

# Introduction

## *Philippe Garrel, an irregular auteur*

In April 2013, a retrospective of Philippe Garrel's films took place at the Magic Cinéma, a municipal theatre in Bobigny, outside Paris. Such a location, on the periphery of the French capital, may seem inappropriate for the work of a longstanding director whom the film critic Serge Daney spoke of as 'le seul grand cinéaste français de ma génération'<sup>1</sup> (Jousse 1991: 58). But both the accolade and this peripheral location are revealing of the ambiguous position Garrel has occupied within French film culture during the last half century. While held in high esteem by peers and critics, he is only beginning now to receive some mainstream and popular recognition. This increased recognition is evidenced by the first French international conference on Garrel that took place at Paris Nanterre University in November 2018 and by a more recent retrospective of Garrel's work at the Cinémathèque Française in September 2019.

Garrel's status as a critically respected yet marginal figure may be explained by the fact that his cinema occupies an uncertain terrain in the history of French cinema, somewhere between the New Wave and the vast heterogeneous body of French cinema that developed in its aftermath. This anomalous position is compounded by an *oeuvre* that often resists straightforward exegetical criticism, and challenges traditionally held critical oppositions such as those of the real and the imaginary, documentary and fiction, political and personal, avant-garde and mainstream. This study traces the irregularity of the film-maker's *oeuvre* and situates it within the context of French film

1 'The only great film-maker of my generation.' Unless otherwise indicated, all translations throughout are the author's.

culture, history and society. It contends that in addition to making him an important figure in his own right, Garrel's work helps illuminate the unstable and elusive film category referred to as the post-New Wave, and provides vital insight into the relationship between French film culture and the legacy of May 68.

Before expanding on the types of critical issues that congregate around the career and personality of Garrel, it is important to establish some facts about his life and the films he has made. What emerges in the account that follows is the significant overlap between Garrel's biography and the characters, themes and forms that predominate in his cinema.

Philippe Garrel was born on 6 April 1948 in Boulogne-Billancourt, a working-class city southwest of Paris. His parents, Maurice and Micheline, studied philosophy and German respectively at the Sorbonne University. They married in 1947 and had three children, Philippe, Thierry and François. Maurice Garrel trained under Charles Dullin and Tania Balachova, theatre directors and actors who had a significant role in teaching. Dullin and Balachova were responsible for the tutelage of many important young French actors after the Second World War, the latter having worked with Michael Lonsdale, Antoine Vitez, Delphine Seyrig and Jean-Louis Trintignant. In 1951, the family moved to Rochetaillée, a village south of Saint-Etienne. Here Maurice began working at the Comédie de Saint-Etienne, a workers' cooperative theatre founded by Jean Dasté and Jeanne Laurent (Azalbert and Delorme 2011: 72).

When the family returned to Boulogne-Billancourt, Maurice and Micheline worked on a puppet show for children's television called *Martin et Martine*, created by Alain Recoing. The show was broadcast every Thursday afternoon on RTF Télévision between October 1953 and April 1957. Philippe Garrel recalls an early fascination with witnessing his parents and their friends preparing the show and recording it live, before he would watch it on television the following afternoon. The craft of his parents provided an apt backdrop for Garrel as a future director, with the puppeteer's orchestration of speech and manipulation of the postures of a body providing a noteworthy corollary to the relationship between director and actor. The early experience of growing up in the milieu of struggling artists is taken up in the film *Liberté, la nuit* (1983), where Garrel transposes his parents' relationship and their craft as marionettists to the backdrop

of France during the Algerian War. Describing his childhood and the marginal artistic milieu he grew up in, Philippe Garrel comments:

Si je suis d'extrême gauche – on ne le dit jamais mais c'est ainsi: mon cinéma est un cinéma de gauche – si j'ai refusé l'armée, si je méprise les facilités que procure de l'argent, c'est grâce à quelques personnes que j'ai vues vivres, pendant ma petite enfance, dans des conditions très pénibles, mais qui étaient des rois.<sup>2</sup> (Garrel and Lescure 1992: 135)

Poverty and the impact of financial struggles on the lives of artists form a backdrop to a number of Garrel's works, influencing notably his development of 'poor' modes of production in the films he made in the 1970s.

Garrel's parents separated when he was five years old, an event also recalled in *Liberté, la nuit*. Jean, an FLN (Front de Libération National) sympathiser played by Maurice Garrel, is shown in a short sequence leaving his wife, played by the iconic actress of *Hiroshima mon amour* (1959), Emmanuelle Riva. In *Le Cœur fantôme* (1998), Garrel returns to the subject when the character of Philippe (Luis Rigo) approaches his father, again played by Maurice Garrel, seeking an explanation as to why he left his mother. The subject of his parent's separation, and more broadly the crises and ruptures experienced by couples, forms a recurrent theme in Garrel's cinema, something the director has acknowledged: 'À l'origine de mes films, il y a toujours un conflit, quelque chose de douloureux et la séparation, pour moi, c'est la scène primitive'<sup>3</sup> (Garrel and Lescure 1992: 33).

