FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT

Cinema as an Act of Love

An Intertextual Approach

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"The film of tomorrow will be an act of love."

—François Truffaut

In memory of my mother and father, whose spirits were with me while writing this book.

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Prologue

François Truffaut - Cinema as an Act of Love derives from an extensive study of Truffaut's films and constitutes an expanded version of the Hebrew book *François Truffaut - The Man Who Loved Films* published by *Hakibbutz Hameuhad*, The Porter Institute for Poetics and Semiotics, Tel Aviv University, and Sapir College in 2006. The book is based on my doctoral dissertation, "Cinematic Intertextuality and the Films of François Truffaut," written under the supervision of Professor Ziva Ben-Porat and Professor Michal Freedman and submitted to Tel Aviv University in December 2001. Since then, I continue to study Truffaut's films, and their intertextuality, both for my own research and as a teacher and dissertation supervisor of students studying Truffaut's films.

My acquaintance with Truffaut's films began more than 40 years ago, as an enchanted viewer. As a film student and later, as a filmmaker, I found his work instructional and illuminating. My familiarity with his cinematic oeuvre has evolved over my thirty-year career as a teacher of film studies. In twenty years of research, I have viewed each Truffaut film dozens of times and I find them ceaselessly enjoyable and fulfilling. Each viewing reveals added nuances and increasingly complex dimensions in terms of content and the original manner in which he confronts cinematic poetics.

The unique nature of such an innovative and wide-ranging filmmaker as Truffaut is difficult to encapsulate, and it is impossible to express the "bottom line" on such a complex long-term research project. I believe that Truffaut's uniqueness and special, powerful cinema is expressed, among other things, by the fact that his films address two levels simultaneously. On the one hand, one finds a mildly experienced simplicity that allows most viewers, even nonprofessionals, to follow the plot and enjoy Truffaut's virtuosity as a dramatic, moving, humorous, and humane storyteller without feeling that they've failed to grasp the filmmaker's intentions. On another level, most of his films are complex masterpieces that address profound issues, complicated interrelationships, tangled passions, and multi-faceted characters. Truffaut's power and distinctive portrayals of nuanced complexity are inherent to his wide-ranging ability to alternate between emotional and stylistic tones effortlessly and naturally.

Concurrently, his films, for the most part, were innovative for their time, undermined cinematic norms, and defined numerous innovations, the sum of which constituted a significant contribution to the development of cinematic language during the nineteen-sixties and seventies. Combining these two seemingly contradictory levels awards Truffaut a place in the small group of innovative humanistic filmmakers that includes Charlie Chaplin, Billy Wilder, Ernst Lubitsch, and Vittorio De Sica. It was these dual features that led me in the choices I made in adapting my doctoral thesis into this book. On the one hand, I felt the importance of preserving the references to as many relevant sources as possible, as well as to the intertextual theories prevalent in semiotic literary criticism, an indispensable element in developing the tools necessary to illuminate the depth, complexity, and innovation of Truffaut's films. On the other hand, in my desire to remain faithful to Truffaut's style, I refrain from including cumbersome quotations to provide clear, simple summaries of the relevant theories. *Cinema as an Act of Love* divides into four sections. Part I constructs the historical and cultural context of Truffaut's oeuvre and includes a short review of his biography, which plays a central part in his films; a review of his filmography, and finally, an analysis of the manner in which he internalized his cultural background. Part II relates to the theoretical grid on which I base my interpretations of Truffaut's films; it is research-oriented and contains a wide range of academic information, explained in as straightforward a manner as possible. Part III, the heart of the book, as it were, is dedicated to the discussion and interpretation of eleven major films from Truffaut's corpus. Part IV includes appendices that summarize the quantitative aspects of the research and examine its conclusions in light of the study's original goals. And lastly, this section includes a detailed filmography, bibliography and indices.

Cinema as an Act of Love is a book for viewers who are interested in and love Truffaut's films, including those viewers less practiced in reading academic or theoretical texts. Anyone interested in understanding why Truffaut's films are so moving and enjoyable, why he influences so many filmmakers, or why he has become one of the most important filmmakers of the twentieth century will find many of the answers in *Cinema as an Act of Love*, as will film school students or scholars and researchers in the fields of cinema studies, literature, art or cultural studies. For consistency's sake, I use gender-specific nouns common for the time in which

Truffaut's film were made, and in no way does this stylistic choice claim gender bias. Readers will find a comprehensive and far-ranging analysis of a unique and significant cultural icon, a master of cinematic language, and a man of profound and expansive culture. To paraphrase a sentence from Truffaut's film, *Day for Night*, I hope you enjoy reading the book as much as I enjoyed writing it.

PART I

FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT

From Life to Cinema

From Cinema to Life

"The film of tomorrow appears to me as even more personal than an individual and autobiographical novel, like a confession or a diary."

(Truffaut, 1978, (1975), p. 19)

Part II

Intertextuality

The Theoretical Discourse

"By encouraging me from 1953 on to write, Bazin did me a great favor. Having to analyze and describe one's pleasure may not automatically change an amateur into a professional, but it does lead one back to the concrete and… to that ill-defined area where the critic works."

(Truffaut, 1978, (1975), p. 5)

"You will certainly have noticed that the New York critics mention your name a great deal in their reviews. I think that in one sense it is quite justified because I do owe you a lot and in another sense unjustified because the story is in fact rather different from those which tend to interest you as a film maker."

Truffaut in a letter to Alfred Hitchcock following the release of *The Bride Wore Black* (Truffaut, 1990, p. 324)

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Defining the Intertextual Discourse

"Poets tend to think of themselves as stars because their deepest desire is to be an influence, rather than to be influenced, but even in the strongest, whose desire is accomplished, the anxiety of having been formed by influence still persists." (Bloom, 1975, p.12-13)

This quote concisely formulates Harold Bloom's theory regarding the psychological impulses that motivate artists. The lines from Truffaut's letter to Hitchcock, quoted above, may serve as an illustration of Bloom's approach. In order to analyze the influence artists have on one another in an intertextual context, we must first define and broaden the theoretical discourse, which makes discussion of this tool possible.

Intertextuality

Intertextuality is a concept that refers to all cases of simultaneous activation of two or more texts within the framework of a single text. For example, a person asked where his brother is who replies, "Am I my brother's keeper?" will immediately activate an associative mechanism connected to the biblical story of Cain and Abel. In this case, a simple and insignificant text activates a deeply significant text that grants the short reply an entirely new meaning. Here the term "text" follows the semiotic approach and refers to any closed system of signs (such as an image, for example, and not only linguistic text), including various types of codes, be they cultural, social or ideological.

Robert Stam characterizes this simultaneous activation of texts as referring to the modern approach as well as to the ancient source in which it is rooted:

The term, 'intertextuality' was first introduced as Julia Kristeva's translation of Mikhail Bakhtin's conception of the 'dialogic,' that is, the simultaneous presence, within a literary work, of two or more intersecting texts which mutually relativize one another. Bakhtin traces the dialogic back to the Socratic dialogues, with their staging of the contest of two competing discourses. … The literary word, according to Bakhtin, is aware of the presence of another literary word alongside it. Every text is what Kristeva calls a 'mosaic of citations' which absorbs and transforms other texts (Stam, 1992, p. 20).

Since Kristeva coined the term "intertextuality" in 1967, various schools of thought have evolved regarding the comprehension of the term and its application in textual interpretation. Despite the controversy surrounding the interpretive significance of intertextuality, the term has permeated and become deeply embedded in academic research, so much so that the researcher Ziva Ben-Porat determines:

Intertextual relationships are both the result and the generators of multi-system communications. Thus, one may assert that intertextuality is a necessary prerequisite in the interpretation of a given text, if not the basis of its existence, or, simply the very process of attributing meaning to the text (Ben-Porat, 1985, p. 170).

Ben-Porat has formulated the prevalent theory in modern intertextual research, whereby one cannot understand a text without relating to the context of a broad network of texts with which the interpreted text maintains a dialogue. In fact, the significance of a given text is to be found solely within a network of texts, which constitute an inseparable part of the original text. One may conclude that there are no closed texts that exist as whole, contained units, even when the text is circumscribed.

Intertext

An interpreted text, referred to as the main text or target text, is not a closed system. It activates additional texts which are called secondary texts or source texts. Each one of these secondary texts is an intertext. An intertextual reading of a work interprets the main text together with its intertexts—the secondary texts activated by the interpreted text. In order to identify an intertext, the main text must contain repetitions—in other words, repetitive usage of existing and familiar elements from the secondary text.

This reuse may appear in various forms and lead to a variety of intertextual meanings. Heinrich Plett distinguishes between different kinds of intertextuality, categorized by intertext type (Plett, 1991, p. 7). He opines that repetition of existing signs is possible, whether well-known, overused signs such as Christ on the cross, or unique fresh signs, such as a baby carriage rolling down a steep staircase, an image engraved in the collective memory from the Odessa Steps scene in Eisenstein's 1925 film *Battleship Potemkin*.

