as it should, or whether audiences would focus on the conventional elements at the expense of the rest, remains an open question.

The Use of Music

We have discussed two fundamentally different approaches to the issue of film music in the previous chapter, the conventional 'supplementing the action' approach, and that described by John Cage, where film music exists in its own right, and is in no way subordinate or related to the visulas. In Retour, we concluded that there was a mix of approaches, but that the conventional approach was far more pronounced than Tanner apparently intended. With Le Milieu du monde, Tanner obviously claims that the music belongs to the second category and he expounds the idea that conventional film music is one of the most crude of the spectrum of techniques used to 'hook' the spectator, the tip of the iceberg as he terms it. He expresses the fear that music always increases the emotional power of the image and leads towards lyricism. The following is a statement made by Tanner outlining what the music should be:

> la musique doit simplement être un élément comme un
> autre de la structure et rien de plus. Mais elle
> agit différemment. Il faut en premier lieu la
> dissocier de l'image, du récit, des sentiments des
> personnages, la faire courir ni devant, ni dessous
> les images, mais parallèlement. Il faut lui faire
> jouer le jeu que jouent tous les autres facteurs de
> la distanciation. Mais il faut jouer serré entre
> le décrochement total et l'illusion, la 'vraie'
> musique de film. (42)

He claims to lay false trails, sometimes the music appears to be conventionally used, then the impression is dispelled; for example the music might make us believe something dramatic is going to happen, then all we see is something very mundane, e.g. the snow falling on a field. The mixture of approaches is meant to sensitise the audience to the issue of film music, the oppositions are meant to provoke speculation. Apart from the usage of music at individual moments, the overall tone of the film will be affected by the music. In the case of Milieu, the music is obviously more 'grave' than the ordinary events that we see, and it gives a general tone of tragedy. If one thinks of the wider implications of the story of Paul Chamoret, then this grave tone is appropriate.

The work methods that produced the music for Milieu are interesting, and are to be seen in conjunction with Tanner's main statement of intention with regard to music just quoted. The director explained to Patrick Moraz what he wanted, in general terms, before the film was made. Hence, there was no question of the musician seeing the film and having ideas about it. Tapes of music were made, brought to the shooting, and Tanner then listened to them during the shooting in order to select and organise them. The musician involved had to give up the idea of being an original composer, and to recognise that he provides raw material only, and that he participates in a team effort.

Tanner begins the film with an obvious clash between visuals and sound (note that the incidence of music is marked on the scene diagram in Appendix 1). The music at the beginning (and it is picked up and

developed throughout the film) is slow, chilling, abstract, electronic, with a remote semblance of a melody. This is played over visuals of fields where heat is rising, and the landscape shimmering. This music would be relevant more to an epic-scale story set in desolate countryside than to a love story set in comfortable Switzerland. (Having however pointed out this clash, it should be said that we are conventionally used to music over natural spaces at the beginning of films). The music could even be termed spine chilling or bizarre, and could have been used with a science fiction story or a thriller. It is also noticeable that it is used somewhat erratically over the five shots of the prelude; over shots A, B and C the music is continuous but it fades in volume over the cut from B to C. In C the commentary begins and, as it does, the music does not diminish as one would expect, so that we can better hear the words spoken), but gathers strength. There is a break in the music at D, as the visuals move to a close-up of a field, but after a second or so it begins again and bleeds into scene 2. In effect, the music that we have described so far creates global expectations about the film and specific expectations; for example, the music at D is a red herring since it creates an atmosphere of expectation, when all we see is a close-up of a field. The bleeding of music over the date and into the shot of the men in the train welds together visuals that are both surprising and disparate. The bizarre wail of the music, interspersed now with lowering discords, is continued over the shots of Adriana's arrival at scenes 3, 5 and 7. Its volume varies, and at times we are also conscious of the sounds of people in the background. We have discussed the idea of Destiny or Fate in the scene and, in this instance, the music increases the sense of threat, and works in conjunction with this idea. We have noted also that this scene may not be as Tanner intended it. A pattern, based upon a contrast, is set up between the music of

the scenes of Adriana's arrival and the percussion notes that accompany the A.D.P. meetings at scenes 4, 6 and 8. The six or so quick percussion notes interjecting during the conversation at the meeting are completely bizarre and incongruous with respect to the visuals, and might, in a more conventional film, have indicated either suspense or humour. A broad pattern is in fact seen to emerge in the early scenes (up to 21), where the percussion is reserved for the date, or for Paul's scenes, and the 'wailing' electronic type music is used for the nature scenes (including the brief moment when the two garage men look out at the snow and lament the weather), and for Adriana's scenes. This pattern is broken down at scene 24 where Paul is arriving at the café (he is going to see Adriana for the first time), and the main 'electronic' music is used. In this sense, the music can be directly related to the needs of the narrative (Adriana's music is being used for Paul as they meet).

Certain other interesting features can be observed in the early scenes; the music creates expectations which are subsequently destroyed by what actually follows, i.e. music apparently used conventionally, then this impression dispelled. For example, the percussion notes over the date 16th December are very positive and strident, as if something very dramatic was to follow, but in fact all we see next is Paul and the P.R. men discussing his image creation for the election campaign. Similarly, there are very loud and dramatic discords at scene 17 over the December 24th title, but then all we see next is a field where it is snowing and there is silence. Not only this, but the shot of the silent field is held for a noticeably long time. Sometimes, it should be said that expectations created are not subsequently entirely destroyed; for example, over the February 13th date there is an awful, loud chord with drums, and then in the next scene we hear about the Russians and their 'normalised' relations with

the U.S., the frightening stalemate that exists between these directly opposed ideologies. The grim music is apt to describe one of the gravest issues of the film, that of normalisation in political and personal terms.

One notes that silence is a very important feature in the film, and it is used to great effect on numerous occasions. It is very silent in Adriana's room on her arrival and this silence helps to express, along with the apparent bareness of the room, her loneliness and isolation. After scene 21, when Paul has seen Adriana, the music gathers speed, and we have a faster version of the theme with many notes that appear to 'run along'. Hence, the music is at this point increases the sense of suspense or excitement, and the idea of movement as Paul begins the chase. But this temporary flirtation with music that supplements or 'tells the same story' as the visuals, is brief. There are many instances of what could only be termed jarring clashes between the music and the visuals. When Paul and Adriana are walking, very happy in their beginning relationship, the music starts with loud electronic-type noises, percussion notes, and gradually gets louder and louder, producing an effect which would be suited in fact to the awful climax of a high tragedy.

The majority of dates are accompanied by loud percussion notes or chords, but occasionally this pattern is interrupted, which is a productive and generally sensitising denial of an expectation set up in the film. The same can be said of the nature inserts. In one such insert, instead of the usual music, all we hear is the natural sound of rooks (but played very loud), and we see them flocking round a winter tree that is skeletal in appearance. These abrupt changes in music patterns cannot but sensitise an audience to the use of music in this film, and in films in general.

We notice that the interplay of diegetic music and non-diegetic music is very productive in this film. The non diegetic music is most often bizarre, and electronic, whilst in contrast, the music heard for example in the café, is tuneful and easy to listen to. Rock guitars play on the juke box as we scrutinize Paul's thoughtful and troubled face, as he watches Adriana. This music, in another film, could have easily been a part of the score of the film. Apart from the music in the café, one thinks of the music box sound (a present given to Adriana). This music echoes the simple and, in a way, naive joy of the lovers at this point, and is in direct contrast to the general tone of tragedy created by the non-diegetic music. There is a constant 'rub' between the quality of the diegetic and non-diegetic sound, e.g. the metallic sound of percussion over the date of January 25th, followed by a scene in a farmyard where we heard chickens, ducks and other natural sounds. Or a better example would be the cuckoo faintly heard over the shot of an open field, with its general pastoral associations, which is then suddenly drowned by heavy frowning chords. The sounds of nature are quite often heard in the film, often as related to Paul and his portrayal of himself as a 'cultureux sans terre'. He is nostalgic for his peasant boyhood. The sounds of the city, very important in the two previous Tanner films, are only heard during one trip by Adriana into Geneva (she is, we note, happy in this environment, coming from an urban working class background originally) and at the end of the film when she returns to this sort of environment, to work in Zurich. These city noises are a complete contrast to the quiet village of Mouruz.

It is startling that, in all the reviews and articles written about this film, there is no mention at all of the music. The music is extremely obtrusive both by its very nature - modern experimental, grating to most ears - and by its relationship to the visuals. Only occasionally does it work with the visuals, and in some of these

instances (Adriana's arrival) this was obviously not intended. Most often it clashes with the visuals. The conventional element of the 'mix' referred to by Tanner, is in fact only very slightly represented. What the music does do is to sensitise an audience to the issue of film music in general; hence, one of the chief reasons for having any music at all in this film is didactic. Most films have music, so that by retaining music, Tanner is not, to start with, alienating his audience; but having said that, the quality and incidence of that music raises many questions.

Fundamental to Tanner's theory about this film is the issue of distanciation, and one could argue that in terms of distanciation, the music of the film is most effective. An audience would presumably be forced to notice the music, forced to sit back and puzzle over it, rather than easily assimilating it in an unthinking manner. The music in no way, except as the occasional teasing 'red herring', involves us with the film or the characters' fates. From the sight of the film crew at the beginning (the reminder that we are going to be watching a film, an artefact), this film is more effectively distanciated than the previous two. One could isolate one scene - that of the two garage men performing a little playlet about the village women gossiping over the notorious affair of Paul Chamoret - as being a good example of an effectively distanciated scene. This little 'performance' is played direct at camera, i.e. it is played to the spectator, hence it could not be part of an illusory film world. The garage owner is somewhere at the back of the garage, so it is not performed for his benefit. It should also be noted that the actors enter the frame from the sides, as in a theatre. The 'playlet' acts as a chorus, commenting on the main action, and it is mainly sung rather than spoken. The Brechtian links are clear. The other factors in the film which are intended to create the effect of distanciation do so to a mixed degree. The commentary,

cited by Tanner as an important agent in creating this effect, has in fact only a limited success in this respect. It could only be said to be distanciating at moments where it discusses film itself (i.e. at the beginning), but where it expounds on theme or assists in explanations vis à vis the characters of the film, it could only be said to engage, to draw us closer, an observation equally true about the two earlier films. Looking at structural aspects of the film, one could cite the lack of the champ contre champ as a feature that limits the inclusion of the spectator in the scene. That is to say that the champ contre champ leads directly to illusion. The plan-séquence itself is very important to Tanner with respect to distanciation; he argues that 'by giving a shot its full value, strength and importance, an alienation effect is caused. If you don't cut you see everything differently'.[43] The constant use of the sequence shot, and its marked difference from the cutting of the scenes in most ordinary films, would be noticed by an audience. The slowness of pace caused by the plan-séquence would be felt. Having said this, it must be recognised that it is very difficult to judge a film by standards that operated in 1974. Distanciation techniques have by definition to change and develop continually if they are to be effective.

In terms of the characters, and the actors portrayal of these characters, one could argue that Olympia Carlisi gives a non-naturalistic and hence distanciated performance. (She had just completed a major role in Straub's Othon and demonstrated thereby her technical proficiency.) It is doubtful if this is a valid argument, since the performance should rather be seen as negative and uncommitted, and certainly this performance 'sits' badly in the film as a whole. In fact, she in fact expresses in detail her problems with this role in a conversation recorded in Boujut's book. At one point she intended to leave the cast. Modifications were made in the resulting

film to accommodate her performance. The characters are finely drawn, there is a deep interest in characterisation and Phillipe Leotard's style of acting is suited to this fact.

We have shown that theory and finished film product have drawn closer in Le Milieu du monde than in the earlier films, and that the work on film language is far more developed and systematic than in, for example, Retour d'Afrique. Milieu must also be said to be more effectively distanciated. It is a cooler film altogether, less lyrical. The reliance on poetry (Heine, Césaire) that marked the two earlier films, is effaced. A base of what is commonly termed 'realism', i.e. conventional filmic practice, remains. Tanner later refers to this base as the 'anchor point' of his films. He makes this observation about Jonas qui aura 25 ans en l'an 2000, 'à l'intérieur des scènes il y a des points d'ancrage qui sont effectivement dans le naturalisme parce que les spectateurs s'y retrouvent parce que tout le cinéma est fondé sur l'effet du réel'.[44] The anchor points in Milieu lie in story, in settings (e.g. the close observation of Adriana's room), in characterisation and dialogue. The film's 'realism' however often slides into allegory, and indeed allegory must be seen as a basic tendency in Tanner's films. Tanner says that, 'j'ai toujours besoin de cette base de vraisemblance, de credibilité et de ressemblance avec la réalité et en générale avec ce qu'elle a de plus contemporain et quotidien'.[45] He admits that this represents a starting point, and not in fact the end product. In the finished film allegory and 'realism' constantly and productively rub against one another. We have observed during the chapter where the conventional 'anchor points' exist in this film. We note that the conventional elements, and what they offer, do still tend to be underplayed by the director (e.g. his disparagement of his story), and that they do obviously constitute major strengths of the film. The subtlety of characterisation, the

clarity of the analysis of human relationships cannot be overlooked.
As a radical film maker, Tanner creates for himself a useful 'space',
where an intelligent dialogue with an audience on both the issues of
film itself, <u>and</u> the particular issues of this film can be effectively
pursued.

CHAPTER 6 - FOOTNOTES

1. Alain Tanner, 'Le "pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"', in ed. M. Boujut, Le Milieu du monde ou le cinéma selon Tanner (Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1974), p. 12.

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8. Comolli, 'Technique et Idéologie', p. 7.

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11. Ibid., p. 18.

12. Tanner, 'Le "pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"', pp. 13-14.

13. Ibid., p. 17.

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21. Ibid., p. 16.

22. Ibid., p. 22.

23. Quoted in Ibid., p. 14

24. Boujut, ed., Le Milieu du monde ou le cinéma selon Tanner, p. 153.

25. Ibid., p. 161.

26. G. Braucourt, 'Le Milieu du monde', Ecran, 29 (Oct. 197), p. 47.

27. Ibid.

28. Script of Le Milieu du monde, p. 27, publ. in M. Boujut, Le Milieu du monde ou le cinéma selon Tanner.

29. Tanner, 'Le "pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"', p. 18.

30. L. Rubenstein, 'Isolation and Ennui: Alain Tanner', Film, 28 (July 1975), p. 17.

31. Ibid.

32. Tanner, 'Le "pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"', p. 29.

33. Rubenstein, 'Isolation and Ennui', p. 16.

34. Script, Le Milieu du monde, p. 81.

35. Tanner, 'Le "pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"', p. 30.

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid., p. 18.

39. J. J. Olivier, 'Alain Tanner: "Je demande au spectateur d'être intelligent"', Figaro Littéraire (21.9.74).

40. These letters pub. in Ciné-Tracts, 1:1 (Spring 1977), pp. 15-26.

41. L. Rubenstein, 'Irony is a double-edged weapon: an interview with Alain Tanner, Cinéaste, 6:4 (1975), p. 27.

42. Tanner, 'Le "pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"', p. 33.

43. Rubenstein, 'Irony is a double-edged weapon', p. 27.

44. D. Rabourdin, 'Interview with Alain Tanner', Cinéma 77, 217 (Jan. 1977).

45. Tanner, 'Le "pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"', p. 28.

APPENDIX

SCENE 1

(MUSIC)

(COMMENTARY)...........................

A	B	C	D	E	
1 plain in summer credits	bridge in summer credits	bridge in winter film crew	field in winter	close-up field in winter	**2** 6 DECEMBER A in train
3 A walking	**4** A.D.P. meeting	**5** A walking	**6** A.D.P. meeting	**7** A walking	**8** A.D.P. P chosen
9 P is informed	**10** A in room	**11** 7 DECEMBER P leaving his house	**12** A in café	**13** P goes to work	**14** 15 DECEMBER P poses for photo
15 A and card players (train noise)	**16** 16 DECEMBER P and the P.R. men	**17** 24 DECEMBER WINTER FIELD A in café	**18** 12 JANUARY P receives finance text	**19** A and widow a warning	**20** 14 JANUARY A with card players
21 15 JANUARY P rerehearsing speech	**22** P and garage men	**23** A preparing room for meeting	**24** P arriving	**25** P watching A train noise SUMMER FIELD	**26** P travelling to to café

27 P watches A in café

28 P returns in car

29 17 JANUARY P's car leaves factory

30 P arrives café A not there

31 P walks

32 P at café 1st contact with A

33 P leaves café

34 P at meeting

35 18 JANUARY P travels to café

36 A asleep in bed

37 P arrives café

38 P and Juliette

39 P in car

40 A opens door to P

41 1st conversation

42 SUMMER FIELD

43 A leaves café and enters car

44 P and A walk by canal

45 20 JANUARY A and P - trains

46 21 JANUARY they talk of past they walk

47 22 JANUARY

48 WINTER PLAIN

49 23 JANUARY A watches a train

50 P talks at meeting

51 24 JANUARY A and Juliette

52 25 JANUARY A and P - the rabbits

53 P and A at inn

54 A agrees to show P 'M of W'

55 A and P in bed 'M of W'

56 SUMMER PLAIN

57 P leaves A's room

58 A drinks coffee

59 26 JANUARY

60 A and P walk in public

61 27 JANUARY P arranges a breakdown

62 28 JANUARY P in car - radio

63
P and A in bed

64
P goes to car

65
P pees in field
rolls in snow

66
5 FEBRUARY
A in St Claret
meets Paul

67
A and Juliette

68
6 FEBRUARY
P and A in café

69
in car P
rehearses speech

70
in hotel room

71
WINTER FIELD

72
7 FEBRUARY
P is warned of
behaviour

73
P on way to A

74
A room – in bed

75
J and widow
warn A

76
8 FEBRUARY
P and A happy
in bed

77
9 FEBRUARY
P arrives at A
sees his electoral
picture on her door

78
garage men
discuss affair

79
12 FEBRUARY
card players
the joke

80
A.D.P. 'where is
Paul?'

81
2 men sent for
P same joke

82
car overturns

83
P and A on plain

84
A room
P and A make love

85
P drives home

86
13 FEBRUARY
P in car – radio

87
P and A in café

88
A in bed
P cooks

89
14 FEBRUARY
P and his father

90
15 FEBRUARY
A.D.P. discuss P

91
P leaves café

92
P addresses meeting

93 P - abuse on phone	**94** 16 FEBRUARY widow questioned about A	**95** 20 FEBRUARY P and A in café don't agree	**96** A rejects P's house	**97** WINTER PLAIN	**98** 21 FEBRUARY A and P split = obvious
99 P sleeps in car	**100** 25 FEBRUARY P photos A diffs = there	**101** A room P criticises it split growing	**102** SUMMER PLAIN	**103** 28 FEBRUARY addresses	**104** A walks 'free'
105 P at work	**106** A free in train orange	**107** FIELD IN WINTER	**108** 1 MARCH quarrel over camera A "the prostitute"	**109** P at meeting	**110** 5 MARCH P finds café closed death of widow
111 A in her room P lost election	**112** WINTER PLAIN	**113** 6 MARCH A phones P	**114** P at work	**115** A on phone to P	**116** 7 MARCH P and garage men
117 P in car - radio	**118** A announces she is leaving	**119** P returns home	**120** A sleeps alone	**121** 8 MARCH A and Juliette at station	**122** train going over plain