## Adolescence

In the late 1950s, Maurice Garrel began to integrate film acting with his theatre and television work. He played small roles in several New Wave films including Jacques Rozier's *Adieu Philippine* (1960) and François Truffaut's *La Peau douce* (1962). Seeing his father on the

2 'If I am of the extreme-left – no one ever says this but it is the case: my cinema is a cinema of the left – if I refused the army, if I have contempt for the facilities that money procures it's thanks to a few people whom I saw, during my childhood, in very difficult conditions but who were kings.'

3 'At the source of my films, there is always a conflict, something painful and separation, for me, it's the primal scene.'

screen encouraged Philippe's early enthrallment with the cinema. He was also interested in painting and attended the Musée des Arts Décoratifs, which offered classes in painting for children. Later he went to the Louvre, where he studied proportions, lighting and colouration, developing a passion for Georges de La Tour. This early experience helps to explain the painterly quality of many of Garrel's films, including his attachment to compositions illuminated by candlelight reminiscent of La Tour and his allusions to the neo-classical painting of Ingres.

According to Garrel, his debut in film-making came about due to an encounter with Claude Berri when he was fourteen years old. Berri spotted the young man on the Champs Élysées and organised an audition with Georges de Beauregard. After an initial screen test, Garrel explained that he was not interested in becoming an actor and asked Berri to take him on as an apprentice director on his first feature film, *Le Vieil Homme et l'enfant* (1966). During the filming of Berri's first feature, Garrel saved up to buy the film stock left over from the shoot, which enabled him to make *Les Enfants désaccordés* (1966), his first extant work<sup>4</sup> (Azalbert and Delorme 2011: 73). Recorded in three days and edited rapidly, this short film about adolescent rebellion was bought by French television. The money from TV enabled him to finance a second short film, *Droit de visite* (1966). The use of street photography, sequences filmed in Parisian cafés, in addition to the evocation of rebellious youth culture in both works, reflects the influence of the New Wave.

Following his film-making debut, the young director began working for the French television broadcaster, the ORTF (Office de Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française). Until a study by Nicole Brenez, this period in Garrel's early career had gone virtually unacknowledged. He worked for two programmes, *Bouton Rouge*, co-produced by André Harriss and Alain Sédouy, and *Seize million des jeunes*, produced by Michel Taittinger and Jean-Pierre Frambois. During this time, Garrel made short films, documentary pieces dealing with the expansion of pop music and the lifestyle of the baby-boomer

4 Prior to *Les Enfants désaccordés* Garrel made one other work, *Une Plume pour Carole*, initially entitled *Un français à Londres*. Shot in London and starring Garrel's English girlfriend at the time and Jérôme Laperrousaz, the director later destroyed the film when classifying his work in 1970 (Tsukidate 2018).

generation. Brenez depicts Garrel's approach as a deliberate challenge to the transformation of the youth culture in France into a demographic with passive tastes and modes of behaviour dominated by American consumer culture. She writes, 'dans un tel contexte, frappe la radicalité politique de Philippe Garrel qui injecte de la critique partout où cela s'avère possible, à commencer par la diversité inventive du traitement des sujets abordés, grâce à des formes et des longueurs encore non-standardisées' (Brenez 2013: 124).

The ORTF commissioned Garrel to make a feature-length television film. *Anémone* (1967), the film's eponymous title, is drawn from a nickname Garrel gave to the leading actor Anne Bourguignon, a nickname that Bourguignon went on to adopt in the course of her film career. She plays an adolescent from the Parisian bourgeoisie, who rebels against her privileged background by running away from home with her companion Pascal (Pascal Laperrousaz). With a similar storyline and featuring the same male lead, the parallels between *Anémone* and *Les Enfants désaccordés* are readily apparent. The black and white cinematography of Garrel's first short is, on this occasion, replaced by saturated 16mm colour stock. Garrel recounts that after an advance screening of the work, a programmer from the ORTF promised him that his work would never be shown (Garrel and Lescure 1992: 38–39). The film was eventually televised a year later in 1968, but the anecdote reveals an early conflict between the film-maker's approaches and institutional tastes.

Garrel's second feature film, *Marie pour mémoire* (1967), at once brought him critical recognition but also a further warning as to the hostility and incomprehension his work would be met with in the future. With the director no longer working at the ORTF, the film was independently produced in part thanks to financial support from Claude Berri. The film received first prize at the Festival International du Jeune Cinéma de Hyères in April 1968. Garrel describes how the entire audience booed when the award was announced. The critical endorsement nonetheless proved fortuitous for a different reason. The award helped Garrel avoid prison for having refused compulsory military service, after a photo of him being embraced by Michel

5 'Garrel's political radicality is striking in such a context, injecting criticism wherever possible, beginning with the inventive diversity of the treatment of the subjects taken on, thanks to forms and durations not yet standardised'.