Plett calls cases such as these, in which the repetition is of signs, "material intertextuality," whereas a repetition of rules is classified as "structural intertextuality." Most film researchers, when addressing intertextuality, discuss some aspects of structural intertextuality, such as genre and remakes. At times one encounters repetitions of both signs and the system of rules in which the signs appear. This is known as material-structural intertextuality, Plett's third category. The significance of a film star's role, an issue studied by film researchers, is a classic example of material-structural intertextuality. The star's well-known visage is a repetition of a familiar sign, while the behavior of the character he is portraying adheres to repetitive rules. John Wayne's repeated appearances in Westerns are an example of this type of intertextuality. Wayne's physiognomy is the repeated sign, while his code of behavior adheres to repeated rules. Plett's first category – material intertextuality – has received little attention in film studies literature, limited to some discussion of the general term "homage." In light of the above, this book focuses on material intertextuality (Plett's first category) and material-structural intertextuality (Plett's third category).

Intertextual Categories

Choice versus Unavoidable Necessity

Ben-Porat distinguishes between linguistic and rhetorical intertextuality and postulates that Kristeva's approach, stating that "every text is to a certain extent a derived text and every sentence—a quotation" (Kristeva, 1968); (Ben-Porat, 1985, p. 171) distinctly represents linguistic intertextuality. Rhetorical intertextuality, on the other hand, is a deliberate aesthetic strategy whose distinctive representative is Michael Riffaterre (Riffaterre, 1978). While linguistic intertextuality is generally imperceptible because it is imbedded in the structure of the language and is therefore

not a matter of choice, rhetorical intertextuality in most cases is perceptible, because of the essential role of the intertext in filling the gaps in the text. When the director David Griffith first made use of close-ups in film, he changed the cinematic utterance. The fact that later filmmakers could not avoid the use of close-ups is an example of linguistic intertextuality, as understanding the significance of the close-ups in the interpretation of their films was not constituent on the identification of Griffith's first use of close-up. However, when the filmmaker Brian De Palma, in his 1987 film, *The Untouchables*, portrayed a baby carriage rolling down the stairs in the train station during a shootout between Mafia gangsters and FBI agents, identifying the scene as an allusion to the Odessa Steps scene in *Battleship Potemkin* grants a new interpretation to De Palma's scene, and is, therefore, an instance of rhetorical intertextuality.

Linguistic intertextuality constitutes an integral part of the cinematic utterance and is therefore unavoidable and inevitable, and automatically interpreted when analyzing film utterance. Rhetorical intertextuality, on the other hand, is unique, the product of choice, and the intertexts must be identified in order to interpret the text. Continuing from Riffaterre's approach, this study focuses principally on rhetorical intertextuality, interpretation of which enables us to explain Truffaut's choices both on the level of the text and on the level of the poetic whole.

The Bloomian Discourse

Harold Bloom's theory of the "anxiety of influence" refers to imaginary personal relationships between strong poets and focuses on the conflict between text and intertext, which is an expression, according to Bloom, of the oedipal conflict between a poet and his precursor. This unusual concept is central to this study, as the model proposed by Bloom is partially appropriate to a description of Truffaut's relations with his precursors, as well as to biographical aspects of his cinematic oeuvre. While Riffaterre's model limits itself mainly to the rhetoric of the single text, Truffaut employed intertextuality as a tool through which he developed his cinematic voice in relation to tradition, necessitating a Bloomian intertextual approach.

The Canon

One of the key terms in the Bloomian model is the "canon," a term frequently used in the study of literature but less common in film studies. As the term is highly significant both in Bloomian theory and with regard to Truffaut's works, I believe some clarification is apt at this point.

> Canon—from Lat. and Gr., a carpenter's rule, hence a standard (as 'the canons of criticism,' a model, an ordinance)…. Also the body of the books in the Bible which are accepted by the Christian Church generally as genuine and inspired; the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation, excluding the Apocrypha called also the 'sacred canon' and the 'canonical books' (Benét, 1950, p. 173).

Based on the above, canonical literature may be regarded as a literary collection which has undergone a process of acceptance by the establishment, a process that is linked to the relation between texts considered sacred by a given culture and new texts imparted with this status by the relevant authority. Thus, one may claim that canonical cinema is the collection of films considered sacred by a particular culture. The term "canon" implies a somewhat problematic underlying assumption, whereby cultures, in this case the literary and cinematic culture, are ruled by a higher authority that sanctifies works of art, similar to religious authorities.

The American film critic, Andrew Sarris introduced the term "pantheon" as an alternative to "canon" in his publications on the French New Wave.[1] The formation of a canon was central to Truffaut's films and to his earlier work as a critic, and since cinematic allusion served as an essential tool for the consolidation of this canon, Bloom's theory makes it possible to position Truffaut in cinematic history and to examine his position in the canon from a fresh perspective.

"The Anxiety of Influence" and "Misreading"

Bloom's books, *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) and *A Map of Misreading* (1975), contain several fundamental assumptions and central themes on which the Bloomian discourse is based and which will be discussed extensively in the following chapters.

Formulating Bloom's Thesis

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[1] Later sections will elaborate on the central role of the cinematic canon according to Truffaut, who together with his colleagues in the New Wave, rebelled against the old cinematic canon and consolidated an alternative cinematic canon.

According to Bloom, the fundamental problem in reading is that it is a belated act, which takes place in a broad context of writings that are familiar to both the writer and the reader. Reading is a belated act not only because of the obvious reason that everything has already been written about and there is nothing new under the sun, but also because of the ever-expanding chronological gap between the moment something was written and the moment it is read. All of the products of a culture produced within that gap alter the nature of the original work of art. The time lapse between writing and reading, which is, in itself, a variable, changes the reading of what has been written, as it is, into an impossible act. An act of reading will be seen as strong only when it is a misreading. Bloom's assertion, whereby a work of art changes with time resonates with Luis Borges' formulation in his story, Pierre Menard, Author of the Quixote:

> To compose the Quixote at the beginning of the seventeenth century was a reasonable undertaking, necessary and perhaps even unavoidable; at the beginning of the twentieth, it is almost impossible. It is not in vain that three hundred years have gone by, filled with exceedingly complex events. Amongst them, to mention only one, is the Quixote itself (Borges, *Labyrinths*, James E. Irby (translator), 1962, p.41-42).

Menard, as one may remember, "rewrites" the *Quixote* without changing a single word. In other words, repositioning the story within a different context is the factor that renews and alters the original.

Bloom postulates that the influence that works of art have on one another signifies that there are no texts, only interactions between texts. The influence-relation governs reading to the same degree that it governs writing; therefore, reading is actually "miswriting," and writing is "misreading." As Bloom put it: As literary history lengthens, all poetry necessarily becomes verse-criticism, just as all criticism, becomes prose-poetry" (Bloom, 1975, p.3).

Thus, Bloom formulates a discourse that faithfully expresses the simple fact that two people describing a film that they both saw, will tell two different stories, even though they are both trying to describe the original film accurately. The reason for this is that their descriptions contain their misreadings, which reflect their personal interpretations of the film.

The poet's greatest difficulty, according to Bloom, is that he was born too late—after the great artists whom he admires. Being born after one's precursors is not

coincidental—it is an innate quality of human development, both physically and culturally. Just as a child is inevitably born after its father, every poet since Homer has been born into a previously existing cultural context. This reality, which is fundamental to the emergence of any given culture, leads to poets' obsessive involvement in issues of influence and the origin of their work, exactly as every human being takes an interest in his origins, as part of defining his identity. Since poets long to influence others rather than be influenced by others, they are in a state of constant anxiety regarding their originality, or as Bloom puts it, they suffer from the anxiety of influence. Poets maintain a constant struggle with the great poets who preceded them, a struggle that Bloom calls "wrestling with the greatest": "Poetic strength comes only from a triumphant wrestling with the greatest of the dead" (Bloom, 1975, p.9). According to Bloom, this wrestling is necessary for the perception of artistic value. Wrestling with the greatest of one's precursors is defined as a necessary prerequisite to achieving artistic greatness. Thus, we have a criterion for the definition of a canon and a formulation of the manner in which canons develop historically. Beginning at the dawn of the civilization that defined the first of the greatest—the Bible and Greek mythology in Western culture—an inherent prerequisite for inclusion in the canon was this wrestling with the greatest of the past and with those who had wrestled with them and so on, leading to contemporary artists. Thus, Bloom addresses the psychological motives that lead to the formation of an artistic act and their influence on the final product. In the Bloomian discourse, a poem is never about subject nor about itself; it is always about another poem:

> A poem is a response to a poem, as a poet is a response to a poet, or a person to his parent. Trying to write a poem takes the poet back to the origins of what a poem first was for him, and so takes the poet back beyond the pleasure principle to the decisive initial encounter and response that began him (Bloom, 1975, p.18).