123
28 MARCH
A in Zurich
factory

124
A returns to
new lodging

125
PLAIN IN WINTER
....

CHAPTER 7 - JONAS QUI AURA 25 ANS EN L'AN 2000

Michel Boujut's book about the shooting of Le Milieu du monde was useful since it collected together script, director's intentions in the form of a long interview, diary of shooting and reactions of the film crew; Urs Graf and the Zurich Film Kollectiv were very much more ambitious when they produced their film about Jonas qui aura 25 ans en l'an 2000 entitled Cinema mort ou vif.[1] This documentary film was made around the time of the shooting of Jonas, i.e. between February and April 1976, and it was made in close collaboration with Tanner himself. The focal point of Graf's film is a two camera record and analysis of the shooting of scene 51, a key scene, which took place on 23rd March 1976. Boujut's book is a mere record of events and intentions, offering virtually no criticism or analysis, except that which occurs during conversations with the crew after the shooting. Graf's film, however, by a variety of methods, offers a critique and an appraisal of Jonas according to criteria laid down by Tanner himself. In a paper entitled 'Sur Jonas' that was put out by the Film Kollectiv prior to the making of Cinema mort ou vif (29.3.1976), it is argued that Jonas was a better choice of subject than Milieu since 'Tanner fait ici un pas de plus dans sa lutte contre l'influence soporifique des usines de rêves. A leurs produits, il oppose l'alternative d'un film très conscient et stimulant l'imagination, un film qui sera plus riche encore en expériences cinématographiques que ses deux films précédents Retour d'Afrique et Le Milieu du monde'.[2] The paper goes on to argue that Milieu successfully excluded superficial consumption by an audience but that the public would not find the differences between this and a conventional film intelligible enough to learn from them and apply them to other films. It goes on to say that the essay 'Le "pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"',[3] 'était trop abstrait pour

la majorité du public afin de lui permettre une référence à ses propres expériences cinématographiques'. Hence, the paper continues, the documentary Cinéma mort ou vif is concerned with how the ideas of this rather abstract essay are worked out in Jonas. The intention is to clarify these important ideas and make them accessible, 'non pas au moyen d'un commentaire explicatif et théorique, mais par l'expérience pratique des normes du cinéma commercial et de leur dépassement'. Graf's conclusions - having made his documentary - are of course more critical of Tanner's results than he perhaps originally envisaged, but if the documentarist's results waver from his intentions, he is only mirroring the process that happens to Tanner himself when the real day-to-day work of shooting gets going.

Graf aims to develop a relationship with the spectator that is active; his spectator, like Tanner's, is invited to work, to participate. He says in the paper 'Sur Jonas', 'notre film se veut aussi un pas en avant dans le film documentaire; pas de personne en tant qu'objet devant la caméra, mais plutôt dialogue, argumentation, conclusions, conséquences, critique, démonstration du contraire'. The title itself Cinéma mort ou vif is an invitation to speculate, a question. It is an apt play on the title of Tanner's first film in which Charles Dé struggled for life against the forces of conformity, and failed. Here we have a cinema that is struggling against settled and dulling modes.

Cinéma mort ou vif is in two parts. The first part begins with a shot of an audience sitting down in a comfortable cinema and then we see a written title, 'Transformer le regard du spectateur'. The next shot is of the audience leaving the cinema, to the sound of easy, bland music. By his juxtaposition of these three shots, Graf obviously invites us to ask the question, has the strategy worked, has the spectator viewed this film in a different way? It is more than hinted,

of course, that in these stereotyped viewing conditions and situations, Tanner has a very difficult task. We then see the title of this film on the screen, Cinéma mort ou vif, with its suggestion of failure (the apparent failure of Charles Dé of course does not question the importance and validity of the attempt). No shot of Graf's film is idle, and juxtaposition of shots is of prime importance. He then switches abruptly to a shot of Tanner's house, a large comfortable villa in fairly central Geneva, i.e. an indicator of affluence, and gives us an interview with Tanner, in which the main aims in Jonas are spelt out, the relationship with the spectator, the conventional forms that he is working against and so on. After this interview Graf screens a title 'Eight actors', and gives us names followed by pictures. We are forced by such methods of presentation to pay attention. Having shown the raw ingredients, or some of them, we are shown a street; the camera then gradually pans upwards to an office window - a wry comment presumably on where the real power lies in the film business. We hear the producer in his office talk of the difficulties of getting money for Tanner after losses were made on Milieu and how in the end the money was arranged. In other words, very near the beginning of his film, Graf is indicating that all ideas/experimentation are at the mercy of producers and distributors. The more rigorous experimentation with language of Milieu and its relative lack of charm meant a poorer box office return. The implication is that Tanner was under some pressure with Jonas. (It must be noted however that later in the documentary, Graf shows Tanner explaining that he in fact refused a little of the final budget offer, in order to bring the sum down to a figure that he felt would not tie him down too much in terms of artistic choices.) The rest of this first section of the documentary is an exploration of how Tanner shot scene 51, the key scene of the film, where all eight characters come

briefly together. Using two cameras, Graf shows us the actors working, the crew in action, the different takes, and then a final run through the finished scene, the end product. We are thus given a marvellous opportunity for judging what we are never able to do during the fleeting moments of an ordinary screening. Graf makes no overt judgements, but from his selection of material and by his techniques of juxtaposition, positive points of view emerge.

Part-two of the documentary film concerns the editing and the music of Jonas. The conclusions that he draws with regard to these two specific aspects of the film are discussed later at in the chapter. The third and final part is entitled 'L'art et l'argent - quelques remarques', and begins with the context of film consumption, the people settling themselves down in a comfortable cinema, the easy music, the projectionist getting ready. Tanner, in another brief interview, then admits the difficulties of producing something different, given all the prevailing conditions, but argues that even though one may not like the difficulties imposed by the commercial circuits, one has to be contented with them as that is where most people get their films. He repeats his personal formula, 'travailler à partir des codes conventionelles et les disloquer, les distordre, et transformer le regard du spectateur'. He realises, he says, that even this means the loss of some spectators. We then see Gasser, the producer, speaking of finance, and how he guaranteed losses made on Jonas against other films and how the film was marketed. Graf then selects a few shots of the film's première at the Locarno Film Festival, where Tanner says a few words of introduction for the first audience. In shots that resemble Nice Time, low angle shots of huge cinema hordings at night, we see the big hordings of Jonas, now on the market in London, in Paris - i.e. on the big commercial circuits. Graf is presumably asking, questioning, if such a film, in such circumstances, can indeed be in any way

different. And significantly, he ends his documentary with Renato Berta, Tanner's cameraman, who expresses regret that Tanner does not go further in experimentation, as for example Straub with whom Berta also works. Straub, of course, is never on the screen as Berta has to confess. Graf's conclusions in <u>Cinéma mort ou vif</u> obviously point to only a very muted and gentle level of experimentation on the part of Tanner, and indeed to a failure in certain aspects of the film to escape the conventional at all; but he is presumably asking an audience if, given the prevailing conditions of work, of financing, of projection a director could go further and still be sure of release for his films, i.e. if perhaps Tanner pushes the system as far as it will allow?

Tanner did not like the resulting film <u>Cinéma mort ou vif</u> for reasons that are perhaps easy to guess at, though difficult to locate specifically. He goes so far as to admit that Graf may have been in a position to see things he didn't see during the work. He positively disagrees with the idea that Graf unearthed in the interview with Berta, and gave prominence, namely that the film team for <u>Jonas</u> was hierarchical and unhappy. This is an idea which carries the implication that relations in the team needed, as a priority, to be reformed. Tanner claims that a) he likes to establsh co-operation and pleasantness in his working relations, not conflict and b) he feels that one man needs to 'have everything in his head', i.e. needs to direct. Greater democracy is suspect. He quotes Godard on the subject of collective, democratic creation; 'très bien — moi je suis tout-à-fait d'accord: je pousse le chariot du travelling et que le mec de travelling écrive les dialogues et dise aux acteurs ce qu'ils doivent faire, voilà!' Tanner argues that people want to do their job and to do it well, they can discuss the work with him and finally he

will tell them where to put the tracks for example, or where the camera is to be placed.[4]

The work effected by Graf and the Zurich Film Kollectiv presents an obvious backcloth to the chief aim of this chapter, which is to assess Tanner's work on film language in Jonas and to situate it in terms of what has gone before in the director's career. Graf only deals in any detail with editing practice and music but despite this fact and despite the fact that my conclusions might differ from his, Cinéma mort ou vif does (for this spectator at least) do what it was intended to do; namely it enriches the cinematic experience of Jonas, providing as it does a unique set of materials that must be of great interest.

Narrative Structure

The narrative structure of Jonas, to which Graf does not address himself specifically, is very unconventional, despite the fact that some of the ordinary pleasures associated with narratives are retained. A conventional structure, with a rising and falling action, with tight causal connections and a closed ending, bears no relation to the narrative structure of this film. Jonas has eight protagonists; Max is in a sense the father figure to the other seven, but if predominance is given to any one character, it is Mathieu. It is Mathieu we see first, and last, and his message - to struggle on despite the fact that progress is slow, passing on one's political gains to one's children - is the core message of the film. He sees it as his role to keep the ideas and the spirit of the other seven alive. However having said that, Mathieu is given slight dominance, it is seen that the one hundred and fifty scenes of the film are in fact divided more or less equally between the eight.

This is the first time that Tanner has dispensed with a story. We are shown moments, brief episodes in the lives of eight people who are

trying to hammer out a lifestyle that retains their integrity.   Between the beginning and the end of the film, the ideas of some of them, e.g. Marco and Mathieu, develop and they change their jobs.   The   eight happen to meet up for a brief period and then disperse again but there is no story as such and there is no climax of a conventional sort. This panorama of possible ways of living in the system without being submerged by it is rendered in one hundred and fifty or so non-integrated scenes, or 'acts', each one a discrete unit.   This is close to the Brechtian pattern of each scene for itself, with a productive rub between the scenes.   One of Tanner's scenes is to be read against the next, but we have not the tight causal links of a story that normally carry us in a conventinal film from one scene to the next.   Notions of tightness, economy, have no place in Jonas.   One might rather speak of richness and diversity.   This in no way however implies looseness or sloppiness of construction, for in fact according to its own principles Jonas is rigorously structured.

The scenes, looked at linearly, fall into sections, or broad phases, in a way that Tanner has favoured in his other films.   The film opens with a twin pair of scenes, Max coming into a shop, grumbling at inflation as it affects his cigarettes, Mathieu in the shop equally surprised at the price but offering no comment. With this pair of brief scenes, humorous, schematic and unrealistic, we are alerted to something very unusual in terms of narrative. A key scene follows, a circular, moving,   low angle shot of the Rousseau statue on the Ile Rousseau in Geneva, with a voice over quote from Rousseau's book Emile.[5]   Here we have the idea that underlies the whole film; namely that from birth to death man is in chains, constrained by his institutions. Our eight characters strive to live properly within this constraint.   The words of the eighteenth century philosopher, born in Geneva, are to be applied to these a-typical twentieth   century

Genevois. As Marco later explains to his class, true prophets are not understood in their own time but at a much later date. The elders of Geneva, together with most others, persecuted for Rousseau most of his life.

From this unusual opening section we move into section-two, which could perhaps be labelled 'Descriptions'. This takes us from scene 4 through to scene 51. All the characters and their preoccupations are introduced, and links between some of them are seen to develop. At scene 4 it might momentarily appear that the director is starting on a conventional story line; Mathieu and Matilde at their breakfast table discuss a new job for Mathieu who is unemployed. The next scene shows Matilde on her way to work (we note the shot of Rousseau from the bus), and then at work, and the one after shows Mathieu arriving at the organic farm where there is a job vacancy. (The pattern of switching between the respective husband and wife's employment is reminiscent of the pattern of introducing Vincent and Françoise at the beginning of Retour.) However, once Mathieu is at the Certoux farm, it becomes clear that the focus temporarily shifts to Marcel and Marguerite and their preoccupations, and then of course at scene 12 we have an even more abrupt switch of focus; we see Marco in his new job as a history teacher, a new character with no apparent connection to what has gone before. Notions of a conventional story development are already dispelled. Marco's lesson is central to the ideas of the film, and Tanner situates it early in the film, though at this point one can only have glimmerings of its ramifications. It is obviously quite outside the conventions of ordinary narrative to have long philosophical/political discourses thrown 'neat' at the audience, even if it is ostensibly situated in a fictional lesson situation. And in the middle of the discourse, Tanner cuts to a shot of Max shooting a clock, exemplifying for a brief second what Marco is talking about,

namely the death of capitalist time schemes. The discourse then continues. Andrew Horton argues that the explanation for Tanner's form in _Jonas_ lies also in Marco's lesson on time. Marco chops a blood sausage and calls the pieces 'pieces of history'. He explains to the students that the capitalists turned the pieces into a highway, straight and long. Tanner's film, according to Horton, is like the sausage pieces; it denies or undermines the traditional cause and effect of the narrative flow of conventional films and hence it mirrors the destruction of the capitalist concept of history and time.[6]

Having briefly re-introduced Max, Tanner now concentrates on outlining the concerns of Max, and with him Madeleine whom he meets in his attempts to frustrate a shady land speculation deal. It is very noticeable that the latter project, which could be seen as a hint of story, of 'action', introduced at scene 21, has no follow up at all until scene 27. A lot of other material comes in the intervening space. And what these intervening scenes do is to draw links between those characters we have already met, with the Certoux farm being the meeting ground, the focal point. Marco for example, is invited to dinner and he also meets Mathieu there who agrees to teach his students about inflation. Much more material is also intercut concerning Marcel and Marguerite. Gradually one is aware that threads are being drawn together, that the protagonists (seven so far) are drawing together. It is noticeable in the structure that most of the links are established already when Marie, the eighth, is introduced. She and Marco do not meet till scene 29 but after this, three scenes are then devoted to her philosophy of life and her particular stance against the system. It is of course via her helping of old people that we see Charles, the only other important character in the film. Outside the main group, he comes from the generation of the parents of the 'children of May '68'. His function in the film is important in

two respects: first that as an old man, with his present life full of his past memories, he forms an example of Marco's developing philosophy. Marco comes to think that rather than preaching future revolution to the young, a capitalist con trick that keeps people quiet, it is more important to work with the old who perforce live in the present but with the past in their minds. Secondly, Charles is crucial to the film since he expresses a central idea, in a metaphor about driving a train. If you are a passenger he explains, the countryside goes past you. (It is unfortunate perhaps that Tanner has to stretch his metaphor to include a point about the cinema, namely that being a passenger is 'like at the movies ... I don't go to movies any more', i.e. being at the movies is a passive activity.) In the driving seat of a train however, you go into the countryside. This becomes a metaphor for a right and positive way of living. The eight are 'drivers' and Jonas (it is hoped) will be one too.

The third section of the film starts at scene 51 and is the culmination of what has gone before, a climax of a sort, though not a conventional one. It is a phase that might be termed 'Solidarity'. Links and friendships have been gathering over the early part of the film and at 51 all eight people collect at the Certoux farm, Max and Madeleine to see the progress of their plans, Marco and Marie for vegetables, Mathieu and Matilde now resident there, and of course Marcel and Marguerite the farm owners. Their picture, in this joyful moment, is fixed on the wall by the children and it remains long after they have split up and gone different ways. In the picture, Max, the tallest, is depicted with his arms outstretched as if crucified and the others are gathered 'under' his arms. It becomes clear that Max is to be seen as the crucified Christ - a prophet whose death (i.e. the death of the hopes of '68) gives rise to the 'little' prophets, the disciples, who carry on his struggle in other ways. Max is also the

'big bear' whose territory is wider than those of the little bears, the other seven. Trantrism, organic food etc. are offshoots made possible by the straight political failure of '68.

The third section of the film (scenes 51-75) is marked by new pairings, new connections between the eight, e.g. a friendship between Marie and Matilde, discussions between Marco, Mathieu and Max. It is in this section that Tanner places the fantasy of Vandoeuvres substituted for a pig - i.e. the implication being that the forces of grasping capitalism are momentarily in decline. However, success and fraternity, as with all radical amalgamations, is fragile, and these scenes contain within them seeds of failure and dissention. The arrest of Marie undercuts the joy of this period and casts a shadow over the communal meal at scene 66. Here the seven express their warm friendship, Jonas is announced, they share in naming him and in a sense all become his 'parents'. Disgorged from the whale of the twentieth century, he will be, in the year 2000, the repository of their hopes for progress. After this scene, Tanner gives an intertitle to announce that one year has passed; Jonas is seen sucking at the breast of his mother, a shot that is followed by one of playful and active whales. It becomes clear that after a year the group of seven are still actively linked. But it is at scene 75 that the community breaks up, explodes - its own internal pressures becoming too much for it. Ironically it breaks up in front of the wall, the picture that will keep/guard an image of their union. Mathieu is sacked - the organic farm can no longer support his Rousseauesque school in a greenhouse.

The final section of the film is a collection of scenes that are parallel ones to those that opened it, but in a different order. We see Mathieu and family again in the kitchen, he is about to go off to a new job. Again we see him, 'Labour', as he puts it, off to work on his bicycle. But this time we have a Mathieu who sees himself as the

repository of the hopes of the group now fragmented. As he cycles to work in a cold grey dawn, he sings that he will keep their hopes alive and his son will inherit their struggle. Tanner then gives us a re-run of the scene where Max enters the shop and is surprised by the inflation in the cost of a packet of cigarettes. We do not see Mathieu do the same, the implication being that there is no hope for Max, no change has occurred in him, he is negative and grudging. Tanner then moves again to the Rousseau statue and not a quote but a voice over that states that 'Emile' is now a savage doomed to live in cities. The final shot is of 'Emile'/Jonas, now about four or five, chalking over the drawing on the wall; healthy, impudent, he will draw new things over/upon the efforts of his parents. This is an ending that is very much open of course, the film is a description of part only of a continuing process, a description of only a moment in time in the mid 1970s.