Simon on receiving the prize at Hyères was shown to the jury during the trial (Garrel and Lescure 1992: 40). This episode is recalled in *Les Amants réguliers* when the young poet, François Dervieux (Louis Garrel), is given a suspended sentence owing to his artistic sensibility, having refused to report for compulsory military service.

### May 68

The worker and student revolt of May 68, which threatened to topple the de Gaulle government, led to a marked politicisation of French film culture. During the *événements*, many in the French film industry united in solidarity with those who had gone on strike, occupying the IDHEC (Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques), and the CNC (Centre National de la Cinématographie) and establishing the Estates General of Cinema (États Généraux du Cinéma Français).<sup>6</sup> Garrel responded to the tumult through his participation in the realisation of collectively produced militant films, referred to as *cinétracts*. Alongside Laurent Condominas, Serge Bard, Patrick Deval and with the assistance of Alain Jouffroy, Garrel made *Actua 1*, a mostly silent, black and white short film shot on the streets of Paris during the *événements*. Recorded in 35mm, unlike the other film tracts, which were recorded on 16mm, the film was described by Godard as the best film made about May 68 (de Baecque 2010: 413).

Garrel's experiment with collectivised, militant film-making was short-lived. His next two films *Le Révélateur* (1968) – a silent work shot in the Bavarian countryside at the tail end of the *événements* – and *La Concentration* (1968) – filmed over three days in a studio in Paris during the period immediately afterwards – appeared only obliquely related to the revolutionary upheaval witnessed in France. Articulating his particular vision of artistic engagement, Garrel stated the following during an interview with *Cahiers du cinéma* in August 1968:

6 The IDHEC and the CNC constituted France's national film school and its major public funding for film respectively. For a detailed discussion of the role of the Estates General and the relationship between May 68 and French film culture see: Harvey 1978.

Il ne faut jamais que le cinéma soit l'endroit où le spectateur trouve sa part de plaisir. Or, c'est cela que le cinéma avait tendance à devenir dans le système capitaliste. Il faut absolument que le film soit celui qui dérange: s'il a une fonction, c'est bien de tomber comme un pavé dans la mare, dans la salle où la bourgeoisie vient se nicher.<sup>7</sup> (Comolli, Narboni and Rivette 1968: 54)

The statement implies a form of engagement in terms of pushing formal boundaries and provoking the spectator. Garrel articulates the necessity of an austere approach that would challenge the notion of the cinema as a mode of entertainment, highlighting a quest to align experimental cinema with revolutionary struggle.

## Underground

In 1969 Garrel met Christa Päffgen, the German musician, actress and model better known by her stage name Nico. The encounter with Nico took place when Garrel travelled to Italy to film part of *Le Lit de la vierge* (1969) in Grottaferata, just outside Rome. Nico had previously been closely affiliated with the Factory in New York, forming one of Andy Warhol's 'Superstars', a grouping of artists and friends of Warhol arbitrarily designated as stars in a riposte to the Hollywood star system. She appeared in Warhol's most famous film, *Chelsea Girls* (1966), a work presented in a split screen with an alternating soundtrack, made with the inhabitants and associates of the Chelsea Hotel in New York. Nico's song, 'The Falconer', which had originally been written in dedication to Warhol, accompanies a single-shot sequence in *Le Lit de la vierge*, a black and white film recorded in widescreen. Garrel himself appears in this dreamlike sequence, dressed in ragged clothing and carrying a newspaper. He is shown in a long-shot waking up in a vast, deserted landscape, with mountains visible in the distance. The camera tracks laterally for several minutes to capture the young man's meandering stroll, as he makes his way towards the figures of Mary (Zouzou) and Jesus (Pierre Clémenti).

7 'The cinema must never be a place where the spectator finds pleasure. That is the tendency of film in a capitalist system. Above all the film must be something that disturbs: if it has one function, it is to fall like a paving stone in a pond, into the auditorium where the bourgeoisie has come to nestle.'

The incorporation of the song marks the first collaboration between Garrel and Nico. It signified the beginning of a creative and romantic affiliation between the two figures, which would lead to the production of six films.

The period of Garrel's relationship with Nico is also synonymous with his underground period, a term that denotes the experimental nature of Garrel's cinema as well as his refusal to subscribe to the traditional circuits of production and distribution. The underground films, each of which feature Nico, can be divided into two subgroups. The first is defined by wealth, as Garrel benefited from the patronage of Sylvina Boissonnas,<sup>8</sup> an experimental film-maker and militant who had inherited a large fortune. The second is defined by poverty, beginning with *Les Hautes Solitudes* in 1974, a silent film starring Jean Seberg, Nico, Tina Aumont and Laurent Terzieff. In the later films of Garrel's underground period, the director self-produced his work, often with little money and without the aid of crew or technicians. Many of the works during this period were only screened at the Cinémathèque Française upon their release, thanks to Henri Langlois, who was a long-time admirer and supporter of Garrel's cinema.