At this point Bloom equates the artistic experience with a primal experience of self-discovery. Since experiences such as these are renewed and associated with various works of art at certain stages of one's development, every artist or reader has certain works of art that he had experienced, including initial reading experiences. Therefore, during the process of his artistic development, an adult artist is likely to long to reproduce this process several times in relation to several different works of art.

Coping with Precursors, Denial Mechanisms

The anxiety of influence constitutes an obstacle in the way of the poet in finding and individualizing his voice opposite his artistic fathers and frequently poses an actual threat to his writing ability. In order to overcome this difficulty, Bloom asserts that the poet must deny the existence of the influence, just as a son denies his oedipal relationship with his father and is therefore unaware of its existence. Thus, the poet is unaware of his anxiety or his relations with his poetic father, and in order to ensure the continuing endurance of his denial, he must develop various denial mechanisms. The fact that his poetic precursors predate the poet, or that the poet is "late," so to speak, leads to his being "not so much a man speaking to men as a man rebelling against being spoken to by a dead man (the precursor) outrageously more alive than himself" (Bloom, 1975, p.19).

In contrast to the view that sees the artistic act as a dialogue between an artist and a living audience, Bloom defines the artistic act as a dialogue with the past. This definition augments the role of intertextuality and accords it the status of a necessary, if not an exclusive tool, in the interpretation of a work of art. In order to survive as an artist, the poet must misconstrue the oeuvre of his poetic father. The act of misreading constitutes a process of rewriting the father's work, and plays a central role in the poet's construction of a denial mechanism, an indispensable part of the artistic act. The significance of misreading, according to Bloom, is that the poet is convinced that he understands his artistic father's intentions better than the father himself, the self-same artistic father who had originally had such an extensive influence on him. Alternatively, the poet may see himself as the first to dare to go beyond his artistic precursor's limitations, following in his footsteps but reaching new heights where his precursor had not dared, or had not been capable of treading.

The poet is convinced that his misreading is an artistic achievement that the "greatest" with whom he is wrestling could not have reached. In the Bloomian discourse, this victory in the struggle with the greatest is the source of the new work's poetic strength. Bloom compares the formation of an artist's identity to the crystallization of identity in personal development. Identity is formed following a revolt against one's parents, the point of origin, and the target of the revolt being the very source from which the artist sprung.

Bloom emphasizes the difference between the anxiety of influence and the anxiety of style, as a differing or even an opposing style is irrelevant to the identity of the father. On the contrary:

> Since poetic influence is necessarily misprision, a taking or doing amiss of one's burden, it is to be expected that such a process of malformation and misinterpretation will, at the very least, produce deviations in style between strong poets (Bloom, 1975, p.20).

Defining this distinction, Bloom is relating to the apparent paradox appearing when a poet adopts a style that opposes that of artists he dmires, a paradox wherein lies the psychological explanation of the dynamics that necessitate the renewal and alteration of an artistic act. Finally, Bloom states:

> I take the resistance shown to the theory by many poets, in particular, to be likely evidence for its validity, for poets rightly idealize their activity; and all poets, weak and strong, agree in denying any share in the anxiety of influence (Bloom, 1975, p.10).

Bloom formulates the simple fact that a son is unable to admit his oedipal relationship with his father. This assertion relates, *prima facie*, to the possibility of defending his theory in light of possible resistance, and defines its immunity to criticism, as any theoretical attack will serve as evidence of its validity. The role that Bloom accords to "misreading" and to the denial of influence is relevant to our discussion of Truffaut. In contrast to the Bloomian conception of denial, Truffaut seems to be highly aware of his precursors' influence and even turns the "anxiety of influence" and the act of "misreading" into a cinematic theme that he recurrently engages in.

The Bloomian Discourse: Summary

Bloom asserts that reading is a late act, which takes place with a broad context of texts that are familiar to both the writer and the reader. The act of reading is considered strong because it is actually "misreading." In other words, there are no stand-alone texts; there are only interactions between texts. The influence-relations that govern writing are realized in reading, which proves to be "miswriting." and in writing, which proves to be "misreading." Good poetry, according to Bloom, is always verse-criticism. And just as influential criticism is recognized as prose-poetry, poetic strength is recognized in the wrestling with the greatest of our artistic

forefathers. In the Bloomian discourse, this struggle is a necessary factor in the perception of artistic value. From this approach, Bloom derives his criteria for the definition of the canon and his conception of the tradition as a developing canon. Poems, in the Bloomian discourse, are neither about subjects nor about themselves, but necessarily about other poems. The poet does not speak to people; rather, he rebels against the continuous speaking of the dead poets to him—a speaking that possesses much more vitality than his own voice. Moreover, in contrast to the view that sees the artistic act as a dialogue between an artist and a living audience, Bloom defines the artistic act as a dialogue with the past. This definition augments the role of intertextuality and accords it the status of a necessary tool, if not an exclusive one. This struggle with the past causes the poet to misconstrue the oeuvre of his poetic father. The rewriting of the father plays a central role in the poet's construction of a denial mechanism towards the "anxiety of influence." A "strong" artist will develop various strategies that will allow him to "deviate" from his precursor's works and reach a point that the original artist had intended to reach but had failed. Thus, the new artist rewrites the previous work, or miswrites it, in Bloom's terms. This process leads the new writer to believe that he is the original artist who created the earlier work of art, more than having been influenced by it. Thus, he appropriates the earlier work of art. This psychological and rhetorical strategy allows the younger artist to deny the influence of his precursor while simultaneously, through a process of denial, retaining the spiritual significance of that influence as well as its creative implications. Bloom describes a dramatic battle of forces. Bloom postulates that a work of art cannot have one right interpretation. All interpretations are neither correct nor wrong—they are either strong or weak misreading. The role that Bloom accords to misreading and to the denial of influence is relevant to our discussion.

Despite the advantages mentioned of applying Bloom's theory to the study of Truffaut, this theory by itself is insufficient, principally because it does not give us tools to describe a rebellion that goes beyond the crystallization of the artist's identity, and also because our goal is to cast light on the revolution that Truffaut effected in the cinema. Furthermore, in Truffaut's case, his relations with many of the leading filmmakers, with whom he was wrestling, were not relationships with dead artists, as most of them were alive and working at the same time as he became a director, and indeed several were at the height of their careers. Moreover, as a filmmaker who started out as a film critic, Truffaut was highly aware of influence-relations, in

general, and particularly of the influence that the canonical filmmakers had on his work. This fact does not negate the possibility that he may have been in denial regarding certain aspects of the influence relationship, although the dualistic relationship between a high degree of awareness of influence and its suppressed aspects implies a complex phenomenon, which requires an investigative tool more sophisticated than the Bloomian.

The Bloomian Discourse – Virtues versus Limitations

One of the significant vulnerabilities in Bloom's theory is its preoccupation with the artist's psychological state, which often lures readers into a discussion centered on the artist rather than on the work of art. The Bloomian discourse seems to focus on the **why**—what were the artist's motives—rather than on the fundamental interpretive question of **what for**—what is the significance from the point of view of the audience. This theory seems to focus the discussion on the psychological factors that lead an artist to resonate an earlier text, instead of discussing the interpretive significance of the resonance of an earlier text in the original text.

Bloom's theory is highly significant in a discussion of Truffaut's films, particularly when adopting his discourse to illustrate four salient aspects:

1. The introduction of the term "misreading" in place of the overused term "homage," which has been used so frequently to denote cinematic references or quotations that it has become virtually meaningless and incorrect. When a critic chooses to define a film that refers to another film as a work of "homage," he is seemingly fulfilling his obligation to diagnosing what he saw, but actually preventing any discussion of the significance of the reference or of different types of references. The term "misreading," on the other hand, implies the existence of a conflict between reading and misconstruing; between admiration for an artistic precursor, implied by the term "homage" as well, and a rebellion against an artistic precursor, as implied by the "mis" in "misreading."

2. The significance granted by Bloom's theory to the process of finding one's voice and defining the identity of the artist, in light of the dominant influence of his artistic father, adds an important perspective to the discussion of the significance of an artistic revolution, of changes in cinematic language and the redesigning of innovative stylistic codes.

3. The term "appropriation" in the anxiety of influence theory facilitates observation of the process of appropriation of earlier works in new works of art.

4. The process of appropriation grants the appropriated works significant status in cases in which they are not yet considered canonical, and, at times, the appropriation increases the significance of the appropriating work of art. In

both cases, appropriation is a means of determining the contents of a canon, a subject frequently addressed by Truffaut.

The application of the Bloomian discourse, taking into account its limitations, and accommodating it to the study of film, will serve as a fruitful starting point for a refreshing discussion of Truffaut's films.

"Another interesting thing about the film is that, maybe for the first time, we are given a filmed critique of films. […] for the first time we are given deliberate citations from other directors, with the same frames, angles, and positions of the actors."
François Truffaut, writing in 1956 of Billy Wilder's 1955 film *The Seven Year Itch* (Truffaut, 1978, (1975), p.160).