This analysis of the unconventional structure of Jonas has as yet taken no account of the fades into black and white that take place some seventeen or so times in the film and which weaken even further any vestiges of narrative continuity in it. Tanner claimed that he took pleasure in overturning what he saw as the normal code of black and white equals reality, news, documentary, and using it for the opposite, for fantasies or for episodes in the imaginative life of his characters.[7] (By 1976 this is probably a doubtful or outdated assumption that black and white equals reality, and therefore Tanner's wished for nuance is questionable.) Most of the black and white sequences 'belong' to one particular character but some are collective fantasies — e.g. the assembled group, seeing the freedom and enjoyment of the children, imagine themselves rolling down a mud bank, spontaneous and physical, constraints gone. The only problem area with regard to the scenes that fade into black and white are perhaps the two

scenes that concern Matilde; she is physical, non-verbal, non-intellectual, yet we are asked to accept that she imagines her factory supervisor being massaged by her, and explaining how as a child he hated races and lost. This is a reversal of the real situation where he stands grimly over her, timing her work. It is an explanation for a mentality that is insecure but finds power and dominance in the factory with a stopwatch (a symbol of the 'capitalist' time that Max destroys when he shoots a clock). However, for the most part the black and white scenes express the spiritual life of the characters and, generally speaking, they criticise the reality that the characters are normally surrounded by. The fantasies in the black and white scenes are generally pleasurable to the characters in the sense of helping the present situation to be tolerable; Vandoeuvres is like a pig to Marguerite, and he is replaced in her fantasy by an actual pig; Marie, refusing the front seat, having hitched a lift, and ignoring the pointed glances of the driver, breaks into a song that expresses her so far irrepressible spirit and her philosophy of life; Marguerite, in her fantasy, does what she could never normally do and screams out in the market, a glorious and poetic outburst about organic grown tomatoes. Some of the wishes expressed in the black and white sequences are fulfilled, e.g. Mathieu is invited to see the farm's books - ironically when he is being fired. The black and white scenes associated with Max are of a different type; they undermine, rather than aid his present reality, and they are actual documentary clips of '68, of the Soviet hierarchy, missiles and so on. They explain his cynicism and depression, and they seem to have replaced any imaginative dimension of his own.

As we have implied, the centre of Jonas is not story, not what happens to eight characters over a period of time, but it is the rub and flux of ideas. It is a film that explores possible lifestyles in

the period of the early/mid '70s when the failure of '68 was a very clear and depressing feature of recent history. What holds the film together, in terms of structure, and gives it cohesion, is the development and exploration of central themes. The most notable of course is the theme of time. Awareness and speculation about time is everywhere in <u>Jonas</u>, beginning with the title which suggests an awareness of the time span of Man in relation to the larger time span of History. Max has to be reminded that History (and change) does not move fast, though men wrongly hope for change over the span of their brief lifetime. Jonas will be ready to play his part in the year 2000, but Jonas is only part of a continuing struggle. The year 2000 has always sounded to us as a magical time, a time for science fiction. Tanner reminds us it is not far away and we must make the best use of our years as this should constitute the heritage of our children.

The chief concern of Marco Perly is with time, which is the subject of his first lesson to his students.[8] He intends to produce for them an anti-capitalist analysis of time and history, and the ramifications and reverberations of the ideas of this scene sound over what we have already seen prior to this point in the film, and what comes after. Marco describes how time was essentially cyclical in earlier agrarian societies, the cycles being the seasons, and how time came to be seen as a 'highway', linear and progressive, by the capitalists. The imperialist leaders, says Marco, used up the primitive cultures, tossing the used 'bottles' by the highway side, keeping going straight and fast for fear of vengeance being wreaked upon them. The hours of this straight road of time were divided into dates, decades, work hours and so forth, divisions artificially constructed. Marco preaches that capitalist structures can collapse and are doing so; this is where Tanner intercuts a fade of Max shooting not himself, but a large clock, a symbol of capitalist time that sits

at his bedside. We return to Marco's lesson to hear about prophets and how and why they are misunderstood in their own time. Rousseau is of course given as an example, which reminds us of the beginning of the film and the fact that words written by this prophet/philosopher in the eighteenth century are of prime importance to us, two thirds through the twentieth century. After a shot of Rousseau's statue at the beginning of the film, we have a written title 'The next morning' which indicates a) the fact that for revolutionary ideas, long periods of time are as nothing - it takes generations to grasp them, and b) that the audience is being sensitised to the question of the time of narratives, normal expectation is thwarted; it is apparently absurd to have 'the next morning' on the screen after a shot of a statue. The eight characters are called 'little prophets' by Tanner; their words and example may have some effect in time to come. Marco ends his lesson by telling the students that 'in total synthesis time disappears' and they riotously enjoy trying to show it by banging on their desks very fast.

So called 'capitalist time' is manifest in numerous instances in the film; we think of the supervisor with his watch checking Matilde's productivity and the subsequent fade into black and white that breaks down this relation into something more human; we think of Mathieu himself, caught up in these manufactured time schemes. On his way to his new factory at the end of the film he is stopped on his bike by an interminable red light (and Tanner shows the light on the film for its true length of time). He shrieks and curses violently and it changes. The light is the symbol for the blockage of the hopes of the eight protagonists, and when it changes, the spokesman for the eight passes through, hoping to make some progress again.

Sacked for preaching revolution, Marco's ideas undergo a fundamental change. He views the concept of revolution in the future

as a safe construct of the capitalist outlook and decides that work with the old is preferable since, for the old, only the present is meaningful. Revolution must be seen as more a question of the revenge of the past.

Marcel also muses on time as he observes the impatience of 'les deux héros' while waiting for their dinner. Always concerned to demonstrate the superiority of the animal kingdom over man, he observes that a tick can wait for up to twenty-five years to feed and lay its eggs. It then dies twenty-four hours after that event. A man cannot wait ten minutes for his dinner, and has in the film been shown to be impatient in more important respects also, e.g. his expectations regarding the rate of change/progress.

Apart from the theme of time which gives cohesion to the pieces of the film, we have also the theme of education and the motif of food, both of which serve the same purpose in terms of the structure of the film. The spirit of the great educator, Rousseau, hangs over the whole film and Jonas is clearly to be seen as the Emile of the last third of the twentieth century. The basic principle of Rousseau's book Emile is that the child should educate himself in the sense that he asks questions of the teacher; thus his own interest guides him and leads him on. Balanced against our system of conventional formal education (which Mathieu argues is like a slaughterhouse, but Marguerite claims can be survived), we have two unconventional classrooms seen in the film. The first is Mathieu's school in a greenhouse. In a gay, vibrant and unconventional setting, where children's minds are to 'grow', the children listen to tapes of the noises of whales, do algebra, draw and listen to stories. In a black and white montage sequence, we see a reversal of the fundamental principle of Emile, and see the teacher asking questions of the children, childlike questions such as 'when the kettle boils does it hurt the water?', or 'can the

wind feel?'. Perhaps in teaching them he is re-capturing his own buried sense of childlike wonder at natural phenomena. (It seems odd that these vibrant questioning children are shown in certain scenes in the film to be mute, passive, serving the adults, taking a background role. This seems to be counterproductive.) The other unconventional classroom is Marco's. Whilst he initiates an informal and more spontaneous relationship with his pupils and captures their attention with unusual classroom aids, he basically bores them with his material. (It is odd that Mathieu - vibrant in his own classroom - bores Marco's pupils in the lessons he gives to them.) After his illustration of the blood sausage (pieces of history) Marco basically preaches his message 'straight'. They may laugh at the fact that his mother was a opera singer, and other asides, but his material is difficult and sophisticated and very condensed. He does, we note, attempt to get the pupils to ask questions. This is however an example of how not to teach; the pupils are bored and the school sacks him for 'preaching revolution'. Marco's 'lesson' on time and history is, according to Tanner, pure John Berger, who happened to be working at that moment on questions relating to time and politics.[9] Tanner makes it clear in this interview that it is meant to be used as an example of bad teaching, of how not to proceed. He remarks that one of his daughters was suffering in a similar way in her lessons about the Egyptians at school. Asked how he would teach a subject, he adds that he would take a substance or object, e.g. sugar, let the children taste it, let them ask where it comes from, what it is etc., thus leading _outwards_ to discussions of chemistry, biology, geography etc. One notes the fundamental role of asking questions (hence the inspiration of _Emile_). Viewed from a wider perspective, the speculation in the film about teaching methods has a direct bearing on the whole method of the film; in a film, one can be like Godard for example in some of his fims, and

preach 'straight', with the loss of most of the audience that this involves; or one can 'dilute the message', adding onto it what has been called a sugar coating, thus rendering the material attractive and digestible. It is also possible in a film to engender a mood or an atmosphere that is conducive to the audience asking questions. Jonas is obviously a film of the latter type, which contains within itself examples of what it is working against.

The motif of food runs throughout the film and also gives a cohesion to the fragmentary nature of the structure. It is woven in and out of all the fabric of Jonas. The film argues that man should have a real, direct, close and respectful relationship with the natural world around him. He may use animals, plants etc. but not destroy them. Marcel Certoux can pluck a chicken unceremoniously for his dinner and marvel at and study animals as his hobby. The Certoux farm is where we see food planted, grown and eaten in a way that uses the soil but does not destroy it and poison the products. Much time in Jonas is spent in kitchens and the basic activities of kitchens; one of the most important discussions of the film, that between Mathieu, Marco and Max, takes place for example, while they are peeling and chopping onions. It should be noted also that on the level of editing we have a number of startling cuts to food, e.g. from Mathieu's fantasy about seeing the books when he arrives, to a shot of a hand plucking a chicken. There are constant links in the film between vegetables and other things: cabbages/lobes of the brain, time/blood sausage and so on.

Jonas has an unorthodox narrative structure, but theme and motif, as in a piece of music, give cohesion. As a stone dropped in a pond spreads ripples outwards, so the sounding of themes gathers momentum as the film goes on. This is a process that can in fact work retrospectively as well: Marco's lesson, bad though it is from a pedagogic point of view, reflects backwards over what we have already

seen in the film, and forwards over the next seventy or so scenes that we have still to see. To the unity of ideas of <u>Jonas</u>, one must add that the film has a unity of atmosphere, of tone. This unity is captured perfectly in the music which has the qualities of optimism and gaiety edged with sadness and wistfulness. The eight characters live differently, carry on a struggle to do so, yet are aware of the limits of their progress and the sheer force and power of the obstacles.

Anchor Points

The development of themes and ideas is one of the pleasures to be associated with a richly conceived work of art. To be a 'marginal case' in the film business as Tanner intends this film to be, certain conventional pelasures normally associated with narratives have to be offered. (<u>Milieu</u>, we have to remember, lost money and the producer had to work to raise the money for Tanner's next film.) Another conventional pleasure derived from narratives is that associated with characterisation. In this respect one would have to say that Tanner steers an interesting course; he offers small vignettes, cameos of eight characters, with his proven talent for portraying quirky individuals. They are lifelike, but they are not rounded in the normal sense nor are they developed in the usual way over time. At first glance, the eight characters seem entirely schematic; they clearly represent sets of ideas, they are eight 'answers' to living in 1976; their names all begin with 'Ma', obviously derived from mai, i.e. May '68. Tanner says of them 'tous les personnages ne sont pas vraiment des personnages, ce sont des métaphores sur deux pattes. Ce n'est pas un film au premier degré ancré dans une réalité, ni naturaliste ni réaliste c'est un film plus au niveau de l'allégorie.'[10]

Mathieu, a redundant print worker and former union organiser, frequently gives himself the general label of 'Labour'. 'Je suis Main d'oeuvre - donc à louer' he says to Marguerite who then wryly asks if

that makes her 'Capital'. At the end of the film he refers to the fact that he is 'Labour on its bicycle'. Like Brecht's unindividualised 'worker' Boenicke, in <u>Kuhle Wampe</u> (1931) who threw himself out of a window, he has greater potential subversive force and authority if he is 'Labour' rather than Mathieu Vernier. This was shown in the case of Brecht's film by the fact that it was banned by the censors, with a fifty page document to damn it. Brecht remarked that the censors had understood it better than the critics had. Mathieu has a basic philosophy that is realistic and dogged: you earn your bread first and with any energy you have left you fight the system and try and change it. When it is feasible, e.g. when working for the Certoux, he is shown to be energetic in trying to change things, in this case the school system. Apart from his basic sets of ideas, we have almost no personalised traits for Mathieu, no rounding of his character in a conventional way. His wife Matilde is shown to be an archetypal mother figure; she works outside her home when she has to but is basically only fulfilled when producing and rearing children. The situation that these two find themselves in changes, but their basic philosophy does not develop. Marco and Marie could be said to change their ideas as the film progresses, due to events, but none of the characters develop into rounded characters in the traditional sense.

Life is brought to these eight 'sets of ideas' by the actors. As in the children's mural, the figures are flat and stylised yet have some individual traits and a certain realism. The original choice of these eight actors was very important and took a good deal of time. It involved lengthy discussions with Tanner's collaborator John Berger. Tanner says that he instinctively opts for 'poetic' actors rather than 'psychological' ones, a distinction he attributes originally to Truffaut.[11] The huge lanky figure of Bideau exudes weariness and cynicism. He is droll in appearance and mannerism and well known in

Franco-Swiss circles. He is responsible for bringing the set of ideas that is Max into warm life. Add to this the fact that the character is seen in very ordinary everyday situations, eating, walking, chopping onions, driving. One can say that the main characters in Jonas are alive, although schematic.

If one considers the characterisation of the minor figures of Jonas it is clear that they are all overblown, parodies of certain types who are fundamentally different from the eight main characters that the film celebrates. The portrayal of the two 'heroes', with their animal-like characteristics, has caused a good deal of criticism. Being the only two non-intellectual working men in the film, it is argued that this debased (humorous) portrayal is an insult. It is obviously an unfortunate decision on Tanner's part to raise this sort of humour at their expense. This is compounded by a frequent mis-reading of 'héros' as 'zeros' in English. Looked at in conjunction with the shots of foreign workers in their lonely and debasing living quarters, it is argued that Tanner is giving fuel to the reactionary attitudes that claim that such workers are dirty, depraved etc. Tanner's isolated shots of these workers certainly do not make his position clear and are hence a mistake. One cannot however blame a film for not fully dealing with every issue. Articles in Jump Cut for example take the view that Tanner does not deal adequately with the problem of the foreign workers in Switzerland.[12] This is true in the sense that the director makes the mistake of raising a large and difficult issue in a few ambiguous shots, but one has to remember that his chief aims in Jonas are unashamedly more narrow and specific.

Marguerite's sexual relations with the workers in the barracks also raises a problem. It is not clear whether she is exploiting them sexually, as well as economically (here we have to bear in mind that she is the least sympathetic character of the eight), or whether she is

easing the misery of their lives generally by granting sexual favours. It may be argued that everything on the Certoux farm is encouraged to live and exist according to the principles of nature; hence Marcel has to shrug off his wife's infidelity as a 'mystère de la nature', and hence he likes and celebrates the two heroes for their closeness to the animals whom he reveres. But these areas are fuzzy in the film and are unfortunately, therefore, open to criticism.

There are three characters in the film who are, for Tanner, legitimate targets as they are representatives of an oppressive Establishment. Each one is parodied. We have the man who give Marie a lift, conventional, well dressed, who when he asks her to sit in the front seat, manages to look prim and conventional yet lustful at the same time. This actor it will be remembered, played the 'petit patron' to Bulle Ogier's salamander and gave an identical performance. Next we have the bank official who tries to buy out the Certoux. A functionary of De Vandoeuvres, he is a parody of modern official man. This smooth, well dressed official cannot cope with the jibes of the Certoux who proceed to blame him (as a representative of his kind) for all modern ills. The clash between the two is wonderfully humorous. Finally, there is De Vandoeuvres himself, a parody of a fat, disgusting and greedy speculator/bank director. The name Vandoeuvres is that of a millionaire's village just outside Geneva. (Most of the names in the film are place names in and around Geneva and some have a subtle significance.) The name means literally seller of works - but there is a play on wind/vent, hence wind works and the man himself says he 'sells the wind'. He in fact sells 'fresh air' in the form of rural slums for city dwellers, i.e. nothing. These are sales made possible by certain loopholes in the zoning laws in Geneva. De Vandoeuvres is replaced by an actual pig in Marguerite's fantasy. These minor

characters are social types and, as such, bear a resemblance to the type of characterisation of the neo-realists.

Editing Practice

If the narrative structure has been found to be almost entirely unconventional (a point that is not highlighted by Graf), and only in minor degree counterbalanced by some conventional elements, it has to be said that the editing displayed in the film is very much a mixture of the conventional and the unusual. It does not in fact live up to all Tanner's claims for it. The most comprehensive statements of the director's intentions with regard to editing emerge in Urs Graf's film in the form of an interview. Tanner's policy for editing is seen to be the same as that for the editing of <u>Milieu</u>. He has the same editor as for the latter film. In the interview Tanner gives examples from <u>Jonas</u> of the classical editing to which he is opposed, and in this sense <u>Jonas</u> is different from the earlier film since it consciously presents examples of what it is working against. Tanner cites as such an example the scene where the adults are rolling down the mud slope. 'Real' time and space are destroyed in the editing, it is very chopped up. The director explains that it is cut on 'les temps forts ... c'est une façon d'activer le spectateur uniquement sur certains éléments, sur les éléments les plus grossièrement évidents d'une action plutôt que de prendre l'action sur son temps et sa durée'.[13] His intention is to offer a critique of such conventional procedures. Certainly the cutting of this scene emphasises the physical grotesqueness of this fantasy episode; we see someone gambolling/Max sitting in the mud/someone landing on top of him/someone throwing mud at Max's face and so on. This cutting is effective and it is the cutting often associated with an 'action' scene. It is especially noticeable since it is embedded between scenes that are primarily created with camera work, and where the time of actions/events is respected.

It is within the black and white scenes that Tanner says he situates his conventional editing. (The fades into these scenes rather than cuts, also signal that we are to see a different order of experience.) Several of the black and white scenes are actual archive shots, e.g. jerky, fast cut, archive shots of May '68, and the director says that he tended for that reason to 'tourner un peu tout de la façon dont on tournerait des actualités à la TV; par exemple c'est-à-dire caméra à la main, sans se preoccuper à ce moment-là de faire du plan séquence avec, s'il le fallait un découpage traditionnel en champ contre champ ou des coupes à l'intérieur de la scène'.[14] One might look at another black and white sequence, say for example the fade from Mathilde at her production line, supervisor with stopwatch behind, to the shot of him lying down and her massaging his back and laughing. We note that the contrast between the first scene and the black and white one is extremely effective (stress/laughter, coldness/human warmth and contact etc.) and that the cut within the black and white scene is a routine and conventional one. Tanner simply cuts from a side view to a front view so that we can better see their faces.