### Narrative

In the late 1970s, following the end of his relationship with Nico, Garrel came to a creative and emotional impasse. His experimental works, made with ever-diminishing resources, increasingly discouraged the interest of a broad public due to the opacity of the subject matter and the poverty of the means of production. The film-maker responded to this crisis by deciding to make work that confronted aspects of his life, including his relationship with Nico, by means of a more transparent narrative form. This manifested in the development of an autofictional style, involving characters that loosely resembled the director and other members of his entourage of

8 Having been a significant figure in Parisian underground culture in the 1960s and early 1970s, Boissonnas became more closely involved with militant feminism. Since 1974 she has collaborated with and helped finance the feminist publishing house *Éditions de femmes*.



friends and family, some of whom are incarnated by their real-life referents. *L'Enfant secret* (1979) was the first work to emerge following this shift, portraying the relationship between a young director and an actor closely resembling Garrel and Nico.

Following his relationship with Nico, Garrel began a relationship with the actor and director Brigitte Sy. Together, Garrel and Sy had two children, Louis Garrel (b.1983) and Esther Garrel (b.1991). In the 1980s and 1990s the director's work loosely traces the evolution of this family unit, confronting the various crises faced by couples, including the tension between a desire for artistic and sexual freedom and the responsibilities of being a husband and father. Louis Garrel's first appearance in his father's cinema was in a photograph shown in *Elle a passé tant d'heures sous les sunlights*. Still only a child, Louis also made a cameo appearance in *Les Ministères de l'art* (1988) and *Les Baisers de secours* (1989), before a prolonged period of collaboration with his father that began with a leading role in *Les Amants réguliers*. Esther Garrel, Louis's younger sister, made her first appearance in her father's work much later with a cameo role in *Sauvage Innocence* (2001) at nine years of age. She is shown standing in the wings of a film-set in Amsterdam, during the down time in the shooting of the film within the film. This prefaced her leading role as the character of Jeanne in *L'Amant d'un jour* (2017). Further reflecting Garrel's tendency to integrate aspects of his personal life in his cinema, the actors Brigitte Sy and Maurice Garrel are recurrent figures in the director's films of this period.

For *Les Baisers de secours* (1989) Garrel deployed a screenwriter for the first time, the poet and novelist Marc Cholodenko. Cholodenko subsequently worked as a screenwriter for ten films with Garrel. This development has marked a gravitation in the film-maker's approaches away from the strict individual control of the various aspects of production, towards a more standardised production model and the inclusion of a larger team of technicians and professionals.

Cholodenko's affinity with Garrel's work preceded their collaboration. This included an admiration for the director's underground films which he watched in the Pagode cinema as a young man when based in Paris for military service. Cholodenko's creative affinity with Garrel, in addition to his burgeoning friendship with the director, meant that he was sensitive to his counterpart's autobiographical tendencies and the subjects previously explored in his cinema. This

affinity facilitated Cholodenko's ability to address Garrel's relationships, notably with Nico, who emerges as an avatar in several films, including the character of Marianne (Johanna ter Steege) in *J'entends plus la guitare* (1990). It also facilitated the treatment of Garrel's evolving familial ties, something that is most explicitly touched on in *Les Baisers de secours*. In the latter work, Philippe Garrel plays the role of a director named Mathieu who comes into conflict with his wife, played by Brigitte Sy, having chosen a different actress to incarnate her in a film about their life. Loosely based on a real-life crisis between Garrel and Sy, after Garrel had chosen Mireille Perrier to star in *Elle a passé tant d'heures sous les sunlights* (1984), it represents the director's most developed autofictional work.

### Future generations

In 1999, just over three decades after the *événements* of May 68, Garrel made *Le Vent de la nuit*. The film provides an oblique reflection on the traces of May 68, through the portrayal of the relationship between a former militant named Serge (Daniel Duval) and his young assistant Paul (Xavier Beauvois). The film signals the beginning of a shift in focus in Garrel's cinema, involving the treatment of the lives of younger generations. Beyond working with Cholodenko, Garrel has also deployed Noémie Lvovsky as a screenwriter, in addition to regular collaborations with Arlette Langman and his second wife Caroline Deruras, who first worked on *Un Été brûlant* (2011). Garrel has also worked with veteran cinematographers including Raoul Coutard, famous for his work with Godard and Truffaut, who accompanied Garrel for *La Naissance de l'amour* (1993), *Le Cœur fantôme* (1998) and *Sauvage Innocence* (2001), combining a shift towards youthful characters and collaborations with experienced writers and artists.

In 2018, coinciding with the fiftieth anniversary of May 68, Garrel celebrated his seventieth birthday. This followed his completion of a trilogy of films: *La Jalousie* (2013), *L'Ombre des femmes* (2015), *L'Amant d'un jour* (2017). The three works are filmed in black and white and, with a similar duration of around 75 minutes, are relatively short for feature productions. Although the films deal with the amorous struggles faced by couples, there is the suggestion of a lighter approach that may in part be owed to the participation of the screenwriter

Jean-Claude Carrière, whose irreverent black humour inflects both *L'Ombre des femmes* and *L'Amant d'un jour*.