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Cinematic Intertextuality:

Applying the Semiotic-Conceptual Framework

In applying the theoretical framework drawn from semiotics (the study of signs, symbols and signification) and literature to the cinema, it is important to distinguish between two different concepts: "intertextuality in cinema" and "cinematic intertextuality." Distinguishing between these two concepts is of the utmost importance in comprehending the relation between main texts and intertexts as well as the interpretive significance of intertextual occurrences of both types.

Intertextuality in cinema – This term refers to observation of all the phenomena that the theories of intertextuality relate to, where the text being studied is a film rather than a literary text, but the intertext is not necessarily a film. For example, this may refer to a cinematic text such as the Odessa Steps scene in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*, in which a mother carries her dead son in a manner that resonates with the *Pietà,* in which Mary carries the crucified Christ away from the cross. The cinematic text—*Battleship Potemkin*—makes use of an intertext from the fields of history and fine arts—the *Pietà.*

Cinematic intertextuality – This refers to the special case where both the text and the intertext are films or parts of films. For example, the scene in which the Mafia accountant is trapped on the stairs in the train station in De Palma's *The Untouchables* is a cinematic text that alludes to an intertext which is also from a film—the Odessa Steps scene in Eisenstein's *Battleship Potemkin*. This study focuses on this special case, although at times there are also references to intertexts from other cultural domains, such as literature, painting, music, and history.

The Status of Intertextuality in Cinema Studies Today'

Most of the studies dealing with intertextuality in cinema relate to linguistic intertextuality while rhetorical intertextuality is rarely and insufficiently addressed. Despite the importance of intertextuality, it is infrequently discussed and its ramifications have not received adequate treatment. Prevailing intertextual research deals with the language of cinema—with genres, remakes, motifs that navigate from one cinematic school to another, which means that it deals essentially with the transition of mechanisms of signification through more than one text, but not with the purpose and meaning of these mechanisms of signification or their effects on the viewer. Rhetorical intertextuality, which could explain these phenomena in the context of the cinematic communications situation, has not yet been thoroughly addressed in cinematic research. Cinematic quotations and allusions, when these are identified, are generally catalogued in the broad category of the "homage," without any treatment of their covert interpretative and poetic potential.

Truffaut and his New Wave colleagues, as filmmakers and as critics, possessed a historical awareness of the cinema as a developing language, an awareness that reinforces the methodological validity of the argument whereby cinematic intertextuality is an essential component in the optimal actualization of the interpretive potential of a cinematic text concealed within the works of the New Wave filmmakers.

A survey of traditional intertextual references in connection with the New Wave reveals a conspicuous lack of discussion of cinematic intertextuality. This lack is especially conspicuous in light of the status of reflexivity with New Wave filmmakers, both in theory and in practice.

An Overview of Intertextual Approaches in Cinema Studies

In his *Film Theory, An Introduction* (2000), Robert Stam provides a comprehensive overview of the history and current state of a wide range of cinematic theories. Under the title *From Text to Intertext*, Stam summarizes the state of cinematic intertextual research updated to the end of the twentieth century and describes the turning point after which intertextual studies began to develop:

> In one sense, the decline of the text as an object of study in the 1980s
> coincided with the ascendance of the intertext. Rather than focus on specific

films or single genres, intertextuality theory saw every text as related to other texts, and thus to an intertext (Stam, 2000, p. 201).

Stam clarifies that the literature virtually ignored intertextuality in cinema, in general, until the mid-1980s and particularly cinematic intertextuality.

Keith Reader published an article on intertextuality in cinema in 1990,[2] in which he compared the television adaptation of R.L. Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* to Jean Renoir's cinematic adaptation of the novel (*Le Testament du Docteur Cordelier*, 1959). The intertextual discussion becomes an inter-medium discussion, in which the wrestling of the greatest is not between great artists working in a common medium but between the cinema and its literary father, on the one hand, and its made-for-TV offspring on the other. Ultimately, Reader's article is about intertextuality in cinema, but rather than addressing cinematic intertextuality, it discusses hyper-textuality.[3]

Denis Turner, as opposed to Reader, concentrates solely on cinematic intertexts. In his study, *The Transformation of Genres in the Films of François Truffaut and J*ean-*Luc Godard* (1981), he relates to the Hollywood sources of influence that shaped the cinematic worlds of Godard and Truffaut and mentions the cinematic intertexts that formed this influence. Thus, for example, Turner quotes Leo Braudy, in referring to Truffaut's comments on his film, *Shoot the Piano Player*:

> I chose *Shoot the Piano Player* because I admired the author, David Goodis; perhaps you movie-lovers know his novel *Nightmare*, which became *Dark Passage*[4] starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall (Braudy, 1972, p. 134).

Turner claims that with this comment, Truffaut was rebutting the audience devoted to René Clair, a well-known French director from the early days of cinema, and actually defining himself as a member of the small, elite group of cineastes, or cinema addicts, who were familiar with marginal authors such as David Goodis and others whose names Truffaut was in the habit of mentioning nonchalantly. According to Turner, Truffaut was trying to lure his audience "into one of those tedious film-buff exchanges in which he and Godard had indulged so frequently that they became, in

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[2] *Literature/Cinema/Television*: Intertextuality in Jean Renoir's Le Testament du Docteur Cordelier (Worton & Still, 1990, p. 176-189)
[3] A term coined by Gerard Genette in 1982, which defines the relationship between a text and its adaptations or translations.
[4] Directed by Delmer Daves

the form of 'homage,' part of the New Wave style" (Turner, 1981, p. 127-128).
Turner further asserts:

> This deliberate snubbing of the average French filmmaker and special appeal to the 'real film nuts' was the act of young artists who had not yet found their own voices. It was as if Truffaut's first film, which had been the traditional young man's venture into subjective narrative, had not quite released him from his past (ibid., p. 127-128).

This statement of Turner's, regarding young artists who had not yet found their own voices, reveals his weak point. Turner totally ignores Bloom's theory, whereby an artist's voice is formed as a result of his "wrestling with the greatest" and coping with the voices of earlier masters. The fact that Turner ignores the Bloomian discourse is less disturbing than his ignoring the rebellion and innovation in Truffaut and Godard's early films, which constituted an investigation of the classic Hollywood genres. Turner postulates that they were imitating these genres and adapting them to French culture:

> Excluding *Jules and Jim* and *Stolen Kisses*, all of his early films were attempts to copy a particular Hollywood genre. *Piano Player* (*Shoot the Piano Player* A.P.) was an American gangster flick, *The Soft Skin* a reworking of the conventional love melodrama, *Fahrenheit 451* a science-fiction epic, *The Bride Wore Black* a deliberate imitation of and homage to Alfred Hitchcock, *Mississippi Mermaid* a thriller. Except for *The Soft Skin*, all of these early films were adapted from American novels. Thus, as James Monaco has pointed out, Truffaut's early career can be divided between the autobiographical cycle of the Doinel films and the Hollywood genre cycle made up of films that transpose American plots to France (Turner, 1981, p. 128).

Turner completely ignores the possibility that these films were not imitations or pure acts of homage, but rather what Bloom would have called "misreadings." He fails to relate to the fact that Godard and Truffaut were testing the structure of cinematic narrative and language and defying the legitimacy of classic codes. It would seem that Turner is formulating a common error regarding Truffaut, an error which the following chapters will attempt to rectify.

Jean Douchet, in his book, *French New Wave*, provides a thorough and on-target formulation of the erroneous conception of the complex relationship of French New

Wave films and their predecessors in the cinematic tradition. Douchet examines the cinematic revolution generated by the creators of the New Wave and the historical cinematic context in which they acted, and notes that parallel to the enthusiastic reception awarded the young, innovative artists, their films frequently aroused violent and hostile reactions. For instance, Douchet cites Charensol's blunt critique of New Wave filmmakers, which applies particularly to our discussion: "The leaders of the movement are looking more and more like plagiarists who haven't even bothered to dissimulate their sources (Charensol, 1961)" (Douchet, 1999, p. 232).

Contrary to Turner and other critics similar to Charensol, Alan Hirsh, in a first-of-its-kind article on cinematic intertextuality entitled "Truffaut's Subversive Siren: Intertextual Narrative in *Mississippi Mermaid*" (1979), reveals the multi-dimensional intertextuality existing in the film discussed. Hirsh notes a long list of films referred to in the film, particularly those of Fritz Lang, Alfred Hitchcock, and Jean Renoir, and asserts that:

> Intertextuality, more than any other principle, provides us with the filmmaker's prime concern. This concern is to link the old cinema to the new, to draw upon the resources of both genre expectation and specific intertextualities[5] in order to foreground the presence of the author and his own ideology of film. Truffaut, in other words, is reworking film history (Hirsh, 1979, p. 81).