Still in the context of the black and white scenes, Tanner explains in Cinéma mort ou vif that in a conventional film we would have a lot of cutting that leads to identification with characters. He cites as an example of this from Jonas the tiny black and white scene where the camera looks at the wall, with the children drawing their picture on it. We then have a cut to a close-up of Mathieu (i.e. we are shown whose view of the wall it was). Hence we tend at that moment to identify with Mathieu. The director argues that because it is firstly a very short scene and secondly in black and white, it is out of context with the rest of the film, it stands out, and it is obvious that it is meant to be read critically. It seems to me that this scene is so truncated as not to be effective in the sense that Tanner wants;

it needs a second shot of the wall, i.e. what Mathieu sees, after the close-up of him. One can argue that Tanner also uses classical editing openly in another scene, where Mathieu is on his bicycle going to work, without acknowledging it by putting it out of context or in black and white. This scene is not only within the main flow of the (colour) film but it is also in a key position; it is right at the end of the film and it is very important in terms of the 'message' of the film. As Mathieu cycles to his new factory job, he enunciates hopes for Jonas and celebrates the struggles and the spirit of Jonas' eight 'godparents'. We have for example in this scene identificatory patterns of cutting, such as a cut to a close-up of Mathieu/a cut to a close-up of the red light (i.e. what he is looking at and shot from his angle of view)/cut back to Mathieu. The music is also very affective. One has to argue that on the whole, within the main colour scenes, there is a lot more 'bread and butter' conventional cutting than Tanner leads us to believe, and many of the scenes are hence not the plan séquence structure that Tanner so much admires.[15] Numerous scenes featuring Marie for example are cut a great deal and in a conventional way (e.g. the scene where Marie hitches a lift). Equally the scene of Max and Madeleine walking along the riverside discussing his lost faith in politics is cut a good deal, and along conventional patterns; there are numerous other such scenes.

The editing between the scenes is, on the contrary, very often both effective and unorthodox. It is a fundamental mechanism, as in other Tanner films, for the generation of meaning, demanding active 'work' by the spectator. The striking nature of the editing between the one hundred and fifty or so scenes has already been implied in the description of the narrative structure but it may be worthwhile to examine a few instances. One could cite the marvellous cuts from Soviet dictators/to missiles/to the banal and ordinary supermarket with

it's piped bland music. Or one could consider for example the way that
the ideas of Rousseau are, at the beginning of the film, related via
editing to the lives of the characters. (One is also sensitised right
at the outset of the film, via this editing, to the unconventionality
of the editing patterns used.) Tanner cuts from his twin scenes of the
two men buying cigarettes/grumbling at inflation, to a title 'The next
morning' and then to a statue of Rousseau with a quote from Emile:

> All our wisdom consists in servile prejudices. All
> our practices are only subjection, impediment, and
> constraint. Civil man is born, lives and dies in
> slavery. At his birth he is sewed in swaddling
> clothes; at his death he is nailed in a coffin. So
> long as he keeps his human shape, he is enchained
> by our institutions.' (16)

Tanner has imposed a time relation between two men in the twentieth
century, and a statue of one in the eighteenth century, a time relation
where literally one cannot exist. The cutting indicates that a
relation between the philosophy of Rousseau and the two men does exist.
Tanner then cuts from the statue to one man at his breakfast table
discussing his employment situation, i.e. it is implied that here is
another of the 'chains' referred to. Matilde is next seen on the bus
on her way to work and Tanner intercuts into this a shot of the statue
as the bus travels by it and then a close-up of Matilde - the 'owner'
of the look at the statue. Clearly Rousseau's words are to be kept in
mind in her situation too. Then, to emphasise Matilde's 'slavery',
Tanner cuts to a shot of her in the awful noise and servitude of the
factory production line. The next important cut takes us to Mathieu
travelling in traffic to his new job, and then to the peace and
quiet/visually uncluttered fields of the countryside outside Geneva.
It is implied that there is some hope for the liberation from servitude
here. It has been seen that, via editing, a productive relation
between the ideas of Rousseau and twentieth century men has been
achieved. It should be added that the music specifically associated

with Rousseau, after this point, serves to keep him and his words in mind.

Not all the cutting between scenes is so productive. We are aware at times of cuts that produce a 'patchwork' effect in the sense that they move us from one member of the group to another - e.g. from Mathieu's talk about whales and shrimps in scene 11, to Marco in his classroom. Such cuts do not add any other dimension of meaning, but merely move us to another example of the struggle. When Madeleine is first introduced, we see cutting procedures that are designed (scene 15) to sum up her concerns and her personality. Tanner cuts from her luxurious red hair (a symbol of sexuality) to an erotic eastern painting, then to her in her office. Such cutting is an 'economical' means of introducing a new character. And there are examples in the film of actual routine conventional cutting (between scenes), e.g. a cut to Max entering Madeleine's office to ask her to support what he wants to do, to a cut to the café where in the previous scene they have just arranged to meet.

Camera Usage

It emerges in an interview recorded by Tanner for Graf's film that the camera, in his eyes, is the 'principal transgresseur des codes établis'. Once again the theory relating to the camerawork is not significantly different from that expounded with regard to the camerawork of Milieu. The real nature, the natural infirmity of the camera is to be shown, not covered, and the camera is to be a 'personnage autonome'. It will obey its own laws, not those of the actors. Tanner actually says that he often decided on the journey of the camera first in a scene and then did the scene afterwards, so that as a result the camera may rest on nothing, or on the back of someone's head and so on. It can be said that Tanner begins his film in a way that is designed to sensitise his audience to the fact and behaviour of

the camera. He not only sets up a play in the first three shots between static camera and moving camera, but he uses them the opposite way to what would conventionally be expected. In the first shot of the shop, the camera is static, a recording device; in the second shot also. It is the characters who move in and out of frame. In the third shot, which is of a lifeless statue, the camera moves round in a three-quarter circle. The effect is also to bring the statue to life since the influence of Rousseau is vital in the film. At the very end of the film we have static low angle shots of the same statue, thus the film is in a sense put in quotation marks.

However having said that Tanner begins his film in a way calculated to raise questions about camerawork itself, it is clear that when one examines the camerawork generally in <u>Jonas</u> in the light of the statements of intent of the director, the level of experimentation and the obtrusiveness are in reality very muted. There is a good deal of conventional work. This is perhaps the reason why Renato Berta makes it clear that he works with Tanner because the films are reasonably well paid, though not very experimental, in order to be able to afford to work with Straub who can pay very little but whose films satisfy him from an experimental point of view. Berta also says that he personally likes to work with first films too, in the hope of something new emerging although he admits that 'beaucoup de ces premiers réalisateurs sont convaincus d'entreprendre quelque chose de très différent des autres, mais c'est de moins en moins vrai car le système est organisé de telle façon qu'il y a une médiocrisation generalisée des produits-films'.[17] In the case of a Tanner film, Berta appears to claim credit for a good deal of the work. He says that the original scenarios are literary in the sense that there is not much in them in the first place about the image: work on the latter is done with Tanner before the shooting. He goes on to say that there is a collaboration

in 'Tous les choix qui concernent la mise en place, cadrage, certains images plutôt que d'une autre etc.'

Having interviewed Berta, Graf proceeds in <u>Cinéma mort ou vif</u> to give an intertitle 'Tournage du scène 51'. He then sweeps his camera, at dawn, over a place where presumably the action is to take place. He then does the same sweep of the camera but at 8.30 a.m. and this time we see vans unloading, cameras being set up etc. We see Berta putting in film, we see a close-up of the camera, Berta on rails trying out different images and so on. We then watch the subsequent shooting of this scene, the technical crew in the foreground, actors and action in the background. Graf then shows us the finished scene (without the crew) and one can see in his re-runs of that scene that the camera, far from being autonomous in its movements and serving to highlight the nature of the apparatus itself, actually <u>serves</u> the action and the characters, albeit in an unconventional way. We do not see Tanner panning empty space as we saw Graf doing, and of course in <u>Jonas</u> we do not see the camera itself as we did in <u>Milieu</u>. Scene 51 is the climactic scene of the film, in the sense that for a brief moment all eight are together; their eight different ways of striving for meaning coalesce for a short period. The camera begins this scene by showing a long shot of a gate and a wall and it moves left to catch Madeleine and Max coming in the gate; it then moves across with them as Max is led by one of the children to the wall to be drawn. It then backs left and across in order to see Marco and Marie entering and meeting Mathieu who enters the frame from the right. The three then move right to join the others at the wall but the camera moves left to catch Matilde as she walks on to the scene. It then tracks right with her and sees the whole group together in front of the wall. The last two of the eight enter frame right. This camerawork is unconventional and hence obtrusive, but it is entirely at the service of the characters; it

seeks them out, it binds them together by its sweeping and inclusive movements; it echoes the sense of union that they are briefly to enjoy.

There are eight or so other scenes where the camera is extremely mobile, a couple in Marco's classroom, and the others involving conversations, either between two or three people, or a group. One can highlight a scene in Marco's classroom for example as being a highly structured mix of the unconventional and conventional in terms of its camerawork. The scene is divided into two; at first we see Marco and the class from the back, i.e. a student's eye view. The camera then moves all the time; it 'sees' Marco, who is talking, but only incidentally as it passes; it describes a square figure round the room and comes to rest where it started, at the back. However, in the second part of the scene the camera follows Marco, conventionally, as he moves across the classroom, goes with him to the blackboard and draws closer to him as he speaks of the prophets, Diderot, Rousseau etc. The latter figure of course is crucial in the film, and as he speaks of how these men made 'holes in time', we have a mid-shot of Marco.

In the first conversation between Max and Madeleine in the café, one sees that the camera is behaving unconventionally, but in a creative way that serves the actors, and creates meaning. There is no champ contre champ pattern. The camera moves back and forth between the two, not necessarily resting on the one who is talking, but creating a sense of complicity between the characters, on a personal as well as on a strategic level. (It echos the air of complicity that was created between them, by the camera, in the previous scene. Here the camera slides from one to the other literally behind the back of De Vandoeuvres seated in a bar.) There is, noticeably, one conventional cut, to a close-up of Max when he explains something very important to him - his giving up writing.

There are few scenes in fact where the camerawork is in perfect tune with the director's aims; the group conversation (the 'naming' of Jonas, scene 65) uses a favourite camera procedure of Tanner where the camerawork is autonomous in the sense that it tracks round the backs of the eight at the table, obscuring the view at times, not catching the speaker etc. The movement however could not be said to be entirely unfunctional since it also has the effect of binding together the group, and in that sense echoes other scenes.

Tanner claimed that, in terms of editing, the black and white sequences provided a good deal of conventional work; in the case of the camerawork, these sequences are interesting and unconventional. (There is in fact no overall developed play between conventional work (black and white)/non-conventional work (colour) in Jonas.) It is noticeable that Tanner uses complicated camera movements in, for example, the black and white scene where Marguerite is shouting deliriously about the virtues of her tomatoes and leeks. The scene is arranged so that we begin and end on Marguerite, but between these moments the camera describes complicated arabesques that are obtrusive and quite unfunctional. Other than this, it is very noticeable that Tanner uses a static camera to great effect in the black and white sequences. The shots of the immigrant workers are of course stills; the camera is a pure recording device, but this still camera proves to be a great contrast to the mobile antics of the camera in the preceding scene, scene 24. At scene 28 the static camera is extremely effectively used; it is placed low, near to the ground, and 'army feet' march by in close-up. The spectator has the sense of being trampled on. Then the recipe is reversed and the camera moves over a still subject; a low angle shot of the Kremlin leaders. We look up at the power behind the oppression. Then a static camera is used again, to show a moving subject; a huge missile slides over the screen on a carrier. The

effect of the three shots is powerful and almost dizzying. It is noticeable that the black and white sequences provide - relatively speaking - a higher percentage of unconventional camerawork in a film where, in terms of camera, W. Jehle's general statement is certainly true that Tanner's experiments are 'not too extreme and not too long'.[18]

The Use of Music

If the editing practice and the camerawork in the film have been found not to be entirely consistent with the theory relating to them, then it must be said that the divergence between theory and practice with regard to the music in the film is even greater. Tanner's basic conception of a film as a dialogue between spectator and film, without a relationship of domination and without identification, can be easily undermined by film music. He recognises music as one of the most 'dangerous' of the elements in a film. It tends naturally to increase the emotional power of the image. In Milieu, the music was as Tanner meant it to be - dissociated from the image, autonomous - except where there were (a few) red herrings of conventional film music. Patrick Moraz who composed the music did not see the film, so there was no question of his expressing ideas about it. The music emerged from discussions with Tanner prior to the shooting, and tapes were then brought to the shooting and the director used them as he thought best. The music is harsh, grating, electronic - foreign to the ear; it does not engage our emotions except in so far as it might generally give a note of tragedy to the film.

Tanner travelled to Strasbourg prior to the shooting of Jonas to work with the musician Jean-Marie Scenia. The music was produced in the studio there, as Graf's film shows us. The only exception to this was the 'Je suis crucifié' sequence which was produced on a three day visit to the shooting by Scenia. In principle, Scenia's ideas about

film music are those of Tanner; he claims that he is against a 'cinéma seducteur', a cinema that passes itself off as reality, thus making outside reality look by comparison trivial. He recognises that music is in these respects a potentially dangerous element, regrets that most film directors want 'psychological music', i.e. film music of a conventional kind that tells the story or highlights the mental states or the fortunes of the characters. But if one looks further it becomes clear that what he proposes is subtly divergent from Tanner's ideas. Scenia, in an interview recorded by Graf and included in the script of Graf's film, says he wants to

> arriver à parcourir un film parallèlement à un réalisateur enfin parallèlement à une mise en scène, tout en ayant un discours autonome à l'image et en même temps un discours qui traduisait ce que rien dans le film ne laisse entendre; c'est à dire comment, par exemple, la musique assume le drame d'une comédie, enfin la gravité, sans parler de drame ... chez Tanner c'est ça ... j'ai voulu que ma musique raconte ce qu'il y avait de grave dans ces individus.

Hence we have a film music that is potentially closer to the film than Moraz' music was to Milieu. The music that emerges is far nearer to the conventional than one would have expected Tanner to approve of, and it runs the risk of 'hooking' the spectator on an affective level and undoing the work of distanciation undertaken in other aspects of the film.

There are two main musical themes in the film, both are conventionally tuneful and both very affective. The two tunes are given right at the beginning of the film, the first being what might be termed the Jonas theme which is heard over the credits and bleeds into the first scene of Max buying his cigarettes. It is a tune that is both beautiful and delicate, slightly whimsical, sad and yet jaunty. In effect, it expresses wonderfully the tone and spirit of the film, which is one of individual effort against enormous odds, one of

stubborn optimism (Graf in his section on the music of the film, balances Scenia's statement 'ce qu'il y avait de grave etc.' against the Jonas tune so that his audience can consider the two in juxtaposition). Above all it must be said that the Jonas music is very engaging; it evokes a warm and sympathetic response. The second theme or tune has the same effect. It is heard first in scene 3 and might conveniently be termed the Rousseau music. It is the wistful flowing bassoon tune that first accompanies the shot of Rousseau and the quotation about the enslavement of man. It is slightly mournful but not too much so. It bleeds over the cut into the next scene where Mathieu is talking about his new job possibility, as if to link the Rousseau quotation with the everyday concerns of this family. This music is also very engaging, affective, bringing us closer to the characters and their struggle.

Apart from the two main themes, there are separate musical motifs for several of the individual characters. The most notable of these might be called Marie's tune. We first hear it when she sings it, direct to camera and in close-up, when she has managed to reject the advances of the motorist who has picked her up. The tune is jaunty and childlike, with cheeky percussion. It is a song about risks and conformity, 'if you never spend your money, you know you'll always have cash, if you lick the boots that kick you, you'll never feel the lash' and so on. She looks pathetically vulnerable as she sings it, yet her resistance is spirited. We hear this tune at moments throughout the film, and it is completely engaging in its expression of individual resistance. The others have their musical motifs - Madeleine's is eastern and exotic, whilst Charles has music which always begins when he starts to tell his memories, 'alors on part en voyage ... c'était à Béziers, en 1931 ... il faisait une chaleur'.

These muscial themes are almost always used in a conventional way in the film, i.e. with slight variants in the mood or tone of them, to suit the situation being described. We hear, for example, a sadder and slower version of the Rousseau theme as Mathieu approaches the organic farm of the Certoux to look for a job. The play of this music over the previous scenes has kept the philosopher's words about Man's situation in mind. The implication is that sadly, even here, Mathieu will not be escaping the net of chains that bind modern man. A brisk and brief version of the theme is heard as Marco speaks of the prophets and the 'holes in time'. The Rousseau music actually 'introduces' Jonas/Emile; when Mathieu tells his wife of their new big apartment she decides she will have another child. 'Tu me fasse un enfant ... j'aime pas les espaces vides'. Here a mellow, rich version of the theme is heard. As the official preaches to the Certoux of progress, Marcel interrupts and asks the man suddenly 'what time do you get up?'. He proceeds to explain sadly how man in cities has constructed a terrible silence and never hears the birds. A clarinet plays a slow and sad version of the Rousseau theme.

The music throughout is used to engage, but among the most overt examples of this, are the last few scenes which finally, by an interplay of monologue, music and images, fix our sympathies with the message of the film. The eight godparents of Jonas in scene 66 create a song to celebrate his advent, his emergence from the whale etc. The tune of this song plays over Mathieu's words as he cycles to work speculating about the part Jonas will play in the overall struggle. Words and music together give a tremendous sense of heady optimism and determination. Then, as the scene changes and we see little five year old Jonas scratching his drawing over the top of the old wall picture, we have a heavy and slow version of the original Jonas theme, played on a cello. The effect is very moving. Finally, as Tanner cuts to a

close-up of Jonas's face, we have a jaunty and gay version of Marie's song which signals of course optimism and resistance. The whole effect of these last scenes in the film is a hymn to opposition and optimism.

There are a few oddities in the usage of music in the film. Occasionally, for example, the Jonas music comes in and out of scenes where its usage has no direct significance, e.g. as the two 'heroes' tell Marco about Marguerite and the workers. Or, it may stop and start within scenes in an erratic fashion, e.g. scene 20.

Urs Graf of course effectively highlights in <u>Cinema mort ou vif</u> this oddly blatant discrepancy between Tanner's theory with regard to music, and the results in the final film. Tanner lays himself open to charges that the music is of the 'Hollywood' type, that it is the sort of music that helps sell in the supermarket and so on. Even in the black and white sequences, where such music as there is is of a more unconventional kind, more 'foreign' to the ear, the music might be termed conventional, in the sense that dreams and fantasies could be, and often are, conventionally represented by strange sounds; nightmarish electronic sounds accompany the missile as it moves across the screen; a short eerie chord is heard as Matilde imagines herself massaging the supervisor's back. We see, in Graf's film, Tanner and Scenia working together on the scene where the adults roll in the mud; Tanner says he wants something 'enfantin'. Scenia produces notes and is pleased with them as he says there is also something of nostalgia in them. A final version is accepted, and so on.