Despite the suggestion of a softening in Garrel's approach, his continued political commitment was expressed in an open letter published in *Le Monde* in 2018, in response to the violent suppression of the ZAD (Zone à Défendre) at Notre-Dame-des-Landes. The letter, which was co-signed by Aki Kaurismäki, Pedro Costa and a range of other film-makers, actors and film professionals, expressed solidarity with those who had occupied a section of land near Nantes, destined to be turned into an airport. It called for the direct intervention of film-makers in a manner that harks back to Garrel's intervention in *Actua 1* during May 68:

Nous, cinéastes, appelons donc à 'mordre', c'est-à-dire à filmer et à défendre ce territoire qui bat et se bat. Car défendre la ZAD lorsque l'on fait du cinéma, c'est défendre une idée de l'expérimentation, c'est défendre un lieu réel qui lutte pour construire des imaginaires, d'autres imaginaires, pour dessiller le regard et supprimer l'agonie.<sup>9</sup>  
(*Le Monde*, 17 May 2018)

In its conflation of political engagement and artistic experimentation, the appeal implies Garrel's continued preoccupation with issues surrounding the relationship between the aesthetic and the political, and between film-making and resistance.

### Critical contexts

Although reference will be made throughout this study to the various scholarly and popular critical sources that discuss Garrel's work, it is instructive at this point to review some of the key publications that have engaged with specific films, periods or tendencies within Garrel's career. In comparison with other film-makers of a similar generation and output (for example, Chantal Akerman, Wim Wenders or Nanni Moretti), writing on Garrel's cinema

9 'We, film-makers, call upon people to "bite", meaning to film and defend this territory that breathes and struggles. Because defending the ZAD as film-makers is to defend an idea of experimentation, to defend a real space that is fighting to construct imaginaries, other imaginaries, in order to open people's eyes and end the suffering.'

remains limited and fragmentary. Critical responses to Garrel's work tend to refer to specific films or periods in his career rather than his entire body of work. This may in part be owed to the scale of his output, which encompasses twenty-six feature films, at the time of writing, in a career spanning more than five decades. It is also quite likely owed to the irregularity of his film *oeuvre*, providing a challenge to critics to assimilate the heterogeneity of his style into a single study. Four major trends, at times overlapping, can be identified within the literature. The first grouping is theoretical criticism that tends to emanate from Deleuze's exploration of a corporeal cinema in his book *Cinema II: The Time Image* (1985). The second emerges from critical attempts to situate Garrel's films within a particular tradition, categorising and positioning his work in relation to the history of French cinema and in particular to the New Wave. A third trend incorporates comparative study, relating Garrel to other film-makers or contrasting specific films with those of other directors. A fourth trend encompasses occasional and essayistic writings.

In his second of two famous works on the cinema, Deleuze offers an endorsement of Garrel's cinema, describing him as one of 'the greatest modern *auteurs*, whose work, alas, may well develop its effects only in the long term, endowing the cinema with powers that are as yet not well known' (Deleuze 2005: 207). Deleuze describes Garrel's work as a 'cinema of the body', categorising him alongside other French film-makers of his generation – including Chantal Akerman, Jean Eustache and Jacques Doillon – who display similar preoccupations with the depiction of postures and attitudes of the body. Deleuze uses the term post-New Wave to designate the circle of film-makers associated with Garrel, arguing that the film-maker's figuration of bodies in space (in particular the three bodies of man, woman and child) establishes a cinematographic corporeal presence that rivals the presence of the human body in the theatre.

Although Deleuze has been important in promoting the reputation of Garrel and coining the term post-New Wave, several issues emerge from his approach. First, his analysis of Garrel is removed from a direct consideration of the day-to-day political occurrences in France. Deleuze does not analyse the intersection between Garrel's cinema and the political manifestations with which he was associated, and which, as is evident in his return to the subject of May 68

in *Les Amants réguliers* (2005), remain a preoccupation of his work. Another issue is the relationship proposed between Garrel's cinema (and that of others of his generation) and the New Wave. Referring to the cinema of Godard and Rivette, Deleuze notes how the New Wave 'has taken this cinema of attitudes and postures (whose model actor would be Jean-Pierre L aud) a long way' (Deleuze 2005: 186). The association of Garrel's cinema of bodies with the New Wave elides what appears to be a more ambivalent relationship between the director's work and his cinematic predecessors.

Nicole Brenez and Fabien Bouilly have continued in the tradition of Deleuze, providing theoretically rigorous readings that play close attention to the formal patterns in Garrel's film *oeuvre*. Both scholars offer challenging and rich responses to his cinema while largely omitting a consideration of the place of autobiography in his work. Fabien Bouilly, for instance, provides a detailed study of a tetralogy of films made between 1988 and 1993, for the most part avoiding reference to Garrel's biography. He argues: 'cette  tude ne tiendra   peu pr s aucun compte du caract re autobiographique des films de la quatri me p riode, si ce n'est dans les rares moment o  le probl me filmique envisag  ne nous para tra pas pouvoir se passer du savoir de l'autobiographie'<sup>10</sup> (Bouilly 2004: 10). Thibault Grasshoff's more recent study proposes a tetralogy of Garrel films beginning with *J'entends plus la guitare* (1990), differing marginally from the selection made by Bouilly. Grasshoff's analysis considers the political ramifications of Garrel's intimate *oeuvre*, tracing how the filmmaker's aesthetic of survival constitutes a subtle but eloquent form of resistance.