In summing up his article, Hirsh explains Truffaut's use of intertextuality as alternately adhering to and deviating from a genre's rules. His characters act within a genre-specific story but deviate in their behavior from the accepted codes of that genre. The result reveals Truffaut's diagnosis of the classic genre and its limitations or, as Hirsh puts it:

> The principle point has been to pull them from the film genres, from the classical narrative toward a transformation, a point in transition that makes the film a commentary upon film treatment and upon narrative itself. These characters cannot cross the border[6] until they have passed through the artificiality of genre plot, that which is readily accepted by the audience (Hirsh, 1979, p. 88).

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[5] Hirsh is referring to what we would call rhetorical intertextuality in our discussion.
[6] Hirsh is referring to the ambiguity arising from the fact that the characters in the film escape to the Swiss border, while he is speaking of the borders of the genre.

It is apparent that Hirsh's reading, in direct contrast to those of Turner and Charensol, defines the productive approach in understanding the relationship between Truffaut's films and Hollywood tradition.

Hirsh's statement sheds light on the breakthrough achieved by Truffaut in regard to cinematic narrative, as one of the leading filmmakers to define the modern narrative, which undermines the validity of the classic narrative. This pioneering study, as far as cinematic intertextuality goes, discusses one film only and focuses on the reflexive significance of intertextuality. In the following chapters we will examine additional Truffaut films and the possible implications of intertextual interactions. Moreover, although Hirsh presents Truffaut's films from a new perspective, an expansion of his study is required in order to apply Bloom's theories to Truffaut, an additional step which Hirsh failed to take.

Jefferson Kline (1992) published a comprehensive study of intertextuality in cinema in the context of the New Wave.[7] Kline, similarly to Reader, makes use of Bloom's theory in order to examine the complex dialectic relationship between the French New Wave filmmakers and their films and literature. Kline postulates that this is an oedipal pattern of admiration, the need to free oneself and rebel, and finally, internalize the literary father, while utilizing the denial mechanisms described by Bloom. Contrary to Bloom, who examines the formation of the literary canon as a natural consequence of his theory, Kline refrains from examining the formation of the cinematic canon, choosing instead to focus on the relationships of New Wave filmmakers with authors from the literary canon.

In constructing his thesis, Kline provides an informative and comprehensive description of the intertexts in the interpreted films. Even though it is the first study of its kind, dealing with cinematic intertexts, its primary drawback is the imbalance between the number of interpreted intertexts originating in the literary tradition—intertextuality in cinema—and the lack of interpreted intertexts originating in the cinematic tradition—cinematic intertextuality. For example, in a discussion of Truffaut's film, *Jules and Jim*, one of the major texts in his study, Kline relates to Truffaut's usage of a literary intertext—Goethe's book, *Les Affinités électives* (French in the original),[8] and to historical intertexts and those related to fine arts, such as an image of a Greek statue and the obvious allusion to Venus. However, Kline ignores

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[7] *Screening The Text*: Intertextuality in New Wave French Cinema
[8] *Elective Affinities*

the cinematic intertexts central to this film, such as Charlie Chaplin's 1921 film, *The Kid*[9] or *Citizen Kane*.[10] Although this approach contains an interesting application of Bloomian theory regarding the intertextuality in New Wave films, it fails to examine the formation of the cinematic canon, which is a fundamental element in the worldview of the New Wave filmmakers as well as in that of Bloom. Marsha Kinder presents a similar approach in her article on Godard's 1963 film, *Le Mépris*, "A Thrice-Told Tale, Godard's *Le Mépris.*" The article discusses the intertextual relationship between the film and its literary source, Alberto Moravia's, *A Ghost at Noon*. Kinder examines the analogies between the characters in the film and their parallel figures in Moravia's story and in Homer's *Odyssey*, thus granting meaning to the literary intertext in the film. In contrast, when Kinder mentions the movie posters from *Psycho* (1960) and *Hatari* (1962) used in the film, she fails to give them any sort of interpretation and only uses them as examples of "Godard paying homage to Hitchcock and Hawks" (ibid., p. 111). It seems that Kinder too has failed to recognize the interpretive potential of the cinematic intertexts. Moreover, the film contains numerous cinematic quotations and allusions, beginning with the Lumière Brothers,[11] continuing with Rossellini and Fritz Lang, himself a canonical filmmaker, who plays the part of a film director in the film – actually appearing as himself and as Godard simultaneously. Kinder ignores most of the cinematic intertexts and limits her discussion to the intertextual relationships existing between films, literature and mythology. Once again, the center of gravity is focused on hyper-textual and architextual relationships.[12] Contrary to Kline and Kinder, the researcher Anne Gillain relates to the wealth of intertextual references in which Truffaut's films are replete and examines his works from a psychoanalytical point of view. She weaves threads linking Truffaut's childhood to his verbal texts, and to the classical cinematic fragments alluded to in his films. Her discussion of some of the intertexts in *Jules and Jim* illustrates her approach to the intertextuality in Truffaut's films: "Those who are familiar with Truffaut's films may find the high degree of importance that nature assumes in *Jules and Jim* surprising. He himself made the following confession:

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[9] Catherine's costume.

[10] Catherine replies to Jules' marriage proposal with a replica of Kane's dialogue with his lover, Susan Alexander.

[11] The earliest filmmakers in history – parallel perhaps to Homer's *Odyssey*, not in the complexity of their oeuvre but in its precedence.

[12] Another term coined by Genette, which defines the relationship between a text and an existing archetype.

Nature leaves me entirely unmoved. If someone were to ask me to name the places that I have loved most during my life, I might say that it is the countryside in Murnau's Sunrise, or the town in the same film, but I would not mention any actual place that I had really visited, because I never visit any. I'm aware that it is a bit abnormal, but that's the way it is. I don't like landscapes, or things; I like people, I'm interested in ideas and feelings (Gillain, (1991) 2013, p. 83-84).[13]

Gillain continues developing her idea:

Notwithstanding this protestation, the film presents an extensive country landscape full of murmuring streams, the rustling of trees, and the tall grasses of meadows. This is not the countryside of Murnau, but of Renoir. In the fifth shot of *Jules and Jim*, during the stretch of unoccupied time that precedes the arrival of Catherine, we see the two friends drifting idly in a rowboat that glides along the river under the leafy shade of overhanging trees. This shot comes straight out of *A Day in the Country*. Woman belongs to a nature that brings back cinematic memories. Already in *Les Mistons*, Bernadette had appeared to the boys who were spying on her gliding through the woods on her bicycle. A long traveling shot[14] followed her to the stream in which she took a swim. Bernadette was the sister of the ingénue in *A Day in the Country* who, swinging under the boughs next to the water, entranced the boaters. Just like the women in Renoir's films, Catherine in *Jules and Jim* incorporates and amalgamates the landscapes she traverses (Gillain, (1991), 2013 p. 84).

According to Gillain's understanding, the intertexts are fragmentary memories. Similar to the manner in which another filmmaker may incorporate scenes from his childhood into his films, Truffaut incorporates fragments from films, fragments which he had internalized obsessively since his earliest childhood. This approach emphasizes the extreme importance of these intertexts in shaping Truffaut's personal and artistic development, although it does not provide possible interpretations of *The Mischief Makers* or *Jules and Jim* in light of the quotations from and allusions to *A Day in the Country*.

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[13] Gillain is quoting an earlier interview she'd conducted with Truffaut in 1988, and continues from there to develop her present thesis.

[14] A shot in which the camera follows a moving subject, otherwise known as a tracking shot, or a Dolly shot.

Robert Stam examines the relationships between cinematic texts in his book, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard* (1985), applying Gerard Genette's literary intertextual categorizations to cinematic intertextuality. The adaptation of Genette's categories to the cinema indicates the numerous possibilities inherent in this approach. Moreover, Stam maintains the equilibrium between discussion of intertextuality in cinema—primarily relating to literary sources—and cinematic intertextuality. Although Stam refers to numerous cinematic allusions, his book ignores two significant issues which we will address in the present study:

1. Stam fails to relate to the additional interpretive potential existing in the allusions he mentions. He interprets the allusions as components of a film's reflexivity. In other words, he narrows their significance to linguistic intertextuality, defining them as the filmmaker's statement regarding the medium. This is an important and, at times, central significance, but it is not the only one. He collectively links Truffaut's numerous self-quotations in *Day for Night* to the fact that Truffaut is making a film about films. He postulates that in the course of the film, Truffaut is conducting a critical self-analysis, summing up his previous work. However, Stam fails to relate interpretively to Truffaut's specific self-quotations. A complete interpretation of a film necessitates identifying and interpreting the cinematic intertexts and establishing the ensuing intertextual relationships. In the following sections, we will present a model of cinematic intertextual interpretation, based on Ben-Porat's definition of literary allusion: "The literary allusion is a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts" (Ben-Porat, 1976, p. 107). Defining allusion as a device of this sort implies that fully identifying the cinematic intertext, its unique significance and the effect created by the interrelationship of both texts is of the utmost importance.