There is of course a good deal of music within the film, apart from the non-diegetic music that we have been discussing, and it might be worthwhile considering it briefly at this point. There are four songs, two of which we have mentioned, sung by characters in the film. These songs hang in a curious position between the diegetic and non-diegetic. Marie's song is sung direct to camera and her

accompaniment is supplied by a non-diegetic source. Max, the failed prophet of '68 stuck to the wall, sings 'Je suis crucifié' etc. and the other seven join in with improvised lines. Marcel improvises a song about Jonas's birth and the rest of the group join in, the background music again supplied by a non-diegetic source, and finally Mathieu sings a song about the humble and democratic virtues of the onion. These songs are reminiscent of Weill's songs in Brecht's plays. They are non-naturalistic and they stand outside the fictional world; they break the illusion of fiction. They deliver important messages and are performances within the performance, Brechtian in intention. They have to be seen to be in large measure distantiating in their effect but, having said this, their effect is often so appealing as to create a very curious play of distantiation/ engagement at the same time.

There are one or two instances of music that do arise apparently naturally in the film, and the choice of this music is put to good use by the director. The club where Max meets De Vandoeuvres is playing what might afterwards be labelled the 'Vandoeuvres tango'. Thus a bouncy tango plays as the little fat man rolls up to Max in the bar. Music and images provide a perfect parody of the greasy speculator. The two 'heroes' play a mindless and irritating accordion tune to blot out the official's words in the Certoux kitchen. Marco is heard at work in an old people's home celebrating their past, their memories, as he sings 'Le temps des cerises', a nostalgic song about youth.

Tanner is obviously not so insensitive as to misjudge the effects of the Jonas music, hence there must be a deliberate sacrificing of the ideals of Milieu in this respect. Warmth and emotion enter into the film via its music and Tanner is apparently this time, not afraid to let it happen. In the same way, he is not afraid of humour in this film, nor is he afraid of colour. Although horrified by a letter from an American who had seen Jonas and had written to say that he cried in

happiness on seeing it, felt Tanner was a friend, and invited him to America, etc., the director must concede that the film demands an affective response.[19]

Hence there is a fundamental undermining in Jonas of the principle of distanciation that Tanner holds as so important. Yet at the same time the film demands a sophisticated level of reading. In its specific aspects we can often see an odd play between involvement and 'estrangement'; the black and white scenes for example weaken an already unconventional, fragmentary (and distanciating) narrative structure. They take us abruptly into black and white from the rich colours of the main film; they are often accompanied by strange music, they are startling in content, indeed they are fantasies. Yet they can be said to draw the spectator nearer to the character concerned as they help to penetrate and explain his inner life. Marie's song in the car draws us into her inner life and philosophy. It is also done in close-up and is most appealing generally. However for a character to break into song, and direct to camera, i.e. to the audience, is a shock, and very Brechtian in its quality and effect. Marcel's song about Jonas and the whale, in the main film, is also to a certain extent 'distancing'. It is a shock for a character to burst into song, accompanied by unseen musicians, and particularly so when six others join in as well; yet, as with the 'je suis crucifié' sequence, the 'message' of the song is a key one in the film and could in a sense be thought of as drawing us closer into the film. The voice over at the beginning of Jonas could also be argued to have a two-way effect; distancing by definition (as discussed in earlier chapters), it could also be said to be the window through which the rest of the film is to be viewed, fundamental to the film's ideas and, as such, involving, drawing us in a sense closer.

The links between <u>Jonas</u> and the neo-realist tradition have been touched upon in Chapter 2. It has to be said that this film cuts a curious path between a ground base of conventional realism (the 'anchor points' as Tanner calls them[20]) and a pervading tone of unreality that marks the whole. Tanner says that in spite of the irruption of realism, everything should sound a 'false note'.

> C'est parce que la mise en film opère une
> distortion constante du système representatif
> qu'elle en démonte la mecanique ... et ceci non
> seulement à partir de la non-linearité du récit
> mais surtout au travers de la structure interne de
> chaque scène. Si la ré-definition du réalisme
> passait par là j'aurais le sentiment d'avoir avancé
> un pas. (21)

Leaving aside questions of structure, it might be useful to discuss where in a given scene, the groundmarks of what is conventionally termed realism lie, and where the take off into unreality and even into allegory occurs. In scene 51 all eight characters meet together, Max and Madeleine and the rest look 'real' in terms of clothes, actions etc. The farm setting looks real. (Although it has an allegoric dimension, it is situated on the margins of Geneva; the position of the eight is on the margins of capitalist society.) But this scene works outwards from realism and becomes pure allegory. To start with of course there is a total unlikelihood that all eight should gather at precisely that moment and precisely that place - despite the fact that they all have concrete reasons, individually, for being there (e.g. Marco comes for vegetables and naturally brings Marie). Also it should be said that they all enter the scene as from theatre wings - from the sides. A boy approaches Max and leads him to the wall to be drawn by the group of children. This boy does not act naturalistically. He speaks and behaves as if he is consciously 'playing a part'. The adults begin to talk about whether Max is a butterfly, an elephant or a bear ... or a prophet. By this stage, the

spectator is reading this scene on an allegorical level and when Max
breaks into song 'Je suis crucifié', this notion is developed; Max is
the Christ figure dying in '68 to give rise to the little prophets who
may now come after. The children's shouts, that he must stay where he
is, can now be read as indicators of his fixed and dead political and
philosophical stances. Max shouts 'my territory is as far as I can see
... no further. My country exists only on the map ... I'm never at
home'. The word play, on this allegorical level, is bandied about
between the group. Marco yells 'we're all borderline cases'. At the
end of the scene we see shots of the finished wall, all eight
characters drawn on it, the seven standing in a group below the level
of the arms of the father figure Max. As the 'big bear', his territory
is wider than theirs. The 'little bears' have narrower (smaller/lower)
aspirations. The mural remains after they are gone, as perhaps an
example of 'reality' rendered into art, i.e. two dimensional and
artificial. In discussions of the lack of realism of this scene, it
has also to be taken into account that the whole scene is done in one
long take, with the camera being obtrusive in its seeking out
characters and binding them into the group. The unconventionality of
the techniques used in this scene is distracting and also helps to
undermine conventional filmic realism.

The scene just discussed is not of course representative of the
whole film, though there are plenty of other scenes that begin
naturalistically and then veer off. We can think of Marco, Max and
Mathieu in the Certoux kitchen discussing their various approaches to
life and Mathieu breaking out into a song (accompanied) about the
virtues of the onion, thus destroying any illusion of realism in the
scene. We have a 'performance' within a performance. Similarly
Charles and Marie begin a scene discussing shopping and end it by
performing a 'playlet' of 'Charles and the café owner in 1936'. There
are also other scenes that do not ostensibly leave the realist

groundbase - Mathieu and family at breakfast discussing his new job, Max and Madeleine walking by the river in Geneva discussing time and change and Max's disillusionment, and many others.

It is interesting that the same principles of theory could have produced two such different films as Milieu and Jonas. Milieu is a cooler, more schematic film, where the gap between Tanner's theory and the resulting film is narrowest. Jonas, despite its more strikingly unconventional narrative structure, its loss of story, its relative lack of conventional filmic realism, is a film that actually allows a much more affective response, a film that is warmer and less distanciated. It is more visual and less obviously illustrating a set of theoretic principles than its predecessor. It is ironic that one should argue that Jonas is a better film, although less consistent with its own theoretic principles. It was more favourably received by critics and public alike than the earlier film.

One has to again note, that generally, critics do not address the questions of film langauge that are so important to Tanner himself. Ideas, themes, characters are discussed, rather than whether Tanner has made any advance in his battle with, for example, the conventional norms governing editing practice. Perhaps if Graf's film were widely distributed, and in conjunction with showings of Jonas, the fundamental ideas about the film would be better disseminated. It must in the end be virtually impossible for the average film goer to properly grasp the intricacies of the issues about film, in this fast moving spectacle. Perhaps it has to be said that Tanner simply miscalculates the capabilities of his audiences and Graf touches on a sore point, namely that the central issues need extra clarification, outside the film.

In fairness to the majority of the critics however, Jonas is very successful on levels other than for example the strict undermining of

'normal' narrative structure. Vincent Canby remarks in an article in the _New York Times_, à propos of _Cinéma mort ou vif_, 'This documentary has a ready answer for everything except the mystery that is Tanner's talent'.[22] It is possible, in concentrating on theory, to underplay the very rewarding human warmth and sheer lyricism that pervades _Jonas_. This lyricism of course often derives directly from elements, such as the use of music, that are suspect in terms of the film's theory. The last scenes, where Mathieu cycles to work and celebrates the idea of the progress of the generations, and where Jonas begins to chalk his own messages over the top of the old wall drawing, are good examples of the lyricism that pervades the whole film. _Jonas_ offers a heartfelt, moving and powerful message from the director, of the value of being a cog in the wheel of life, and of the real possibilities of transmitted progress.

Tanner celebrates his quirky, marginal people and describes them with great affection. He is no longer afraid of humour; the gift that he possesses for the comic was virtually entirely suppressed in _Milieu_. We laugh in _Jonas_ at the rub of different philosophies; Max's bemused face at Marcel's diatribe about mountains of shrimps, or his bewildered expression on entering Madeleine's trantric den. We laugh also at Tanner's parodies of, for example, De Vandoeuvres. The film is also noticeably full of colour (_Milieu_, the first colour film of Tanner's, was largely colourless). It is full also of everyday, mundane things and actions, a fact that renders it very attractive. It moves easily from peeling onions to philosophy.

Jonas may be seen in the future as a valuable and affectionate depiction of the early/mid '70s and their countercultures, developed after the political disappointment of '68. Tanner says 'ce qui m'intéressait c'était de partir de la constatation que dans la mesure où il y a désillusion quant à la politique politicienne chez beaucoup

de gens des choses se passent à d'autres niveaux.'[23] The hard left critics may have carped at surface charm covering soft or even dubious politics - certainly there are cloudy areas/mistakes in the treatment of foreign workers and in the treatment of the character of Marguerite; they may also have carped about the film's omissions (but why should a film be an all encompassing tract?). One wonders however why such a warm and intelligent contribution to radical perspectives and hopes should have been at any moment frowned upon. As a radical film it should not be dismissed, either in the climate of post-'68 or for that matter in the '80s. Although the perspectives have changed, we now see a failure, the fragmentation of the organised political left, in Europe and in America. The focus may still, with reason, rest with individuals, and the encouragment of Mathieu's words, 'Jonas ... les jeux ne sont pas faits' is still relevant.

CHAPTER 7 - FOOTNOTES

1. Script of Cinéma mort ou vif pub. by Film Kollectiv, Josefstrasse 106, 8005 Zurich (note the script has no page numbers).

2. U. Graf, 'Sur Jonas', Dossier de presse de la Cinémathèque suisse, A.A.6397.

3. A. Tanner, 'Le "pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"', in Le Milieu du monde ou le cinéma selon Tanner, ed. M. Boujut (Editions l'Age d'Homme, 1974).

4. C. Dimitriu, 'Interview with A. Tanner', Dossier Cinémathèque suisse, A.A. 1715 (16.11.82).

5. J.J. Rousseau, Emile or On Education, trans. A. Bloom (Basic Books, 1979).

6. A. Horton, 'Alain Tanner's "Jonah": Echoes of Renoir's "M. Lange"', Film Criticism, 4:3 (Spring 1980), p. 78.

7. Script of Cinéma mort ou vif.

8. This discourse pub. in Ciné Tracts, 1:3 (Aut/Winter 1977-8), pp. 7-14 (note that a script was later published by Cinémathèque Suisse, Lausanne: 1978).

9. F. Albera, 'Interview with Alain Tanner', Voix Ouvrière (27.11.76), p. 11.

10. 'Dialogue avec Alain Tanner', Cinéma Français, 8 (1977).

11. N. Heinic, 'Entretien avec Alain Tanner', Cahiers du cinéma, 273 (Jan-Feb 1977), p. 39.

12. R. Stam, 'The Subversive Charm of Alain Tanner', Jump Cut, 15 (July 1977) and
    L. Greene, J. Hess and R. Lakes, 'Jonah ... Subversive Charm Indeed!', Jump Cut, 15 (July 1977).

13. Script, Cinéma mort ou vif.

14. Ibid.

15. Tanner, 'Le "pourquoi dire" et le "comment dire"', p. 20.

16. Rousseau, Emile, pp. 42-3.

17. Cahiers, 'Entretien avec R. Berta', Cahiers du cinéma, 284 (Jan. 1978), p. 68.

18. W. Jehle, 'Nicht zu extrem und nicht zu lange', Cinema (Zurich), 23:4 (1977), (trans. U. Zimmermann).

19. Quoted in Dimitriu, 'Interview with A. Tanner', p. 5.

20. D. Rabourdin, 'Interview with A. Tanner', Cinema 77, 217 (Jan. 1977), p. 52.

21. Script, _Cinéma mort ou vif_.

22. V. Canby, 'Jonah who will be 25 in the year 2000', _New York Times_ (22.2.79).

23. Albera, 'Interview with A. Tanner', p. 10.

APPENDIX

1 Max in shop 'inflation' (MUSIC)	2 Mathieu in shop 'inflation'	3 THE NEXT MORNING Rousseau and voice over quotation	4 Mathieu and family at breakfast		5 Matilde on bus
6 Matilde at work	7 FADE Matilde's fantasy	8 Marcel goes to Certoux farm meets Marguerite	9 FADE CONVERSATION ABOUT CONTRACT	10 Marcel hires Mathieu	11 Marcel tells M of whales
12 Marco's 'lesson' (intercut of Max)	13 Matilde hears Mathieu's news decision for 'Jonas'	14 casino – Max and Vandeouvres meet Madeleine	15 Madeleine walking		16 Eastern painting
17 Madeleine's office	18 FADE M's fantasy of erotic rite	19 the office – Max enters	20 Max and Mad. in café	21 Marco goes for cabbage to Certoux	22 Marco meets Mathieu
23 Marcel drawing animals	24 2 heroes + Marco Marcel waiting for dinner (tick)	25 FADE 3 shots of living areas of foreign workers. 1 shot Margarite + man	26 Marcel + tick Margarite + men Max enters	27 FADE Max fantasy ... troops ... missiles	28 Marco + Marie at till in supermarket

29 Marie hitches lift

30 FADE Marie's song

31 Max at work 'Lotus' enters

32 M + L walking by river

33 Marie + Charles Charles' story

34 Max + 'Lotus' in the fair

35 Matilde watching TV FADE

36 Max + Lotus in bar

37 Max + Lotus at home

38 FADE M's fantasy of Paris riots

39 M + M at market

40 Bank official at Certoux farm

41 FADE Marcel asks 'What time do you get up?'

42 official + the family

43 Mathieu's lesson on inflation

44 Marie + Marco at the till

45 Marco waits for Marie

46 Marco, Charles + Marie

47 Lotus phones Max

48 Lotus + Max driving

49 the wall drawing, all meet together

50 the finished wall Mathieu smiles

51 kids roll down mud slope

52 FADE Adults roll down

53 hoeing and planting onions

54 Marguerite in Vandoeuvres office

55 FADE Vandoeuvres substituted by a pig

56 Marguerite meets man at 'baracks'

57 Marie in class pupils ask questions

58 Marie + M at home. she stays

59 FADE Mathieu asks ? of children	60 Matilde massages Marie - tired	61 Marie arrested	62 Mathieu in greenhouse school	63 Marco asks class about their desires	64 Marco Max Mathieu peel onions. A clash of views
65 all 8 eat together Jonas announced	66 FADE whales play	67 Jonas sucks	68 Charles + Marie play at 'prison'	69 Lotus + Marguerite type paper about about additives	
70 Marco + the old people	71 FADE Marco in bed with 2 girls	72 Marie tells Marco of jail. 2nd girl comes in	73 Mathieu + school listen to whales	74 Marguerite fires Mathieu	75 Mathieu at table talk of next job
76 Mathieu on bike new job. into the city	77 FADE M imagines army clashes + rioters	78 Max enters shop 'inflation'	79 1 day in 1980 Rousseau quote	80 Jonas by the wall 5 years old...	

CHAPTER 8 - AFTER JONAS

The conclusion of this thesis is briefly concerned with a consideration of the direction taken by Tanner's work after Jonas, i.e. after the first phase of Tanner's film making. It sets out to locate the areas of new departure, and to trace those elements that are more retrospective.

After the making of Jonas, Tanner commented 'this film marks the end of a period of work that I must go beyond ... but I don't know how'.[1] Messidor, made in 1979 can at best be termed a transition work. A film of stalemate, a product of a period of quite severe personal depression on the part of its director, it nevertheless contains the seeds of the new departures that can be seen in Light Years Away (1981) and Dans la ville blanche (1983). It is these pointers to the new in Messidor that it is most interesting to detect. One major change in Tanner's perspective in this film is a marked shifting of focus onto landscape/setting. In the interim period between Jonas and Messidor, the director undertook work for Swiss television and it is in this that the foregrounding of setting is begun. For a certain time, Tanner left behind commercial narrative film making and worked with Super-8 film. Given a small budget and freedom to do what he wanted, Tanner was interested in 'shooting miles and miles of footage on roads, cafés and landscapes in Switzerland', with no fixed idea of a film. The footage was chiefly shot between Geneva and Bern, a trip that bored him because he knew it so well. The results on film however, Tanner found fascinating, 'it was a kind of magic of film, some of it marvellous and beautiful, especially when we shot through storms and very heavy rain'.[2] He added bits of commentary and some music, and felt that the result was 'a strange and interesting combination of absolutely empty pictures which are at the

same time absolutely crammed with information about emptiness, duration, time, the road, lorries'.[3] The lack of interest/reaction from other quarters perhaps persuaded Tanner that such an enterprise was altogether too marginal.