By contrast, a co-authored text by Garrel and Thomas Lescure provides an in-depth study of the relationship between Garrel's films and his life. Produced through a series of edited interviews between Lescure and the film-maker, the text seeks to establish coherence in a varied *oeuvre*, and to consider the genesis of several films by paying attention to the complex toing and froing between Garrel's life and his art. Lescure writes:

10 'This study takes almost no account of the autobiographical character of the films of the fourth period, except for the rare moments in which the filmic problems envisaged appear to be insurmountable without knowledge of his autobiography.'

Le travail de Garrel est, on le sait, autobiographique. Dialoguant avec lui j'ai donc cherché à mettre en rapport sa vie et ses films, moins pour fournir des clefs, au demeurant bien connues, que pour mettre en valeur la rhétorique aussi secrète que retorse qu'il a fini par élaborer ... et qui fait de ses films de singuliers objets en lesquels le réel ironise la fiction, à la fois mystifiants et démystifiants.<sup>11</sup> (Garrel and Lescure 1992: 23)

The text refers to almost all of Garrel's films produced up until 1991, contrasting with the majority of studies which respond only to a single film, a small group of films or a specific period.

In terms of texts written in English, Sally Shafto has produced a study of a group of young, experimental French film-makers from the late 1960s and early 70s that numbered Garrel in their entourage (Shafto 2000). These so-called Zanzibar film-makers were sponsored by Sylvina Boissonnas, their name being drawn from a cinematographic expedition organised by Boissonnas to the then Maoist island of Zanzibar between 1969 and 1970. Shafto's analysis is useful for interrogating and problematising the relationship between the films financed by Boissonnas, including those made by Garrel, and the cinema of the New Wave. Issues remain with the proposed composition of the grouping and the fact, acknowledged by Shafto, that Garrel has not identified with the term Zanzibar in relation to his film-making (Shafto 2000: 6). Such a scenario draws attention to the elusiveness of Garrel regarding categories and the heterogeneity of associations he has formed in his varied career.

Jill Forbes's survey of French cinema after the New Wave provides an overview of Garrel's career. She addresses his body of work alongside that of Jean Eustache in a chapter entitled 'The Heritage of the Nouvelle Vague'. Forbes observes key developments in Garrel's work, while providing a brief analysis of the themes and forms of his films. The personal nature of Garrel's film-making is evoked, not just in terms of subject matter but also in his modes of production that

11 'The work of Garrel is, as we know, autobiographical. Conversing with him I therefore sought to place his life and films into relationship with one another. This was less about providing clues for interpretation, given that much of this is already well known, than valorising an equally secret and inventive rhetoric that he has managed to develop ... and which makes his films singular objects in which the real ironises the fiction, at once mystifying and demystifying.'

incorporate the use of friends and family as cast and technicians. The broad remit of Forbes's excellent survey of French cinema after the New Wave means, however, that it does not allow for an in-depth analysis of Garrel's cinema.

In 2013, two French publications were produced on Garrel to coincide with the retrospective of his work at the Magic Cinema in Bobigny in 2013. The first, *Philippe Garrel. Théâtres au cinéma* (Bax and Béghin 2013), forms a large tome combining various articles, interviews and testimonies related to Garrel's cinema from its inception until his then most recent release, *Un Été brûlant* (2011). It includes important material on his little-known work with French television, made prior to becoming an independent film-maker, compiled by Nicole Brenez. In the same year, the journalist and film critic Philippe Azoury published a book offering a personal response to Garrel's work. Azoury offers a series of edited 'carnets intimes sur ce cinéma intime'<sup>12</sup> (Azoury 2013: 12). His unorthodox and essayistic approach produces a personal and lyrical response to Garrel's *oeuvre*, more discursive and poetic than scholarly.

Finally, in terms of sources of film criticism, the French film journal *Cahiers du cinéma* has provided sustained analysis of Garrel's films over the last decades. The journal revealed an early adherence to his work in the late 1960s, which was interrupted by the 1970s Maoist period, during which no mention was made of Garrel's cinema. Since the late 1970s, however, Garrel has regularly featured in its pages. Dossiers of short essays have accompanied the release of almost every new film, and regular interviews with the film-maker provide reflections both on his recent work and historical reflections on his *oeuvre*. *Cahiers* critics who have written regularly on Garrel include Alain Philippon, Thierry Jousse and the magazine's current chief editor, Stéphane Delorme. The latter expressed the depth of his affiliation with Garrel when he stated that it was after seeing *L'Enfant secret* as an adolescent that he decided to devote himself to cinema.<sup>13</sup>

12 'Intimate notebooks on this intimate cinema'.