2. An additional limitation in Stam's approach is particularly highlighted when addressing the intertextuality in Truffaut's films. It would seem that Stam, following Riffaterre, regards the gaps in the text, when failing to identify an intertext leads to an interpretive dead-end, as the key to intertextuality. This approach is unavoidable in an examination of Godard's films, discussed at length by Stam. However, most of the quotations and allusions in Truffaut's

films are mimetically[15] inseparable from the texts and do not force themselves upon the viewer in the form of gaps, anomalies or difficulties in comprehension. Failure to realize the intertext's semantic potential leaves the viewer with fewer levels of meaning, and the film loses a measure of complexity; however, viewers will not encounter any difficulty in following the film's plot. In this historical context, Lucy Fischer's significant contribution is notable. Her book, *Shot/Counter Shot* (1989), is based on cinematic intertextuality. Fischer recognizes intertexts as cinematic and considers their interpretation a necessity; she relates to the role of intertexts in establishing the meaning of a text, however, her intertexts all support a focused feminist interpretation. Fischer addresses the rebellion of women filmmakers, the films of a minority group, which in her opinion have evolved against the background of the hegemonic male cinema. The rebellion against the dominant element in cinema leads Fischer to Bloom, although she herself rebels against the Bloomian discourse, which is fundamentally male—the rebellion of a son against his father. Fischer claims that while Bloom discusses the difficulty in speaking caused by the strong voices of great artists from the cultural, canonical past, women must cope with the difficulty in speaking in any voice whatsoever. Women artists lack fathers in the Bloomian sense, and they have no choice but to seek a plane of reference, a language and a basis for dialogue—outside of the male discourse. This strategy leads Fischer to regard intertextuality as a dynamic of "shot" and "counter shot," similar to the concept of cinematic montage.[16] In other words, she believes that every intertext in women's films is the male background, against which, and in spite of which, a woman's voice is heard. Instructive as this reductive approach to the activation of the intertextual discourse in the cinema is, it fails to shed new light on the discussion of Truffaut's works.

A rare and particularly interesting example of the employment of the Bloomian model appears in Inez Hedges' book, *Breaking The Frame* (1991). In the chapter on François

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[15] Mimesis – a term coined by Aristotle to denote the basis of an artistic act, which is the imitation of reality. In the case described above, when a quotation from another film appears as a logical, realistic part of a text, in such a way that someone unfamiliar with the quoted source will not be aware of the existence of anything external that cannot be explained realistically – then the quotation is part of the text's mimesis.

[16] In conventional filmmaking, when filming dialogue, opposite every shot there is a complimentary counter shot, from an angle that appears as 180°.

Truffaut's film, *The Green Room*, Hedges postulates that the film is a misreading of Cocteau's *Orpheus*, within the framework of Truffaut's wrestling with a dominant precursor (ibid., p. 52-65). Hedges' approach constitutes the initial step in a journey which this study will address in a comprehensive manner, in the extended context of Truffaut's works and of the artists with whom he maintained a dialogue.

A Summary of the Intertextual Studies of Truffaut's Films

Of the existing literature on cinematic intertextuality, Hirsh's approach to *Mississippi Mermaid* and that of Hedges to *The Green Room* are the closest to the approach suggested in this study. To date, approaches of this sort have not been utilized or granted sufficient recognition as potential interpretive tools regarding Truffaut's films. In their conclusive[17] study of Truffaut, *François Truffaut* (1998), authors Diana Holmes and Robert Ingram present a general survey of the approaches to his films: the widely accepted autobiographical approach; methods that categorize his films according to genre, including a discussion of the difficulties involved in this method due to Truffaut's tendency to mix existing genres; thematic approaches; and finally, categorization by narrative structure (Holmes and Ingram, 1998, p. 10-38). Holmes and Ingram do not relate to the wealth of intertextual references in Truffaut's films or to the possibility of utilizing intertextuality as a key to interpreting and categorizing his films. The same applies to studies by John Taylor (1964), Peter Graham (1968), C. G. Crisp (1972), Dominique Fanne (1972), Jean Collet (1977), Don Allen (1985), Gilles Cahoreau (1989), Carole Le Berre (1993) and Robert Ingram (2004).

This book presents, for the first time, a new approach to the systematic discussion of all of Truffaut's films; this is an approach whereby the cinematic heritage, with which Truffaut creates a dialogue, constitutes an indispensable and essential component in any discussion of his works, exactly in the same manner as the autobiographical approach has been used as a tool toward interpreting his films in the past. This study charts the role of this heritage in Truffaut's works.

Uncharted Fields of Study in Cinematic Intertextuality

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[17] As of its publication date.

Cinematic intertextuality in the context of film language usage has, for the most part, not yet been studied. Robert Stam cites the potential inherent in an approach of this type as a future possibility with far-reaching consequences, but he avoids developing the theory in his own research, stating:

> Even a cinematic technique can constitute an intertextual allusion: the iris-in[18] to an informer in *Breathless*, or the use of Griffith style masking[19] in *Jules et Jim*, allude by their calculatedly archaic nature to earlier periods of film history (Stam, 2000, p. 207).

Stam takes a significant step here, in that he suggests studying a new category of intertexts. This study expands along those lines and goes so far as to examine the manner in which intertextuality of this sort is utilized for the purpose of specific statements, more than as an allusion to earlier periods in film history.

In summing up his survey of intertextuality in the cinema, Stam refers to an additional issue developed in this study:

> Theories of literary intertextuality, then, can yield benefits for film theory and analysis. Another literary theorist whose work is ripe for extrapolation for film analysis is Harold Bloom. In *The Anxiety of Influence,* Bloom argues that literary art develops out of an interpersonal and generational struggle with strong oedipal overtones. …One thinks of Brian De Palma's relation to Hitchcock, Godard's relation to Hollywood …Truffaut as the heir of Renoir (Stam, 2000, p. 211-212).

That being the case, Stam assumes that the possibility of applying Bloom's theory exists—although to a limited degree. The following chapters take Stam up on his challenge and examine, using this theory, Truffaut's extraordinary relationship with Renoir's heritage, a possibility mentioned by Stam, as well as with numerous other filmmakers not cited by Stam.

The following chapter presents the development of the French New Wave and of François Truffaut, as one of this cinematic movement's central filmmakers, in a historical context. We will also discuss the validity and actual necessity of the theoretical discourse presented herein in the analysis of Truffaut's films.

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[18] A black circle that gradually covers the screen in black, from the edges toward the center.
[19] Blacking out the screen gradually from right to left or left to right.

"When I was a critic, I thought that a successful film had simultaneously to express an idea of the world and an idea of cinema; *La Règle du Jeu* and *Citizen Kane* corresponded to this definition perfectly. Today, I demand that a film express either the joy of making cinema or the agony of making cinema. I am not at all interested in anything in between; I am not interested in all those films that do not pulse." (Truffaut, 1978, (1975), p.6)

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François Truffaut and the French New Wave
The Historical Context

The Importance of Intertextuality in the Study of Truffaut and the French New Wave

The French New Wave

The above quote provides a concise description of Truffaut's attitude to reflexivity in cinema, as well as that of his colleagues in the French New Wave, as was evident in the articles they published in *Cahiers du Cinèma* as early as 1952. Consciously reflexive films had already been produced in Hollywood by Buster Keaton and Charlie Chaplain since 1920, as well as by the German Expressionists in Europe since 1919. However, it was the New Wave critics who first designated reflexivity as a measure of a film's value. The *Cahiers* school developed a systematic criticism of the historical order and of the consolidation of an agreed cinematic canon. Reflexivity was perceived as a necessary condition for the inclusion of a film in the cinematic canon. Thus these critics-turned-directors inserted the history of cinema into their own films, which re-examine the language of cinema and provoke a heightened discussion of the cinematic code. Their work is a statement about the old genres, and crystallizes new conventions for making and reading cinematic texts.

The New Wave is the first cinematic movement to systematically, consciously and consistently express, in films, as well as in critical reviews, the spirit of T. S. Elliot's position, as formulated in his essay, *Tradition and the Individual Talent*:

> Tradition is a matter of much wider significance. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and compose a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity (T.S. Eliot, 1950 (1919), p.4).

Eliot's assertion may well serve as a re-formulation of the French New Wave's motto, by simply replacing the word "literature" with "cinema" and "poet" with "filmmaker." This calls for an interpretative logic that is based on intertextuality. Intertextuality, in all its above-mentioned aspects, served this movement not only as a distinctive tool for making statements on the history of cinema but also in confronting its future. The intertexts that appear in the films of the New Wave come from the wide range of cultural domains available to them: literature, philosophy, the visual arts, music, theater, mythology, history, politics—and especially the cinema. Out of all these domains, the cinematic intertexts constitute a major tool for honing the cinematic statement, and this is why I have chosen to focus on them.