The move back to fiction film making in 1978 provides us with a decentering of narrative in favour of setting. The starting point for this film, unlike the others which had written scripts, was the settings, the roads, cafés, countryside. 'The landscapes will be the first thing I look at in the camera' [4], Tanner remarked to Tarantino. The film in fact opens with huge aerial sweeps of the landscape, ant-like cars crawling over the roads far below. Extreme long shots are often used to make human figures ant-like, camera movements often work to make the main characters seem incidental in the scene, for example a moving camera at one point tracks over the same swathe of ground at three different moments of the day, incidentally passing Jeanne and Marie as it moves. 'Je préfère un cinéma' says Tanner 'qui met les acteurs dans un décor. Messidor est un film de décors qui ne valent que par les signes qu'on y lit'.[5]

There are the signs in Messidor, developed later on, that Tanner is leaning towards the refusal of overt ideological discourse in his films. He says 'il y a tellement de discours ... j'ai eu envie d'un peu de silence, d'écouter, de me promener, d'aller dans la montagne' and 'J'ai envie de faire une sonate plutôt que de produire de l'idéologie ... faire un film sur le non-discours ... sur la fuite de sens'.[6] There may not be as much talk in this film, but Tanner creates an ideological discourse wherever his camera looks. The notion of escape to the mountains/the countryside is of course an illusion in Messidor. There are no romantic associations possible in the countryside; the farmers are more hostile and reactionary than the townsfolk, the rape attempt takes place in beautiful countryside, the

climb to the top of a mountain offers no release to the girls. Schubert's romantic music, the Winter Songs (played over shots of high summer landscapes), are elegiac in effect. In Retour, it will be remembered, the sense of freedom felt by Vincent and Françoise in the mountains, having escaped Geneva for a day, was very strong; the heights of the peaks, the vast spaces, and dizzying perspectives were used to echo their feelings of freedom and release in that environment.

Certainly however, and it is a new feature for Tanner, the discourse is not situated in this film in the main characters and is not located in dialogue. In Jonas the characters were two-legged metaphors, each expounding a discourse, the end product of the film an eight-way schema of ideas of what to do eight years after 1968. These characters of course represent an extreme example in Tanner's work:characters in earlier films have a dimension of the representative, yet are rounded, and the 'recipe' is slightly different in each film. In Messidor the girls have no theory about what they are doing, no militant posture. It is interesting to note that Tanner calls Jeanne, Jeanne Salève (i.e. a local name, actually of the mountain that dominates Geneva, and therefore reminiscent of Jonas), also that Jeanne gives their name to the policeman as 'Messidor' (the name given by the post-Revolutionary French calendar to the months of June and July), but she appears to be scarcely conscious of the implications of her choice. The reasons for their being on the road are only vaguely sketched in, and once on the road, they decide in fact to play a 'game', to see who can keep going longest. There was no scripted dialogue for this film, which was new for Tanner. He had the locations organised, and the story outline, but after that it was a matter of improvisation. The film shows the girls disintegrating during their experience, changing, and in a sense discovering themselves; Marie, for example, timid and quiet at the outset, becomes

the one who is tough, practical and aggressive. Their experiences were actually checked out by the director who set off two girls on a hitch-hiking expedition with little money and an injunction never to go to a hotel. 'Ce qu'elles m'ont raconté, correspondait à ce que j'avais écrit; trois semaines, c'est ce qu'il fallait pour arriver au stade du désarroi total, de la régression, de l'absurdité.'[7] What is also different about Tanner's two main characters in this film is the fact that they are not particularly sympathetic. The characters in the other films would raise the cry 'les gens sont formidables'. The director also observes them in very detached fashion, generally in long shot. We do however find an echo of Tanner's earlier characters in the predilection for pairs of characters, complementary beings, living in a kind of symbiosis, e.g. Pierre and Paul, Vincent and Françoise. The two girls in Messidor, with their differing character traits, exist in close dependence.

Tanner's minor characters in Messidor, as has been mainly the pattern in earlier films, are schematic. They represent ideas/positions and help to create the discourse as the two girls move around and encounter them. As Toubiana remarks 'l'auteur me semble accompagner ses deux personnages tout au long de leur voyage comme s'il pratiquait un repérage systématique et pointilleux du pays, comme s'il arpentait le territoire pour mieux épingler les menus faits et gestes où se condensent les multiples parcelles de pouvoir de ce consensus social, normatif, répressif, contre lesquelles butent sans arrêt les deux filles'.[8] Bit by bit the journey reveals the harsh realities of life in Switzerland. Examples of these schematic minor 'characters' are the smooth voice in the Mercedes expounding right-wing philosophies of 'standing on one's own feet' and on the subject of debt, or the sudden and ugly portrayal of a bourgeois whose views contain an mixture of anti-feminism and suspicion of all students and loafers. There is,

it must be noted, an uncomfortable suspicion of cliché in the antithesis between sympathetic young characters (e.g. the bikers) and older, unsympathetic bourgeois characters. It is noticeable that two minor characters, who are not schematic or caricatured, are the two men who try to rape Jeanne; they are portrayed as merely crude and ordinary and not overblown as monsters.

What is also a departure for Tanner in this film is the actual level of bitterness of the message/discourse; he strikes here a new note of unrelieved pessimism. The ending is closed, there is an acute sense of being stifled, of having 'nowhere else to go', of final rupture with Switzerland; 'ras le bol des discours idéologiques ... qui s'expliquent par l'échec ou la désillusion de tout ce dont on rêvait dans les années 60 et qui a pour moi culminé avec Messidor ... Messidor répresente le moment creux, la perte de sens, le trou dans cette périod'.(9) Previously, within or on the margins of homogenous Swiss society, it was shown to be possible to carve out a niche for living honestly; it was possible to look to the next generation, to see present work in the contest of a progression. The quest for a useful niche produced real, if modest, results. In Messidor the girls come from position within 'normal' integrated society, put themselves on the margins and are driven outside the circle, from which position their challenge can be dismissed as subversion and/or madness. The director termed this film in his conversation with C. Devarrieux 'mon premier film de vieux', which is an expression of weariness and depression. In this interview he situates the climate of the film politically; it is ten years after 1968. 'Il y a un trou ... une série de désillusions. La Chine, il n'y a pas si longtemps qu'on y croyait. Le Vietnam (il donnait bonne conscience) on l'a sincèrement soutenu: il entre dans le circuit des grandes puissances'. As for Switzerland itself, he claims it to be 'en petit ce que les multinationales essaient de créer chez

les gens, le pays du monde où ça marche le mieux: l'intégration, l'intériorisation du système, l'idéologie du non-choix ... le rêve de l'Union Soviétique'.[10]   As such, Switzerland is a warning of what could happen to other Western countries. Messidor may open with the music of romantic aspiration and breathtaking aerial shots of a beautiful landscape (albeit threaded with roads far below), but it closes with a shot at road level with juggernauts virtually shaking the camera.   No deviation is possible from dominant values in Switzerland; 'going off the roads' is not permitted and quickly labelled subversion, in this society where 'everyone loves to be a cop', and the rifle in each household cupboard is, according to Tanner, a symbol of the citizen's spirited defence of the status quo. It is his view that the government actually fosters a latent paranoia on the subject of terrorism.   Jeanne and Marie travel through this country, apparently going in circles - roads, cafés, faces seem to be seen more than once. Metaphorically and physically they are not able to leave, to cross the border and escape this society of affluence, consumerism and alienation.

Perhaps due to the lack of 'space' in this film for imagination/ flights of fancy, it is noticeable that Tanner does not overtly leave the ground base of realism and move towards fantasy or allegory as he has done in other films. The character of Charles Dé was wholly fictional, having no basis in observable fact and Charles mort ou vif moves towards burlesque and fantasy in the end. La Salamandre shows a tendency towards allegory. Jonas obviously strains the ground base of realism even further, by introducing into the fable, elements of fantasy, myth and allegory. Messidor, as La Salamandre, was loosely based on a newspaper story - a fait divers, about two girl hitch-hikers who after a week on the road, were led to kill a man.   It is interesting to note that the shooting of one scene - that where the girls, given a bar of soap and needing a wash, wash in a village street

fountain - actually used a cinema vérité approach; Tanner set up the scene and directly recorded the reactions of passers-by to this event. The director creates a fiction, by taking the story to its logical conclusion, but it is a fiction that is firmly based on elements of observable Swiss reality.

With Messidor it is to be noted that the focal point, the emphasis for its director is, as with the earlier films, work upon the language of cinema. In terms of narrative form, it is perhaps open to debate as to whether Messidor actually represents a continuation of earlier work. We have mentioned the intention of decentering narrative in favour of material objects/settings. There is obviously a story in this film; two girls decided to temporarily leave their known lifestyles and hitch-hike around. When their money is gone they decide to carry on 'as a kind of game, a game to see who will be toughest and a game against everything else'. During a three week period we see them changing and developing, disintegrating and yet discovering themselves, and finally, via exhaustion, hunger, harrassment and a developing sense of paranoia, they are led to murder a man. However the narrative form is loose, flat and episodic; the film is not packed with events and stories, and for large tracts of time nothing very much happens at all (it is reminiscent in this respect of part of Retour). The weighting of events is noticeable; trivial events are foregrounded, important ones, e.g. the episode with the bikemen and the final shooting, are offscreen. The rape is done in extreme long shot, in very distanced fashion. The narrative wanders, and falters completely at times, as the girls ask one another 'What shall we do now?' ... 'Well ... we'll go to a café'. Neither they, nor the audience know what will happen next. In the scene in the café, the next scene, nothing happens. There is conscious anti-climax. The tight knit shape of conventional narratives, with their strict cause/effect chain, is not in evidence in

<u>Messidor</u>. Tanner interestingly however, provides a neat comment on this sort of narrative in the television programme where the girls are shown harrassing a farmer, in a reconstructed scene. This programme (based on one on German television at the time of the shooting of <u>Messidor</u>) is meant to aid in the capture of criminals. It is shown to be in the direct tradition of the worst Hollywood thriller; there is gaudy colour, and the music, editing and camera technique are at the service of narrative suspense and tension. In effect, this is what Tanner chose <u>not</u> to do with his material. In his film, despite even the fact of the police search, there is no suspense and nowhere in the film are cinematic means used to excite. One notes also in the narrative of <u>Messidor</u>, a great deal of apparent repetition; the girls appear to be going in circles, later shots constantly recall earlier ones, giving a sense of circularity of structure rather than linear progression.

A paradox appears to lie in the fact that whilst Tanner seems to be therefore continuing his work on narrative form, he is seen to be using/re-working a well known older form as a basis, one almost having the status of a modern myth and one that has known box office attractiveness. This is the road movie, and perhaps the best known one was <u>Easy Rider</u> (the literary antecedent is the work of Jack Kerouac); here we have a disillusioning journey through a once beautiful landscape, meetings with fellow (mostly sympathetic) itinerants and brushes with inhospitable natives. A slightly looser connection can be argued with <u>Bonnie and Clyde</u>; 'criminal' yet sympathetic, this pair travel through a world that is shown to be ugly and evil. The road movie is in fact based on very much older narrative forms - e.g. the allegorical journey, religious in <u>Pilgrims Progress</u> and a later form being the picaresque novel where misfit heroes drift from place to place, expoloring the world as they go. The '60s brought its note of

disillusion to its version of the basic form. Because Tanner re-works to some extent in <u>Messidor</u> a well known form, this tempers the impact of his narrative experimentation, and clearly leaves him open to charges of the audience having 'seen it all before'; '<u>Messidor</u> vient trop tard, quand on a dejà vu et revu cette promenade absurde sur les routes'.(11)

Tanner's use of camera in <u>Messidor</u> is very much in line with what one has come to expect; a camera that emphatically declares its presence/explores in its own right. Whilst it sometimes emphasises and creates narrative points, e.g. the loving, lateral travelling movements from girl to girl, (a favourite movement of Tanner) which mirrors the fact that close bonds are developing between them, it very often eschews narrative, tracking <u>away</u> from actions, forcing us to take a distant and cool view, passing characters by, only seeing them incidentally. Tanner also suggests the idea of voyeurism associated with the camera; the spectator looks at a shot of the two girls bathing in a river; the next shot significantly shows two tourists on the bank looking too. He also reminds us in several subtle ways of his presence behind the camera, i.e. that the images have an 'author'. Indeed, attention is specifically drawn to Tanner himself as the person that we don't see, who is just out of frame, but whose presence to the film is crucial. We have 'Alain', Jeanne's friend in the flat who argues with her before she leaves and who we do not see; and we have 'Alain' the unseen driver of the Mercedes who lectures the girls about debt.

It is <u>Light Years Away</u> (1981) that marks the start of a new phase in Tanner's work. It marks a shift to a different kind of discourse, and an attempt on Tanner's part to engage with his audience in a different way. As a film it is 'light years away' from what has gone before and this despite the fact that the family resemblances to earlier films are still there, and despite the fact that his film

builds up/grows out of certain tentative steps taken in <u>Messidor</u>: the latter was a film which very clearly helped its director exorcise the depression felt during this period. For this next film the director says 'I felt I should end that type of discourse. We all tried it in the '60s and early '70s. But this is the '80s ... I am trying to adapt'.[12] He cites - as a group who fail to adapt - the socialist workers party in Switzerland, 'they refuse to shut up ... they just go on shouting in the same old way ... ideology and rational argument won't really free us ... the young know this ... they sense that there's something else, intuition perhaps, inspiration'.[13] It must be noted that Tanner at this point does not deny that ideological work/ considerations have a part to play, but points out that this side of life does not have a monopoly of the truth. <u>Light Years Away</u> then, avoids all political discourse - despite the fact that the protagonist's name is Jonas, that he is 25, and it is the year 2000. Tanner regards these 'backward' references as principally a joke (in Odier's book that he adapted for the film, the chief figure was called Jonas) although Jonas from the earlier film, now 25, could be said to be searching out his way forward. The key words of the director's intentions in this film are watching, looking and feeling. And we find him uttering such statements as 'we must now learn to feel before we can understand ... I don't feel like talking so much as before. I think we have to learn to watch again'. Due to television, Tanner goes on to argue, we don't really look at what is on a screen properly anymore. 'There is a formidable inspiration which comes from the colour of the sky at a given moment, from landscape, and from people. My discourse is in the images.'[14] This film asks then for an emotional/imaginative response not an intellectual one. Learning via looking and feeling is celebrated within the film, learning from books and via words is secondary. However, contrary to this assertion,

Yoska's words - namely his lesson/lecture explaining his message to Jonas - are a key point in the film, and the books he gives his apprentice to read are also very important. The audience is certainly in the film given space and time to look and feel, but Tanner does not entirely abandon words. Indeed it should be said that he does not empty his film of discourse, as certain of his comments would have us believe, but the discourse is a very new one.

The beginnings of the shift in focus to the image were tentatively begun in Messidor but in Messidor of course, the images were always charged with ideological/social significance. In Light Years Away the majority of the images are bare of this kind of discourse. The film is primarily very beautiful to look at, with its wild locations, its desolate landscape sometimes bathed in a curious yellow light, or covered in mist, or battered by wild storms. The camera spends a lot of time 'looking'. Tanner chose for his setting the landscape of Western Ireland and the language is English - he felt the story was an Anglo- Saxon one, not a Latin one. These features mark an important break for Tanner away from the claustrophobic Switzerland of the previous film - indeed of all his previous films - a place where dreams and visions are so utterly denied that it was necessary for him to escape or stifle. The choice of Ireland is interesting in the sense that an audience would associate Ireland with myth/legend (i.e. the exact antithesis of Switzerland), finding it thus in keeping with the spirit of this film. However, the director argues that really the landscape signifies 'nowhere'. 'Je ne fais aucune référence à la culture de l'Irlande, à sa politique, à ses problèmes'.[15] Odier was half Irish in fact, thus suggesting the choice. 'Il me fallait des décors du bout du monde, qui ne ressemblent à rien de ce qu'on trouve en Suisse ou en France.'[16] So, the empty, treeless, deserted spaces of the West Coast were perfect for Tanner's purposes. The dialogue of

the film is extremely sparse - except perhaps for a short section where
Yoska questions Jonas about his sensations and imparts the lessons he
wants Jonas to learn before he is gone. The focus is on the image.
Generally speaking, Tanner argues, the story is what interests an
audience and the images are relegated. Here the attempt was to do the
opposite.   'J'ai essayé de donner au spectateur une autre perception à
travers la photo et le son, qui lui permette de se balader un peu, de
marcher en même temps que le film et de ne pas être assujetti à
l'histoire.'[17]   Where obviously we can read a social/philosophical
discourse into the images is in Yoska's own domain; the pile of
automobile wrecks outside his hangar must be read as a symbol of the
futility and uselessness of what modern society holds dear.   An
abandoned petrol pump is an apt symbol of a society of consumerism in
ruins.   In Messidor everything revolved around the car, the roads -
here we have a car graveyard and in this wild terrain, hardly any
roads. It is ironic that Yoska uses the old van with 'Poliakof Garage'
still printed on it, because in Yoska's territory all this has been
rejected.   One notes also the colours in the images of Yoska's home;
the hangar is bright yellow, the van is bright red. Yoska dreams - as
he explains to Jonas - of having all the old car wrecks painted bright
colours.   These colours are childlike or naive, perhaps the bold
colours of dreams/hopes.

Throughout Tanner's films there has always been a play, a tension,
between the conventionally realist base of appearances and the loss of,
or undermining of that base. As early as La Salamandre we have a
tendency towards allegory. By the time of Jonas, with the elements of
fable, allegory and myth, the trend was very much away from the the
realist base. Light Years Away actually goes farther in this
direction; it belongs to the realms of myth and legend, and actually at
one point enters the realms of the supernatural. Yoska's central task,

to learn to fly, is a symbol of all Man's aspirations and a particular desire that has always haunted and tantalised mankind. Here we see a re-working of the Icarus myth, in reverse, since it is the 'father' who over-aspires and is cast down, the son who has humbler levels of aspiration. The tasks and toils that Jonas performs in the film also recall the trials by ordeal read about in legends; the last one, the trial by fire marks the son's initiation into the secrets of wisdom of the father. After the fire, Jonas dreams of himself plunging into water, into the sea - the opposite element - with a great feeling of release. Jonas's ordeals recall medieval literary legends where the heroes of Spencer for example have to pass through trials to attain perfection, and Greek myths as well.

Light Years Away is utopian in the general drift of its message, but the lessons to be learned are hard and rough. It is a film about initiation and apprenticeship. Central to it, as to many other such myths, is the notion of master and pupil. Tanner comments 'some people think that masters are not necessary anymore but I wonder',[18] and he relates how from personal experience he now sees 'masters' as very necessary and useful, despite the apparently reactionary tone of this statement. Teaching and learning are important in all Tanner films, but in Light Years Away, this for example, is not the egalitarian learning practice of Mathieu's school, but a harsher and hierarchical idea of education. The film claims that there are unusual and special people from whom it is possible to learn, and more generally, it argues the need to transmit wisdom across generations. Related to this perspective of course is the fact that the director himself found special significance this time in a novel, in the work of someone else. (La Voie sauvage by Daniel Odier.) Tanner has always been very disdainful in the past of adapatation. 'A la lecture' he says of this novel 'j'avais ressenti une espèce d'identification très forte aux deux

personnages ... je les avais volés avec la permission de quelqu'un d'autre mais ils m'appartenaient complètement'.[19] The resulting film is actually dedicated to a friend who had wished to adapt the novel but who had recently died. The first scene highlights the issue of 'learned wisdom' and adaption; Yoska is seen reading, and then underlining a passage in a book - presumably the passage and the book that he next day gives to Jonas to read in his squalid city appartment.