13 Delorme expressed his affiliation with Garrel during a discussion following the *avant-première* of *Un Été brûlant* at the Club de l'Etoile Cinéma on 22 September 2011.

## Methods

The reading of Garrel's *oeuvre* that follows draws on the revelations and insights provided by the available literature while at the same time providing several new strands of analysis. The chapters examine the relationship between Garrel's work and May 68, exploring the link between the director's formal innovation and the intellectual and political climate in France, something touched on by several writers, including Shafto and Forbes. Second, following from the approaches developed by Shafto in relation to the categorisation of Garrel, the study provides an interrogation of the label post-New Wave – first proposed in reference to the film-maker by Gilles Deleuze – that has often been attached to him. Rather than presenting Garrel as a willing descendant of the New Wave, it considers the formal and thematic traits of his work that suggest an ambivalent relationship with the cinema of his forebears. The study also considers the director's role as a film historian whose cinema traces the contours of a loose school of largely French film-makers that followed the New Wave.

A further aspect developed in the book is an exploration of the links between Garrel's work and several avant-gardes, including the Surrealists, the Situationists, the Italian artistic movement *Arte povera* and the American underground. Exploring the synergy between these movements and the film-maker's work provides a way of interpreting aspects of his *oeuvre* – both formal and thematic – resistant to straightforward critical exegesis. Additionally, the analysis that follows considers the significance of autobiography in Garrel's films. Attention is paid to the autobiographical approaches used by the director, and his investigation of the porous relationship between art, dreams and everyday life. This field of enquiry, which resonates with Surrealist practice, emerges strongly in Garrel's cinema in his post-underground period.

In tracing Garrel's cinema and its relationship to French culture and society, this study refers to his entire film *oeuvre*, including works that have not been seen by a wide audience. Nearly all Garrel's films since *Elle a passé tant d'heures sous les sunlights* (1984) have been made available on DVD. Some of his earlier works – including *Marie pour mémoire* (1967), *Le Révélateur* (1968), *Le Lit de la vierge* (1969), *La Cicatrice intérieure* (1972) – have also received DVD releases. Many of Garrel's earlier works remain stored in 35mm format in the archives



of the Cinémathèque Française, only visible during the occasional retrospective of his work. A close analysis of the early, little-seen works is provided, given their importance to an understanding of the evolution in Garrel's style over the last half-century.

The study is composed of five chapters that provide both a chronological and thematic presentation of Garrel's *oeuvre*. The chapters are largely organised according to a periodisation which was proposed by the film-maker in the early 1990s. Lescure outlines four distinct periods put forward by Garrel:

L'oeuvre de Philippe Garrel est divisée par lui même en quatre périodes: l'adolescence (1964–1968) des *Enfants désaccordés* au *Révélateur*; les années-Nico ou période underground (1968–1978) de *La Cicatrice Intérieure* au *Bleu des Origines*; l'époque 'narrative', de *L'Enfant secret* – aux *Sunlights*. Une quatrième époque, caractérisée par le recours aux dialogues – réduits à leur plus simple expression voire inexistants dans les films précédents – s'ouvre avec *Les Baisers de secours* (1989) et *J'entends plus la guitare* (1990).<sup>14</sup> (Garrel and Lescure 1992: 26)

Advancing on these four periods outlined, Bouilly suggests a fifth period in Garrel's cinema that begins with the release of *Sauvage Innocence* (2001). He notes that Garrel had previously alluded to an inability to film generations other than his own. The choice of two actors still in their twenties to play the principal roles in the work, is posited by Bouilly as creating an effect of rupture with his previous films. This period, addressing new generations, is the focus of the final chapter in the study.

In accordance with this periodisation, the book is structured into the following chapters. Chapter 1 examines Garrel's early works, which the director refers to as his adolescent phase. It looks at the development in this period (1964–1968), moving from an early affinity with the New Wave to a more enigmatic and austere practice illuminated by its resonances with Situationist theory and practice.

14 'The *oeuvre* of Philippe Garrel is divided by himself into four periods: adolescence (1964–1968) from *Enfants désaccordés* to *Révélateur*; the Nico-Years or the underground period (1968–1978) from *La Cicatrice intérieure* to *Bleu des origines*; the "narrative" period, from *L'Enfant secret* – to *Sunlights*. A fourth period, characterised by the recourse to dialogues – reduced to their most simple expression, which had indeed been non-existent in his previous films – opens with *Les Baisers de secours* (1988) and *J'entends plus la guitare* (1990).'