As a critic, Truffaut debated with André Bazin, stating "the worst Hawks film is more interesting than Huston's best" (Truffaut, 1978, (1975), p.14). This provocative assertion, especially for those who disagree with Truffaut's opinions of Hawks and Huston, summarizes the *auteur*[20] theory held by Truffaut and his colleagues at *Cahiers du Cinéma*. This declaration is valid within the inclusive context of their

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[20] *La Politique des Auteurs* was the title of a Truffaut essay, in which he asserted that a film has only one author, who is responsible for it as a whole form of art, and that is the director. This concept was antithetical to the theories that considered film as a collective product, or product in which the dominant artist was the producer, the star, or the screenwriter.

cinematic school of thought, which considers each film an element of a director's work that is inseparable from the broader context of his works. Moreover, it expresses Truffaut's aspiration, which succeeded, to a great degree, to redefine the cinematic canon. In his opinion, a canon of directors constitutes an alternative to a canon of films. Truffaut unequivocally reformulated his thesis in a conversation with R. M. Franchi and Marshall Lewis in 1962:

> I have just remembered an aspect of the *'Politique des Auteurs'* which I had forgotten. It was a critical concept, essentially polemical; for some critics there are good films and bad films and I had the idea there are not good and bad films: there are simply good and bad directors. …What is interesting is the career of a good director in that it reflects his thought from his beginning to his more mature phase. Each one of the films marks one phase in his thoughts, and it is of no importance that any particular picture is successful or not, or a good film or not (Sarris, 1967, p.448-449).

Quite a few French filmmakers, who had been considered quality directors in their time, disappeared from the cinematic canon after Truffaut and his colleagues declared an all-out war against them, claiming that their films were superficial, simplistic, cliché-ridden, forged, and insincere. On the other hand, directors of comedies and action films, such as Hitchcock, Hawks, Ray and Sturges, who had previously been treated with contempt by critics, were considered canonical by *Cahiers du Cinéma*, due to their total command of the medium, their imprinting their mark on their films' overall design and their cinematic innovations. This new cinematic canon appeared initially in published critiques but was soon expanded and made its mark on Truffaut and Godard's films. Robert Stam describes the delight with which the New Wave directors emphasized the intertexts in their films. He postulates that this was the first generation of filmmakers to have the entire history of film available for plunder and homage. Often they made films against tradition, especially by flouting the generic conventions of antecedent cinema (Stam, 1992, p. 21). His statement aptly summarizes the profound significance of cinematic heritage as the intertextual reservoir of the New Wave, a fact which must be taken into account when interpreting their films.

The strong and unique linkage between the New Wave's films and cinema history and tradition is reconfirmed in Jean-Luc Godard's conversation with Youssef Ishaghpour :

"We're born in the museum, it's our homeland after all, we're the only ones…"
(Godard and Ishaghpour, 2005, p.70).

To sum up, the following factors epitomize the elements shared by New Wave filmmakers, which also link their cinematic language to the theory of intertextuality:

1. Reflexivity;
2. The subversion against the obvious in classical cinematic language and the crystallization of a new cinematic language;
3. A new historical order, in the sense described by Eliot, based on undermining the classical canon of films and consolidating an alternative canon of directors.

The third and last point positions Bloom's theory as a central theory for the discussion of this school of filmmaking.

François Truffaut as Reflected Through the Prism of Harold Bloom

As mentioned above, Stam referred to the potential benefits of applying Bloom's theory to the examination of the relationship between Truffaut and Jean Renoir. Moreover, nine years earlier, Inez Hedges based her analysis of Truffaut's relationship with Jean Cocteau on Bloom's thesis. Whereas Stam spoke only of potential benefits, Hedges focused on Cocteau's *Orpheus*, and to a certain degree on another Cocteau film on the same topic, *The Testament of Orpheus*, co-produced with Truffaut.

Hedges' thesis focuses on coping with death, and the cinematic representation constitutes a part of that coping mechanism. The Orpheus myth, both of Cocteau's films and Truffaut's *The Green Room,* all deal with death as a concrete state of reality and with art as a way of coping with the abstract idea of death. It therefore makes sense to apply a theory based on coping with "the greatest of the dead" in a discussion of these films. *The Green Room* in Truffaut's film is a real room, in which the film's protagonist hangs a picture and lights a candle in memory of each of the dead people in his life, people who were involved in his real life, as well as cultural icons (French culture and general culture) who had meaningful significance in his life, such as the writer Honoré de Balzac. *The Green Room* is part of the Bloomian pantheon by definition, in that it applies Bloom's argument, whereby a poet writes in rebellion against the voice of the dead poet speaking to him.

That being the case, the film's theme obviously invites discussion of a theory dominated by the idea of "the greatest of the dead" who make it difficult for an artist to live in the present, real world.

This study attempts to examine whether Bloom's theory is relevant to the rest of Truffaut's films, other than the unique case of *The Green Room*. Hedges considered the application of Bloomian theory to the cinema problematic, or as she put it:

> There are difficulties in transposing Bloom's terms to the cinema, if only because the visual style of a Cocteau or a Truffaut is so clearly that of its author (Hedges, 1991, p. 59).

In fact, even Bloom himself relates to this difficulty and clearly differentiates between the anxiety of influence and the anxiety of style. He argues that in most cases the anxiety of influence leads young artists to develop a style that is different and antithetical to that of their artistic father (Bloom, 1975, p. 20).

In May 1975, in an interview with Anne de Gaspéri, Truffaut said:

> I can't get away from writing…the taste for writing has been pursuing me ever since I concerned myself as a critic with the form of the screenplay. I didn't think I would become a filmmaker but, rather, a scriptwriter (Dixon, 1993, p. 156).

Truffaut's statement is similar to the theory formulated by Bloom, whereby reading is a miswriting, writing is a misreading, and poetry and literary criticism are actually two aspects of the same art. Following this idea, this study examines the possibility that Truffaut formulates concepts similar to Bloom's, concepts regarding the relationship between miswriting and misreading and between texts and their creators. The following excerpt, from an interview conducted by Anne Gillain, who studied the links between Truffaut's biography and his films, echoes Bloom's assertion, whereby a poem is always about a previously written poem and writing is an expression of the poet's desire to revive his initial reading experience:

> […] I found myself working as a welder in a small factory near Paris. The advantage of welding is that it's good for your concentration. Wearing my dark glasses and with the gas canister in front of me, I passed the time trying to recall the last film I'd seen. In the morning, when I arrived, I'd say to myself: 'I'll try to **revive**[21] *City Lights* (1931) or *Monsieur Verdoux* (1947).'

[21] The bold highlighting is mine. A.P.

And that's what I did, scene by scene, to make it last longer (Gillain, 1988, p. 26).

Truffaut's description of his cinematic experience even before becoming an active filmmaker is reminiscent of Bloom's formulation regarding the writing stage itself. Truffaut's obsession with undermining truths that are usually considered above questioning or criticism, especially in the context of quality films and filmmakers, appears repeatedly both in his writing as a film critic and in his films, as does his incessant preoccupation with the issue of a work's origin. Moreover, the subversion and undermining of prejudices and deeply rooted conceptions may be construed as a facet of his rebellion against a dominant father, all of which underline the necessity of utilizing the tools defined by Bloom in examining and interpreting Truffaut's works. The essence of the oedipal relationship in the Bloomian discourse signifies that the father forces himself on the son and the son struggles with him and tries to silence him. In other words, the son must define his personal identity in light of the father's presence. In Truffaut's case, the lack of a father and the search for a male role model played a decisive role in his private life as well as in his films, which are often highly autobiographical. Indeed, these themes appear in many of his films, which are frequently evidently oedipal in nature. Truffaut's biographers, Antoine de Baecque and Serge Toubiana, described his multi-faceted search for a substitute father figure thus:

Truffaut's secret, of course, was his unknown father, whom he sought to replace with the artists he most admired. Jean Genet and André Bazin were the first to fit into this surrogate role. Truffaut wrote as much to Lachenay on August 15, 1951: 'In three weeks Bazin and Genet did for me what my parents never did for me in fifteen years' (Truffaut, 1951) (De Baecque and Toubiana, 1999, p. 62).

The quote above clarifies the manner in which Truffaut's search for an actual father evolved and developed into a search for an artistic father. De Baecque and Toubiana believe this is linked to his recorded interviews with canonical filmmakers, one of the film criticism innovations introduced by Truffaut:

Between the spring of 1954 and the autumn of 1957, *Cahiers* would publish a series of interviews, conducted mostly by Truffaut and Rivette, with Jean Renoir, Luis Buñuel, Roberto Rossellini, Abel Gance, Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, Robert Aldrich, Joshua Logan, Anthony Mann, Max Ophüls,

Vincente Minnelli, Jacques Tati, Orson Welles, Gene Kelly, Nicholas Ray, Richard Brooks, Luchino Visconti, and, finally, Fritz Lang. This constitutes a corpus that is one of the great innovations of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, and it still remains a foundation and pillar of modern criticism. François Truffaut expected a great deal from each of these meetings. **They no doubt derived from a deep trait in his personality: the need to find masters and learn from them**[22] (ibid. p. 90).

