

Abstract

The thesis explores the French New Wave as a film school which made a break with classical filmmaking and became influential worldwide, but was then discarded as ideologically naïve in the politicized atmosphere before and after the year 1968. It aims to demonstrate that what allowed the New Wave to make groundbreaking changes in filmmaking, that is, what makes it avant-garde, is also what ultimately denies it this attribute: its concern for realism, an issue at the center of inquiries into the nature of film. The first chapter analyses the Wave's stylistic and ideological opposition to the Tradition of Quality in relation to the theory of André Bazin, the Wave's ideologue. The example of Chabrol's *The Cousins* shows the influence of Orson Welles's long takes and deep focuses which urge the spectator to judge him/herself, as in real life, the relations among characters, as opposed to the paternalizing editing devices of classical Hollywood and the Tradition of Quality. The second chapter analyses the Wave's most famous films, Truffaut's *400 Blows* and Godard's *Breathless*, with the emphasis on the shift from Chabrol's formal realism to a psychological realism based in *ambiguity*, Bazin's key term. *Breathless* is understood as the Wave's avant-garde and a realist film which goes beyond realism. The third chapter analyses the "apolitical politics" of the Wave on the example of Godard's *The Little Soldier*, demonstrating why the aimless, individualistic rebellion of the New Wave could not be accepted as progressive by the next generation. The Wave is put in contrast with Godard's own later film, the Brechtian *Two or Three Things I Know About Her*, which introduces meta-reflection on the ideological nature of realism in cinema, the key element of political filmmaking. Finally, Bazin's understanding of realistic representation is revealed as uncritical from the perspective of political modernism, but the New Wave he influenced, with its innovative formal concern for realism and its opposition to the ways of the older generation, is ultimately understood as a necessary step in the development towards the ideological critique of the political avant-garde.