Chapter 2 considers the films of the 1970s, designated by the term 'underground'. It draws upon the American Underground, notably the cinema of Andy Warhol, as well as the precepts of the Italian avant-garde *Arte Povera* in order to interpret the preoccupations and stylistic innovations of Garrel during this period (1969–1978). The third chapter addresses the narrative period (1979–1988), which begins with *L'Enfant secret*. It explores in particular the relationship between Garrel's autobiographical approaches and Surrealism, especially the writings of André Breton, with whom the director expresses a close connection. A second element of this chapter assesses Garrel's role as historian, and in particular how he integrates the personal histories of film-makers such as Chantal Akerman, Jacques Doillon and Jean Eustache, with a broader history of a loose cinematic school that evolved in the aftermath of the New Wave, the so-called post-New Wave.

Chapter 4 addresses the tetralogy of films that mark Garrel's first collaboration with scriptwriters: *Les Baisers de secours* (1989), *J'entends plus la guitare* (1990), *La Naissance de l'amour* (1993) and *Le Cœur fantôme* (1998). These works continue in the vein of the previous period, engaging with aspects of both Garrel's present and past life, including marital difficulties and the conflict that emerges between one's responsibilities towards one's career and one's family. In addition to providing close readings of the films, the chapter assesses the aesthetic implications of Garrel's various collaborations with screenwriters, cinematographers and sound engineers during this period. Chapter 5 addresses the most recent period in Garrel's *oeuvre*, as identified by Bouilly. It considers the relationship between the films *Le Vent de la nuit* and *Les Amants réguliers* in terms of the memory and legacy of May 68. It also explores the latest trilogy of work produced by Garrel and what it suggests about the future directions of the director.

Despite the different periods that mark Garrel's career, the director's *oeuvre* is defined by a distinct approach that renders a porous relationship between individual films. Through this, works from distinct periods are drawn into dialogue with one another and the impression emerges of a large body of intersecting and interdependent components. Throughout, Garrel reworks the same thematic preoccupations, including the couple, separation, suicide,

the material and existential struggles faced by artists and the relationship between art and the political. The same formal patterns recur, including a minimalist, uncluttered frame, the use of long-duration close-ups, as well as contrasted cinematography that often reveals the grain of the film reel. In exploring his life and the lives of those close to him through the prism of a distinct romantic sensibility, Garrel elaborates a rich and variegated canvas that promotes a constant exchange between the imaginary and the real. This study aims to bear witness to Garrel's singular approach and the rare cinematic landscape he has wrought for over half a century.

## References

- Azalbert, Nicholas and Stéphane Delorme (2011) 'Mon but c'est de faire des films d'amour politiques. Entretien avec Philippe Garrel', *Cahiers du cinéma*, 671, pp. 69–77.
- Azoury, Philippe (2013) *Philippe Garrel en substance*, Paris: Capricci.
- Bax, Dominique and Cyril Béghin (eds) (2013) *Philippe Garrel. Théâtres au cinéma*, Bobigny: Collection Magic Cinéma.
- Bouilly, Fabien (2004) "'Entre deux personnes": esthétique de la co-présence dans la quatrième période du cinéma de Philippe Garrel', PhD dissertation, Université Lumière, Lyon.
- Brenez, Nicole (1998) *De la figure en général et du corps en particulier. L'invention figurative au cinéma*, Brussels: De Boeck Université.
- Brenez, Nicole (2013) 'Philippe Garrel, l'œuvre télévisuelle', in Bax and Béghin, *Philippe Garrel. Théâtres au cinéma*, pp. 124–126.
- Collective authors, 'Notre-Dame-des-Landes. Nous, cinéastes, appelons à filmer et à défendre ce territoire qui bat et se bat', *Le Monde* (17 May 2018).
- Comolli, Jean-Louis, Jean Narboni and Jacques Rivette (1968) 'Cercle sous vide. Entretien avec Philippe Garrel', *Cahiers du cinéma*, 204, pp. 44–63.
- De Baecque, Antoine (2010) *Godard, biographie*, Paris: Grasset.
- Deleuze, Gilles (2005) *Cinema II: The Time Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta, London: Continuum.
- Forbes, Jill (1992) *The Cinema in France after the New Wave*, London: Macmillan/BFI.
- Garrel, Philippe and Thomas Lescure (1992) *Une caméra à la place du cœur*, Aix-en-Provence: Admiranda/Institut de l'Image.
- Grasshoff, Thibault (2015) *Philippe Garrel, une esthétique de la survivance*, La Madeleine: Lettmotif.
- Harvey, Sylvia (1978) *May '68 and Film Culture*, London: BFI.
- Jousse, Thierry (1991) 'Le Cinéma au présent. Philippe Garrel, Serge Daney: Dialogues', *Cahiers du cinéma*, 443–444, pp. 58–63.

Shafto, Sally (2000) *The Zanzibar Films and the Dandies of May 1968*, New York: Zanzibar USA.

Tsukidate, Nanako (2018) 'Philippe Garrel et sa generation dans les années 1960-1970', *Débordements*. [www.debordements.fr/Philippe-Garrel-l-experience-interieure-exterieure-671](http://www.debordements.fr/Philippe-Garrel-l-experience-interieure-exterieure-671) (accessed 10 August 2019).