In light of the above, it would seem that the application of Bloom's theory may provide new insights into Truffaut's works, regarding innovations and origins, as well as the manner in which he chose to integrate film criticism and filmmaking and the new historical order that he initiated in the cinema.

From Realistic-Classical Narrative to Modernism

The importance of intertextuality in a work of art as well as in its interpretation is one of the definitive characteristics of modernism. In addition to Truffaut's sophisticated usage of this tool, he also modified the traditional structure of cinematic narrative, together with his New wave colleagues, especially Godard and Resnais. They completed the process begun by Orson Welles twenty years earlier in *Citizen Kane*— the creation of a new narrative that brings the cinema into the modern era. In order to comprehend the upheaval they brought about in film, we must be perfectly clear as to the difference between the classic and modern narratives.

Classic Cinematic Narratives

Truffaut undermines fundamental cinematic conventions throughout his films. In order to distinguish between the various categories of his struggle with cinematic classics, we must first define the classical cinematic storyline, differentiating between narrative, a term which applies to pre-cinema dramatic forms such as theater and literature, and utterances unique to the cinematic medium. And while Truffaut's innovations regarding elements unique to film must be considered in the context of the fifty to seventy-year history of the medium (depending on the point in Truffaut's career under discussion), undermining the narrative structure itself means rebelling

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[22] The bold highlighting is mine. A.P.

against a heritage of over two thousand years[23]and against the developments undergone by the dramatic narrative in literature and theater.

It would seem that the distinction between narrative structure and other forms of cinematic utterance is appropriately expressed in Robert Stam's assertion whereby despite the cinema's apparent modernity and despite its being a technological medium, the aesthetics of illusions adopted by the medium was for the most part conservative. According to Stam, notwithstanding some exceptional experiments in film language beginning with Méliès, Keaton, the French avant-garde, the German Expressionists, the Soviet montage school and through to the films of Alain Resnais, classic feature films perpetuated an aesthetic parallel to that of the nineteenth century mimetic novel. Mainstream films adopted the mimetic aspirations spurned by other arts. Film inherited the illusionistic ideal that impressionism had relinquished in painting that Jarry as well as the Symbolists had attacked in the theater and that Proust, Joyce and Woolf had undermined in the novel (Stam, 1992, p. 10).

Stam's assertion requires clarification in that some of the few cases in point he mentions as early innovative experiments in the history of cinema constituted breakthroughs in terms of unique cinematic techniques and film language but were conventional in terms of cinematic narrative. Feature films made by filmmakers from the Soviet montage school, such as Eisenstein's *Potemkin,* or outstanding German Expressionist films such as Robert Wiene's *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (1919) were innovative and pioneering in terms of editing techniques, cinematography, scenery and acting styles, but their narrative structure was simple, direct and linear. Or to use Stam's terminology, they were modeled on the mimetic novel of the nineteenth century, which defined an imaginary world characterized by inner consistency, reasonable causal relationships and psychological logic.

> Traditional realism, based on a unified and coherent narrative, was seen as obscuring contradictions and projecting an illusory 'mythic' unity. The modernist text, in contrast, foregrounded contradiction and allowed the silenced to speak (Stam, 2000, p. 141).

Stam explains how classic Hollywood screenwriting adopted the mimetic novel model according to Aristotle's unities principle:

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[23]Since Aristotle's *Poetics*, 330B.C.

The classical Hollywood film presents psychologically defined individuals as its principal causal agents. These agents struggle to solve clear-cut problems or to attain specific goals, the story ending with either a resolution of the problem or a clear achievement or non-achievement of the goals. Causality revolving around character provides the prime unifying principle, while spatial configurations are motivated by realism as well as compositional necessity. Scenes are demarcated by neo-classical criteria—unity of time, space, and action. Classical narration tends to be omniscient, highly communicative, and only moderately self-conscious. If time is skipped over, a montage sequence or scrap of dialogue informs us; if a cause is missing, we are informed about its absence. Classical narration operates as an 'editorial intelligence' that selects certain stretches of time for full-scale treatment, while paring down or scissoring out other 'inconsequential' events (ibid., p. 144-145).

The following chapters will reveal how Truffaut's films depart from the classical narrative, undermine it and define a new narrative that corresponds to the characteristics that, according to Stam, typify modernist narration.

"The poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done. And he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living."
(T.S. Eliot, 1950 (1919), p. 11)

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Hypotheses and Goals

As stated in the introduction, this book has been adapted from a study of intertextuality in Truffaut's films and its broader implications regarding film studies in general. A review of the original study's goals and methods may provide an overview of the wider significance of the specific Truffaut films to be discussed in the following chapters.

Study's Goals

1. This study examines whether intertextuality is a necessary condition in order to attain a full interpretation of Truffaut's cinematic texts, as claimed by certain literary theoreticians regarding literary texts, and the possibility of applying this hypothesis to any given cinematic text.

2. The study demonstrates that the above premise is particularly valid when referring to rhetorical intertextuality, a field infrequently addressed in current cinematic research.

3. Hypotheses 1 and 2 will be examined in the special cases in which both the text and the intertext are films. In light of the lack of existing analyses of cinematic intertexts, this study will focus on these intertexts and examine their potential as interpretive tools in the study of cinema. The study's premise is that identifying and deciphering the cinematic intertext are essential elements in providing an illuminating understanding of a cinematic text.

4. This study attempts to apply Bloom's theory to Truffaut's cinematic oeuvre.

5. The study examines the validity of this theory, as well as its limitations in providing insight into Truffaut's films, his filmmaking processes and the new cinematic canon he defined.

6. The study examines whether the Bloomian discourse requires modification when applied to the cinema rather than poetry. Bloom, for example, discusses the fact that every poem is actually about another poem. In other words, the poem is a misreading of an earlier poem. If a film is a misreading of an earlier film, can it be a misreading of more than one preceding film?

7. The study investigates whether, in Truffaut's case, one ought to distinguish between different types of misreading. There are cases of psychological explanations for coping with the anxiety of influence and expression of the desire to influence rather than be influenced, and other examples in which the misreading actually changes the cinematic language. One could perhaps use Bloom's own terminology and differentiate between misreading—a term which applies to the first instance, and miswriting, which describes the second.

8. The study examines the role of cinematic intertextuality in the organization of cinema history, both as a tool used by Truffaut and as a tool available to the researcher who aspires to place Truffaut (or any other filmmaker) in the historical order. With this goal in mind, the study will attempt to refute the frequent claim whereby Truffaut's films are described as acts of homage to Hollywood classics or even sometimes as their imitations, whereas this study demonstrates that Truffaut rebelled against classic films and misread them, even when his admiration and respect for them was strong. In other words, the study shows that in comparing the accepted perception, as expressed by Turner, and the unique outlook posited by Hirsh regarding a specific film, Hirsh's approach accurately reflects the entirety of Truffaut's cinematic corpus.

9. The study examines the role of cinematic intertextuality in shattering cinematic codes and creating alternative codes, in other words, in extending and shaping cinematic language.

Methodology

The study examines eleven films by Truffaut: *The Mischief Makers* (*Les Mistons*, 1957), *The 400 Blows* (*Les Quatre Cents Coups*, 1959), *Shoot the Piano* Player (*Tirez sur le Pianiste,* 1960), *Jules and Jim* (*Jules et Jim,* 1961), *Antoine and Collette (Antoine et Colette*, 1962), *The Soft Skin* (*La Peau Douce,* 1964), *Stolen Kisses* (*Baisers Volés*, 1968), *Mississippi Mermaid* (*La Sirène du Mississipi,* 1969), *Bed and Board* (*Domicile Conjugal*, 1970), *Day for Night* (*La Nuit Américaine*, 1973), and *Love on the Run* (*L'Amour en Fuite,* 1978). Each film is examined and interpreted based principally on intertextuality but relating also to a complex of cinematic and narrative elements. The cases examined are those in which intertextual analysis reinforces the analysis of the text as a closed text and therefore serves as a means of cinematic utterance that combines with other means to create a full meaning, as well as cases in which intertextuality enables new insights and an expansion of the meaning of the closed text. The intertextual interpretation is conducted in the following manner:

1. Identification of an intertextual nexus in which we have a text and an intertext;

2. Definition and characterization of the latter—identification of identical elements, similarities and dissimilarities between the primary text and the intertext being examined;

3. Indication of the intertextual nexus' context and function in the film under discussion;

4. Examination of the intertextual nexus' contribution to larger complexes such as: structure, genre, cinematic school, creation of expectations, cinematic utterance, cinematic statements and historical order.

Once we have clarified our goals and defined our vocabulary and discourse, we will address the heart of our discussion in the following chapters: a new reading into Truffaut's films.