The central message of this film is a new one for Tanner, and it obviously lies in what Yoska teaches to Jonas; at the outset of the film Jonas is a modern, urban 'street-wise' young man who 'knows' nothing. It is that a better life is achievable, but it cannot be bought as modern consumer society expects to buy the good things of life. Jonas, having arrived at Yoska's 'garage' and trying to be accepted, offers the fact that he has fifty-eight pounds. Yoska retorts angrily 'tu penses avec ça, tu vas pouvoir rester assez longtemps pour sortir de ta stupidité'. He takes the money away, 'Il faut commencer par te débarasser de ça ... c'est le premier pas.'[20] Yoska teaches, and then shows, that dreams are achievable. In his case he flies; the fact that this leads to his death is in no way intended to be pessimistic or to intimate a failure. Yoska achieves his destiny, achieves a worthy end. He points out, prior to this, that Jonas' pig accomplishes his destiny, which is to be eaten. Thomas the trapper points out that the only 'death' he sees is in the cities ... in people's eyes ... 'pas une mort rapide naturelle, mais plutôt une sorte de lente agonie, étouffement'.[21] Yoska's death is therefore natural and rapid and not sad. Tanner comments that there is continuity, there is growth, 'la vie marche toujours sur la mort. On se renouvelle par la mort des autres.'[22] And Yoska has found a disciple, a son, shared a brief but very happy relationship and has passed on his knowledge and assured its continuity. For his part,

Jonas has found a father, and more importantly, understood his destiny. (Tanner argues in fact against 'failure' for any of his previous characters ,with the exception of those in Messidor.) Jonas has developed and spiritually matured in a special sense, via his contact with Yoska; at the beginning we see him directionless, untidy, rather lazy, in a meaningless job. 'L'enfer est pavé des paresseux de ce monde!' shouts Yoska as he deposits his book with Jonas at the outset of the film. At this point in time, Jonas's only positive attribute is his sense that he is free, he retains the possibility of altering his life at any moment. Gradually he learns the spiritual lessons of Yoska - from humble beginnings when we see him picking up a phrase of Yoska's and repeating it to himself, 'libre comme un oiseau', via the ordeals that the master imposes, to a point where he acheives a oneness with nature and an entirely new sense of himself, his own being. This latter achievement is signalled after he has first been allowed to feed Yoska's birds, and we then see him in his fantasy immersing himself in a natural element (a parallel to Yoska covering himself with earth to heal wounds, or covering himself with the blood of his birds). Via Yoska's questioning, we see Jonas growing acutely aware of his own physical sensations, and correspondingly aware of the minute changes in natural things, 'J'ai vu le soleil se lever et je pouvais sentir l'odeur de la terre qui change ... les couleurs que changent ... la chaleur des premiers rayons, j'ai vu ... du soleil qui faisait bouger l'herbe'.[23] It is at that point that Jonas also achieves the ability to enter the trance-like state he once saw Yoska in, a state in which there is unison and oneness with nature. Jonas now understands, although he cannot express it in words, why he came to Yoska in the first place. Words of course have only limited status for Yoska, despite the fact that he leaves a written will from which Jonas has to take out and meditate on one phrase a day (like Paul in Charles mort ou

vif), and despite the fact that he expounds certain things in words to Jonas. Certain critics have argued that the film is too long,[24] a frequent complaint against Tanner's films, but the final section of the film is vital to the film's discourse; we see Jonas's temporary re-entry into the city, his offer to the dancer to escape with him, as Yoska had once called and rescued him. (We note for the first time a curious change, an anti-female stance in this film); we see his final refusal of the life and values represented there, and his return to what is now his physical and spiritual home. He returns in the red van. The red van drove into the city at the outset of the film to 'fetch' him. Precisely what he will do in the future is not certain. Tanner wrote into the script, but eliminated at the shooting stage, a scene where it is explained that Jonas's new inheritance is straight away under a compulsory purchase order by the army, but that he is going to fight to stay. Such an ending was perhaps, in the event, considered too 'political' or too specific.

The relationship between audience and film is different in <u>Light Years Away</u>; this film openly asks for a sympathetic, imaginative and emotional response. There is no attempt here at distancing the audience from the film as a whole, although we are not invited to identify with the characters; their individual psychologies are not explored; we know nothing of their past. A sympathetic response is obviously not forthcoming from all quarters, the 'message' is open to ridicule by such critics as Gavin Miller 'There is a tendency in him (Tanner) to rather thin drawn weak-kneed allegories which are meant to have universal application ... a thing the English thank God are not drawn to'.[25] Tanner stresses of course that he does not make films for millions of people 'I want to share an experience with a number of people whom I know, or at least who know my concerns ... if I do well I might succeed with them'.[26]

In isolating the main differences between <u>Light Years Away</u> and previous Tanner films, it is also important to note that the director no longer lays such emphatic stress on the work on film language in the way that he did with the films of what might be termed the 'first phase'. We have mentioned that the intention with regard to film language was to re-orientate the viewer towards looking, towards the image, a tendency that was tentatively sounded out in <u>Messidor</u> and developed in <u>Light Years Away</u>. The director explains that he still refuses to reproduce the real via classical narration, invisible editing, 'ça ne m'intéresse pas de reproduire le réel ... ce qui m'intéresse c'est d'essayer de trouver une certaine vérité qui est dans le sujet par la mise en forme ... il y a mille fois plus de vérité dans un film de Bresson que dans les tranches de vie des films commerciaux.'[27] But the emphasis for Tanner has changed.

Despite its difference and newness with regard to the earlier films, one can obviously see links - family resemblances. Yoska and Jonas search - albeit the search is of a different nature from the others - for a better life. They may, unlike the earlier characters, be said to step outside 'the circle' in their pursuit of it. But Yoska's ancestor is still Charles Dé, who retreats to the countryside/searches for other values than those found in 'normal' society. Yoska also recalls Marcel Certoux; Marcel has rejected poeple in favour of animals - we see him drawing and studying birds, discoursing on shrimps and whales, and on his farm we hear strange noises - grunts and wails - in the background. There are hints of Rosemonde in Jonas's kicking against authority in a rather directionless way, as he sits under a 'No Smoking' sign on the bus, and smokes. Like Rosemonde, his only freedom at the outset of the film is his ability to drop his boring job, and leave. At the end of both <u>La Salamandre</u> and <u>Light Years Away</u> we see the protagonist symbolically

walking the opposite way to the crowd. There is a hint of madness in Rosemonde's exultant face at the end of La Salamandre, and more than a hint of possible madness in Jonas's final solution. The tension between the countryside and the city is almost always a productive one in Tanner films. One cannot help but relate this film to the earlier ones, whilst underlining its exciting differences.

Dans la ville blanche (1983) has strong links with Light Years Away and the two films should be seen as a pair, a pair that express a new phase in Tanner's work. It should be said that Dans la ville blanche is an enormously successful film and that its director was aboslutely right when he said 'on a ... mis le doigt sur quelque chose d'un peu mystérieux, d'un peu magique'.[28] Looking at the two films together, at the most obvious level, we have another film that is situated on the peripheries of Europe, the claustrophobia of Switzerland left behind. 'I can't tolerate making another film there ... so I'm condemned to wander - like Paul, who knows the sea is his only true home, in search of new visions'.[29] Auty aptly entitles his article, 'A Man Condemned to Stifle has Escaped' (echoes of Charles mort ou vif). Tanner liked Lisbon ' a distant city, on the edge of a continent, facing the Atlantic and Africa and with its back turned to Europe; a place to escape to and from'.[30] It was only by chance that the money was offerred in Lisbon, but he found an inspiration in the place, as he had found inspiration on the West Coast of Ireland. Light Years Away had in fact, a precise script - although the dialogue is very sparse and the focus of the film has been seen to lie elsewhere; in Dans la ville blanche, Tanner actually dispensed with script in the ordinary sense of the word. It seems he had three rough pages to show potential backers, and refused to do more, claiming that a script, once accepted by backers, would tie him down and in fact reduce the role of the director to one comparable with a foreman on a building site!   The

film looks 'open' 'unpremeditated' as a result. Tanner did not see the dialogue as very important - he improvised it while the technical crew were preparing the shot and gave it there and then to the actors. 'I wanted to be inspired by the people and the circumstances, even by the light of the moment we were actually working ... to me this is where the real moment of creation exists. Its the film itself which is really the thing.'[31] One cannot help underlining the distance that Tanner as director has come from the early days of La Salamandre with its precise scripting/great emphasis on words/great reliance on the crew for the image. The dialogue of Dans la ville blanche is sparse, the character played by Ganz is not a man of words, he is unable to explain or discuss his experience. Bruno Ganz was chosen for his compelling physical presence. This film, as Light Years Away, totally eschews the political dimension. Its director claims not to have anything against political films now, 'I was a communist in the '50s, a leftist in the '60s and I'm still very angry about the state of the world, but maybe some of the ideas we had about Man and his political dimension are wrong ... or else we just see it differently now'.[32] The 'quest' that is a feature of most of Tanner's films was translated in Light Years Away into a quest for a spiritual identity, one that involved a profound relation with place/natural things. In Dans la ville blanche the quest is also for (individual) identity, and involves an exploration of place. Both protagonists are reduced to nothing at the outset of their search. The issues and the outcome are of course different but there is a fundamental link.

The chief focus of Dans la ville blanche is a meditation on place, the physical world, and on time. Tanner's camera explores Lisbon, the alleys, the bars, the port, as does Paul's Super-8, the film from which he sends home to his wife. The Portugese were unable to conceive of finding an inspiration in Lisbon, but as an alien coming to it, Tanner

found it fascinating and strange. His camera also lingers on shots of the sea, ripples upon it in the breeze, on the hotel room, dwells for eighty seconds on the curtains that move in the breeze from outside - a shot that perhaps represents a whole afternoon - the washing hanging out of windows, a fish being fried, a tap that doesn't work. These slow-paced shots of everyday things, and the relative lack of narrative, recall Tanner's continuing debt to the neo-realist tradition, and his early apprenticeship in documentary. In the images of Lisbon, and Paul's surroundings in the hotel, there is much play between light and shadow. The outside, the steets, are bright with a quality of light that is particular to the South (except for a shot of the ship leaving the estuary which was a disappointment as it had to be shot on a misty day). When Paul's videos are sent home they look enormously bright, even over exposed, viewed against the drab/grey tones of light of Switzerland. These Super-8 images when played back have a dreamlike quality, and give a sense of Paul being alienated from and different from his surroundings. In contrast, his hotel room is dark; it is a protective cocoon, a retreat from the bright light and the manifold stimuli outside. In several shots, the bright light actually filters in shafts through the curtains. In a letter to his wife, Paul explains a dream he had, 'I had a dream. I left my ship, took a room ... didn't know why ... and waited ... I dreamed that the town was white and so was everything else'. In this 'white' city Paul loses his old identity(ies) - those associated with Switzerland, and with the sea; his identity is literally rubbed out 'whited out' and he looks for something new.

The film is also the depiction of the experience of one man, although Tanner saw that as less important than the exploration of physical reality. Or perhaps one could even say the experiences of two men, since Tanner is quite open and specific about the links between

the character and himself. This film is more overtly subjective and autobiographical than any of the others. Tanner was in the merchant navy, albeit thirty years before. 'The whole film has come out of my memories - to love two women at the same time ... to lock myself up in a hotel room for a week with nothing to do ... all this I know about ... I didn't actually leave my ship in a foreign port but I'm always deserting everything in life. I just do it intellectually rather than practically'.[33] Tanner also relates his fascination for the sea, his feeling of being at home on the sea, in ports, in docks. The sea, to Paul, is not 'nothingness' not 'nowhere', but a whole culture to which he belongs. He leaves his ship, confronts new and unknown regions - both geographically, and in himself. The film's director is doing the same thing. It is significant to note that after the success of <u>Light Years Away</u> at Cannes in '81, Tanner had a massive heart attack, major open heart surgery and these experiences must be seen as linked to the film of a man 'dropping out' of his old world, exploring his own identity, and a man who has an urgent sense of the material world about him. Paul 'describes' his state/surroundings in Super-8, Tanner in 35 mm. Paul's words, in his letters, are faltering but his images on film are eloquent. The Super-8 film is very direct and gives the impression of 'raw' reality. The pictures are often jerky, the effect is one of documentary. Paul films himself, the docks, holiday snap type pictures, the streets, the trams, cobbles, the sea. He films Rosa for a few brief seconds; she enters his room and asks what he will do, and he replies he will make a 'love film', and he films her laughing, beautiful now, a changed woman from the one seen at the beginning of the film. This film Paul plays back to himself in his despair after Rosa has left.

There is in fact a constant 'rub' between the 8 mm and the 35 mm films. Lardeau in <u>Cahiers</u> points to the what he terms the 'severity'

and 'coolness' of the 35 mm as against the 'rawness' of the 8 mm.[34]
Right at the end, Tanner openly acknowledges the link between himself
and his character; Paul, on a train home, sees two women, one old, the
other young and beautiful. His attention is captured by the young
girl, and the image of the girl suddenly changes to an 8 mm one,
despite the fact that he has pawned his camera in order to raise the
fare home. 'At this point there is something of an osmosis between the
character in the film and myself. Paul looks at the woman through a
sort of imaginary camera - she embodies the thousands of women he'd
like to have in his life ... it's almost myself ... I have the camera,
he doesn't.'[35] Paul has, or had, a stable relationship with his
wife, an immediate and transitory relationship with Rosa. Now, seeing
this new woman, a question is raised as to whether he will actually
return home...

Dans la ville blanche has also obviously some links with the
earlier films, most notably with Retour d'Afrique; the sense of the
weight of time for example, of isolation and alienation from an
environment, is very reminiscent of the earlier film. In the
relationship between Paul and Rosa, one finds echoes of that earlier
relationship across cultures in Le Milieu du monde. Camera motifs in
Dans la ville blanche recall the earlier film; for example the scene
where Paul and Rosa newly 'discover' one another, their backgrounds, a
developing love. Paul and Adriana's beginning relationship is
expressed by the camera in the same way, sliding from Paul to Adriana
and back again as they talk about themselves. The shot of the train
moving across the flat landscape taking Paul away from Lisbon is very
similar to the shot in Middle of the World where Adriana leaves on a
train, leaving Paul behind.

However, it is clear that the focus of Tanner's work has by this
stage of his career, shifted. The heavy and often schematic weight of

theory that overlay the earlier films, and from which boundaries those films in practice 'escaped', is gone with Light Years Away and Dans la ville blanche. The focus is elsewhere, most particularly on the image, on material/physical things. Tanner still refuses to produce what he terms the easily consumed copy of mainstream films, e.g. in camera, in narrative form; he is still out to create films that are at odds with major European and Amercian products which he sees as compromised at all levels. An anecdote of a conversation with Lindsay Anderson aptly sums up his position. 'Anderson asks "Are you still making Free Cinema?" I always say Yes!... because I'm still trying to make the film the way I want to, not to enter the film 'business' and work on films everyone else can do.'[36]

At the end of Dans la ville blanche, Paul leaves Lisbon to return back and face known territory; Tanner correspondingly returns 'home' (despite his previous statements) to his own precise locality, for his next and most recent film No man's land (1985), set on the French/Swiss border in the Jura just north of Geneva. One looks in this film for a third chapter, a third phase perhaps in Tanner's films, but what we encounter is most noticeably linked to what we have termed the first phase of his film making, i.e. 1969-76, and to a lesser degree offers some links with the second phase of 1978-83. Whilst No man's land is an enjoyable and thought provoking film, and often beautiful to look at, one notes a 'retrospective' quality about it rather more than an advance or a breaking new ground.

No man's land is a geographic area - the actual 'space' between France and Switzerland in the Jura mountains - a long and in most places very remote frontier. This is the place of the action of Tanner's film, and like the middle of the world before it, it acts as a symbol. The place is symbolic in No man's land of being 'nowhere', neither in one culture, or another, a symbol for the character's having

spiritually 'left' the area, yet not having arrived somewhere else. Most of the characters in this film are in stalemate. An amusing anecdote underlines the idea; Paul takes a hitch-hiker who has no papers, from France to Switzerland; she is refused entry into Switzerland - they drive back to the French border police and are denied entry! They are literally in no man's land, in the space, and Paul has to help her cross illegally, at night. These scenes have to be read as allegory, and they recall situations as far back as La Salamandre when Paul and Pierre are 'lost in the forest'. The area of the Middle of the World is also a border in a sense, a flat area where north and south meet, an area of stalemate and normalisation, a suitable area for Paul Chamoret who does not want to/and cannot change. The emphasis in No man's land is however on crossing the border/getting over/arriving 'somewhere else'. The criminal acts, smuggling, outwitting the police, can be read as symbolic efforts on the part of the characters to break free of trammels and restrictions. As Madeleine comments ruefully at 4 a.m. when she wants to go to bed yet everyone else wants to dance, 'everyone wants to be somewhere else'. Paul, obssessed with his feelings of frustration and stalemate in his home on the French side of the border, dreams of Canada, of vast spaces and of flying; Madeleine dreams of being a singer in Paris; the friend who runs the café, of escaping her roots; Mali, an Algerian factory worker, feels stifled and needs to move on. Mali has lost her roots - though she often talks with nostalgia of them, of her father, of her home, of her expectations had she been in that society still. She is an alien, and like Emilio in Retour she is persecuted and exemplifies the problems of leaving one's own culture in search of something else. The only character who wants to stay, who finds happiness or at least a retreat in the farms and pastures of the area, is a redundant worker

from the watch-making industry, Jean. All the others are poised for flight.

These characters clearly relate back to earlier Tanner characters; the forerunner of Paul is Vincent - also stifling in Switzerland, railing against words, _doing_ nothing, in effect in stalemate. Vincent finds his solution 'at home' but Paul is shot on his last passage with illegal goods across the border. Jean recalls Marcel Certoux; both men love animals and nature and distrust people. Madeleine - with the same name in No man's land and the same actress as in Jonas, Myriam Mezières - dreams of flight, as the earlier Madeleine always dreamed of exotic trips to the east. Yet the characters of No man's land are clearly different from earlier ones in that they find no creative solutions where they live. The characters in Jonas for example create a space to live in, within, albeit on the margins, of the social circle. Here the concern is only with flight, and the characters are 'outside the circle' in so far as they are criminals. As criminals, they are ineffective at changing anything in the system. A further difference is that they do not operate creatively as a group - there is no convivial, no group sense, no sense of changing things in general for the better. We are looking at individual attempts at solutions. They have a common awareness of their situation; it is symbolised by their smuggling password 'le poule gris est sourd et aveugle'. This indicates not just a jibe at the border police, but a fundamental state of being of most people who are unaware of their situation. The redundant worker denies that this applies to him. However after his last crossing, when Paul is killed and he escapes, he asks his aunt and uncle (in effect his elders) for 'answers' to all this, for reasons and explanations. He then in defiance chases, kills and eats the 'poule sourde et aveugle', a clear indication he will stay and dismiss thought and uncertainty.

The love of, and exploration of, characters is central to <u>No man's land</u> and signals a return to the 'first phase' of Tanner's films. The characters in this film have a schematic dimension, being 'quatre petites métaphores du temps présent',[37] yet they are more rounded, harking back more to the characters of the pre-<u>Jonas</u> days. It is notable that the opening shots of the film are like shots from a Free Cinema film, close-ups of faces, talking about their fears and hopes, direct to camera, in an interview style. These characters are again wordy, they can and do discuss and grapple verbally with their own situations. The smaller characters however are unlike the schematic parodies of the earlier films; the girl who Paul helps cross the border for example is not a stereotype. The nearest Tanner approaches to one of his earlier stereotyped reactionary 'nasties' is the redundant worker's uncle who rails at him for not getting a job and 'sorting himself out'. Roger Jendly's amusing border guard who delights in thwarting the 'rich pig' in the Mercedes, is more reminiscent of the small humorous cameos of character (e.g. Vladimir in <u>La Salamandre</u>) that we have seen Tanner delight in creating before.

Characters and ideas are once again more important for Tanner than story. 'Je ne suis pas un raconteur d'histoire. Mon projet est d'inventer pour mes personnages des bouts de destin, des désirs ... puis de les faire se rencontrer ... se croiser ... s'observer ce qui arrive.'[38] As in earlier films, one notes a 'weighting' of events that is unrelated to their importance as far as the story is concerned. We see and watch for several minutes a character on his bicycle (this recalls Hermes in <u>Retour</u>), yet important narrative events are skimped or missed out altogether. As in <u>Le Milieu du monde</u>, the shots of setting interrupt and punctuate any narrative flow. There is no suspense, despite the fact that a police net is closing around the characters.

The great emphasis placed on the beauty of the physical setting in No man's land is more reminiscent of Light Years Away and Dans la ville blanche.   The camera looks long at the landscape, in static shots, at mists over the fields, at the moon and the clouds, or it lingers on rivers or fields, long after the characters have moved out of the frame. It is as if the discourse of the director is reasserting the values of Light Years Away, yet his characters are restless and poised for flight. There is in effect no 'message' coming from the characters, and the film has been criticised at this level. Tanner's comment on this criticism is that 'Je veux vous raconter que je n'ai plus rien à raconter parce que vous ne me dites plus rien'.[39] If there are any positives to be found in No man's land they are to be found in the different 'way of seeing' the shots of the physical environment, and as we have indicated, in a continuing love of and exploration of characters.

CHAPTER 8 - FOOTNOTES

1. L. Rubenstein, 'Keeping Hope for Radical Change Alive: an interview with Alain Tanner', <u>Cinéaste</u>, 7:4 (1976), p. 25.

2. M. Tarantino, 'Alain Tanner: after Jonah', <u>Sight and Sound</u> (Winter 1978-9), p. 41.

3. Ibid., p. 42.

4. Ibid.

5. C. Devarrieux, 'Les Signes de l'étouffement; entretien avec le cinéaste Alain Tanner à propos de "Messidor"', <u>Le Monde</u> (15.3.79).

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. S. Toubiana, 'Messidor', <u>Cahiers du cinéma</u> (Apr. 1979), p. 48.

9. P. Defrance, 'Interview with A. Tanner', <u>L'Avant-scène du cinéma</u>, 270 (Jun. 1981), p. 5.

10. Devarrieux, 'Les Signes de l'étouffement'.

11. C. Vallon, 'Messidor', <u>24 Heures</u> (Spring 1979).

12. D. Malcolm, 'Tanner finds a better way to fly', <u>Guardian</u> (7.1.82).

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. H. Guibert, 'Interview with A. Tanner', <u>Le Monde</u> (21.5.81).

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Malcolm, 'Tanner finds a better way to fly'.

19. Defrance, 'Interview', p. 5.

20. From the script of the film, <u>L'Avant-scène du cinéma</u>, 270 (Jun. 1981), p. 16.

21. Script, p. 44.

22. Defrance, 'Interview', p. 6.

23. Script, p. 46.

24. V. Amiel, 'Discours de l'envolée', <u>Positif</u>, 244-45 (Jul.-Aug. 1981), pp. 118-9.

25. G. Millar, 'Light Years Away', <u>Listener</u>, 107:2743 (14.1.82).

26. Malcolm, 'Tanner finds a better way to fly'.

27. Defrance, 'Interview', p. 7.

28. Y. Alion, 'Entretien avec A. Tanner', <u>Revue du Cinéma</u> (Sept. 1985), p. 37.

29. M. Auty, 'A Man Condemned to Stifle has Escaped', <u>Monthly Film Bulletin</u>, 598 (Nov. 1983), p. 316.

30. Ibid.

31. T. Pulleine, 'In the White City', <u>Sight and Sound</u>, 53:1 (Winter 1983-4), p. 5.

32. A. Sutherland, 'In the White City', <u>Screen International</u>, 418 (Jan. 1983), p. 268.

33. M. Ford, 'An Interview with A. Tanner', <u>Time Out</u>, 687 (Oct. 1983), p. 30.

34. Y. Lardeau, 'Lisbonne, symphonie d'une ville', <u>Cahiers du cinéma</u>, 346 (Apr. 1983), p. 44.

35. P. Pawlikowski, 'Dans la Ville blanche', <u>Stills</u> (Jul.-Aug. 1983), p. 76.

36. Pulleine, 'In the White City', p. 5.

37. Alion, 'Entretien avec Alain Tanner', p. 37.

38. Ibid., p. 36.

39. Ibid.

CHAPTER 9 - CONCLUDING STATEMENT

This examination of the work of Alain Tanner has revealed a film making practice that is highly individual and one that has been forged from a marriage of elements derived from apparently conflicting traditions. We have isolated and discussed a realist tradition in film that has, as its main focus, the work of the Italian neo-realist directors during the period from 1940-55. The impact of this tradition can be seen on the work of the directors of the French New Wave and on the Free Cinema Movement in England and Cinéma Vérité in France. Tanner has been shown to have a complicated and continuing debt to this particular realist tradition.

Looking outside this tradition, the influence of Brecht on Tanner's work has been discussed and, in the detailed analyses of the five films produced between 1969-1976, a shifting and very individual practice of distanciation has been uncovered. Also, in contrast to the realist tradition, Tanner's work must be seen to stand in relation to the climate of structuralist thought that was dominant in the '60s and '70s when these films were being made, and in particular to the radical film theory that emerged in the wake of May 1968.

From the close analyses of the films made between 1969 (<u>Charles mort ou vif</u>) and 1976 (<u>Jonas qui aura 25 ans en l'an 2000</u>), Tanner's theory of film was seen to be markedly influenced by radical film theory, although his filmic practice was noted to be often more conventional and less avant-garde than such theory would lead us to suppose. With his insistent theory, it has also been noted that he tends to underplay other strong and notable qualities in his work, namely the warmth, humour and lyricism that naturally abound in his films. We have also uncovered a basic tendency towards allegory and fable that runs all through his work from <u>Charles mort ou vif</u> onwards,

becoming much stronger in <u>Jonas</u>, and reaching its high point in the mythic dimension of <u>Light Years Away</u>. It is however, during the period of 1969-76 that Tanner evolved the strategy of using a mix of conventional and deconstructed procedures in his films. It has been shown to be due to this tension of opposing forces, a resting in the camp of neither, a critique in fact of both, that Tanner can maintain an audience, which for radical film makers, must be a question of first importance. His is a cinema that is honest with regard to cinematic procedures, yet very realistic about how far and how fast audiences can and are prepared to go. It is due to this same tension that Tanner does not lose himself in considerations of purely aesthetic questions, but tackles also important social and political issues. As Sylvia Harvey puts it 'if there is a sense in which modernism offers the only way forward, there is also a sense in which it constitutes a dead end, a graveyard. Only those who pass through it can learn from it; the rest remain buried within it.'[1]

If the years beteen 1969 and 1976 were years of clear progression and creative achievement, the picture for Alain Tanner's film making in the 1978-85 period is more mixed. <u>Messidor</u> is a film of stalemate. It has backward looking elements in terms of its work on the language. It is equally a film of bitter stalemate and depression in terms of its contribution to the issues raised. In contrast, we have seen that <u>Light Years Away</u> and <u>Dans la ville blanche</u> are both films of new and exciting departures, <u>Dans la ville blanche</u> being especially a work of great quality. It is disappointing therefore to note the apparent retrospective quality of <u>No man's land</u>, Tanner's latest film, a film that does not appear to be breaking new ground.

If one thinks of the retrospectiveness of <u>No man's land</u> as being a very dominant feature of it, this observation is matched by Tanner's view that his sort of cinema, in effect a 'cinéma d'auteur', is a

cinema very much in crisis. He sees his politicised public of ten years ago as being dispersed. More importantly he worries about today's relative lack of discourse. As a result of this, <u>No man's land</u> has no 'message'. The 'cinéma d'auteur' is after all, a cinema of discourse, and Tanner remarks that 'le discours est difficile à faire aujourd'hui ... j'écoute ... je fais mes films à l'année sur que j'entends et sur ce que cela me suscite comme désir de fiction et j'ai beaucoup de mal'.[2] As Martin Auty remarked dismally, Alain Tanner may be one of an 'endangered species'.[3] This must be a matter of great concern to his remaining audience and to those who remain, in spirit or in practice, 'frontalières', to use Marco Perly's term. In a culture that tends always towards homogeneity, this present work, which could perhaps be termed a work of 'modest conversation', wishes Alain Tanner well in his important and delicately balanced enterprise.

CHAPTER 9 - FOOTNOTES

1.   S. Harvey, <u>May '68 and Film Culture</u>, (B.F.I., 1978), p. 82.

2.   Y. Alion, 'Entretien avec A. Tanner', <u>Revue du cinéma</u> (Sept. 1985), p. 37.

3.   M. Auty, 'A Man Condemned to Stifle has Escaped', <u>Monthly Film Bulletin</u>, 598 (Nov. 1983), p. 316.

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ALAIN TANNER: SELECTED FILMOGRAPHY

NICE TIME 1956.   In collaboration with Claude Goretta

Production: British Film Institute.   Experimental Production Committee.
Direction: Tanner and Goretta
Sound: John Fletcher
Music: Chas McDevitt
Editing: Tanner and Goretta
B/W. 17 min. 16 mm.

Special mention Venice Film Festival, Experimental Film Category. 1957
UK Distributor: B.F.I. Distribution Library

Between 1964 and 1969 Tanner worked on 40 programmes for Swiss
Television (S.S.R.) including Dr B. médecin de campagne (1968).

RAMUZ, PASSAGE D'UN POETE 1961.

Production: Actua Films
Direction: Tanner
Photography: F. Reymond and A. Porchet
Music: J. Olivier
Narration: Read by A. Pache
B/W. 27 min. 35 mm.

LES APPRENTIS 1964.

Production: Teleproduction, Walter Marti
Direction: Tanner
Script: Tanner
Photography: Ernest Artaria
Music: Victor Fenigstein
Editing: Tanner
B/W. 81 min.

UNE VILLE A CHANDIGARH 1966.

Production: Tanner and E. Artaria
Direction: Tanner
Script: Tanner and John Berger
Narration: Berger
Photography &
  Sound: E. Artaria
Music: Classical Indian Music
Colour. 51 min. 16 mm.

CHARLES MORT OU VIF (**CHARLES DEAD OR ALIVE**) 1969.

Production:	Groupe 5 (Geneva) in collaboration with Swiss Television (SSR).
Direction & Script:	Tanner
Photography:	Renato Berta
Music:	Jacques Olivier
Editing:	Sylvia Bachmann
B/W. 92 min.	16 mm blown up to 35 mm.
Cost:	120.000 Sfr.
Cast:	François Simon (Charles Dé); Marcel Robert (Paul : Marie-Claire Dufour (Adeline); André Schmidt (Pierre Dé); Maya Simon (Marianne Dé)

Selected for the Semaine de la Critique, Festival de Cannes, 1969.
GRAND PRIX at Locarno Festival in 1969
GRAND PRIX at Festival of San Antonio, Texas, 1969

Released in Paris January 1970
No UK Distributor

LA SALAMANDRE (**THE SALAMANDER**) 1971.

Production:	Svocine (Geneva)
Direction:	Tanner
Script:	Tanner and John Berger
Photography:	Renato Berta
Sound:	Marcel Sommerer
Music:	Patrick Moraz
Editing:	Brigitte Sousselier
B/W. 123 min.	16 mm blown up.
Cost:	120,000 Sfr
Cast:	Bulle Ogier (Rosemonde); Jean-Luc Bideau (Pierre); Jacques Denis (Paul); Véronique Alain (Suzanne); Marblum Jéquier (La Femme de Paul)

Prize, Federal Department of Interior
Presented at la Quinzaine des Réalisateurs du Festival de Cannes 1971

Released in Paris, October 1971
UK Distributor: Connoisseur Films

LE RETOUR D'AFRIQUE (RETURN FROM AFRICA) 1973.

Production: Tanner with Groupe 5 and Swiss Television (SSR).
                  Filmantrope. V.M. Productions. C.E.C.R.T. Paris.
Direction: Tanner
Script: Tanner
Photography: Renato Berta
Sound: Marcel Sommerer
Music: J.S. Bach (orchestration Arié Dzierlatka)
Editing: Brigitte Sousselier
B/W. 113 min.   16 mm blown up to 35 mm.

Cast: Josée Destroop (Françoise : François Marthouret
                  (Vincent); Roger Ibanez (Emilio); Roger Jendly (Marcel;
                  Juliet Berto, Anne Wiazemsky (post office workers

Prize, Federal Department of Interior
Prix du Jury oecuménique, Festival de Berlin 1973

UK Distributor: Cinegate

LE MILIEU DU MONDE (THE MIDDLE OF THE WORLD) 1974.

Production: Citel Films (Geneva) & Action Films (Paris)
                  Yves Peyrot and Yves Gasser
Direction: Tanner
Script   Tanner and John Berger
Photography: Renato Berta
Sound: Pierre Gamet
Music: Patrick Moraz
Editing: Brigitte Sousselier
Colour. 115 min. 35 mm.

Cast: Olimpia Carlisi (Adriana); Philippe Léotard (Paul);
                  Juliet Berto (Juliette); Denise Perron (Mme Schmidt);
                  Jacques Denis (Marcel); Roger Jendly (Roger).

UK Distributor: Artificial Eye

JONAS QUI AURA 25 ANS EN L'AN 2000 (JONAH WHO WILL BE 25 IN THE YEAR 2000) 1976.

Production: Citel Films (Geneva) & Action Films (Paris
                 Yves Peyrot and Yves Gasser
Direction: Tanner
Script: John Berger and Tanner
Photography: Renato Berta
Sound: Pierre Gamet
Music: Jean-Marie Sénia
Editing: Brigitte Sousselier, Marc Blavet
Colour. 110 min. 35 mm.

Cast: Jean-Luc Bideau (Max); Myriam Boyer (Mathilde : Jacques
                 Denis (Marco); Roger Jendly (Marcel); Dominique
                 Labourier (Marguerite); Myriam Mezières (Madeleine):
                 Miou-Miou (Marie); Rufus (Mathieu): Raymond Bussières
                 (Charles)

Prize, Federal Department of Interior

UK Distributor: Contemporary Films

1977 Collaboration and Anne-Marie Miéville and Loretta Verna on a 5 week experimental series for the S.S.R. called Ecouter Voir (1977)

MESSIDOR 1979.

Production: Action Films Gaumont (Paris) & Citel Films (Geneva)
                 Yves Peyrot and Yves Gasser
Direction: Tanner
Script: Tanner
Photography: Renato Berta
Music: Arié Dzierlatka
Colour. 120 min. 35 mm.

Cast: Clémentine Amoureux (Jeanne); Catherine Retoré (Marie)

Prize awarded by Federal Department of the Interior
GRAND PRIX, Festival de Lima (1980)

UK Distributor: Contemporary Films

LIGHT YEARS AWAY (**LES ANNEES LUMIERES**) 1981

Production: L.P.A., Phenix and Slotint (Paris)/SSR (Geneva)
Direction: Tanner
Script: Tanner, based on La Voie Sauvage by Daniel Odier
Photography: J. F. Robin
Editing: Brigitte Sousselier
Music: Arié Dzierlatka
Colour. 105 min. 35 mm.

Cast: Trevor Howard (Yoska); Mick Ford (Jonah); Bernice
                Stegers (Betty); Odile Schmidt (dancer); Joe Pilkington
                (Thomas)

Prize awarded by Federal Department of Interior
GRAND PRIX du Jury, Festival de Cannes, 1981

UK Distributor: Artificial Eye

DANS LA VILLE BLANCHE (**IN THE WHITE CITY**) 1983

Production: Filmograph (Geneva)/Metro Filme (Lisbon)
Direction: Tanner
Script: Tanner
Photography: Acacio de Almeida
Editing: Laurant Uhler
Music: J. Luc Barbier
Colour. 108 min. 35 mm.

Cast: B. Ganz (Paul); Tereza Madruga (Rosa); Julia Vonderlinn
                (Elisa); José Carvalho (Le Patron); Francisco Baiao (Le
                Voleur).

Prize, Federal Department of Interior

UK Distributor: Contemporary Films

NO MAN'S LAND 1985.

Production: Companies Filmograph (Geneva) MK2 Prod. (Paris) with
                WDR/Film on Four International/TV Swiss Romande/Films A2
Producers: Tanner, Marin Karmitz
Script: Tanner
Photography: (Eastman Colour) Bernard Zitzermann
Editing: Laurant Uhler
Colour. 110 min. 35 mm.

Cost: 1,500,000 Sfr (100,000 Sfr came from Ville de Genève)

Cast: Hugues Quester (Paul); M. Mézières (Madeleine);
                Jean-Philippe Escoffey (Jean); Betty Berr (Mali);
                Marie-Luce Felber (Lucie)

UK Distributor: B.F.I. Distribution Department.