

Introduction: the iPad is the New Cinema

“It allows us to extend the classroom beyond these four walls,” said an English teacher in Roslyn Heights, N.Y. about the Apple iPad2 tablet.¹ Less than a year after Apple unveiled the first iPad to great fanfare in April 2010, the *New York Times* reported that many American school districts were purchasing them *en masse* for their classes. Already by January 2011, the New York Public School system had ordered over 2,000 of the devices while the Chicago schools had already financed \$450,000 in grants for their acquisition. Teachers and school administrators exuded a palpable enthusiasm for the new device that they claimed was “not just a cool new toy but rather a powerful and versatile tool with a multitude of applications, including thousands of educational uses.”² During the 2011-12 academic year, a series of online articles claimed that the iPad boosted test scores in math and literacy while Apple’s website boasted that the device was “changing the classroom” through inspiring students’ creativity and promoting hand’s-on learning.³

Such enthusiasm for the iPad may appear almost natural given the historically long connection that Americans have made between their civilization and their sense of

¹ Winnie Hu. “Math That Moves: Schools Embrace The iPad.” *New York Times*, January 4, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/05/education/05tablets.html?pagewanted=all>

² Hu, “Math that Moves.”

³ Courtney Subramanian. “New Study Finds iPads in the Classroom Boost Test Scores.” *Time Techland* (22 February 2012). URL: <http://techland.time.com/2012/02/22/new-study-finds-ipads-in-the-classroom-boost-test-scores/>. Jim Dalrymple. “iPads in the Classroom Raise Math Scores 49%.” www.loopinsight.com (13 August 2012). URL: <http://www.loopinsight.com/2012/08/13/ipads-in-the-classroom-raise-math-scores-49/>. Apple’s iPad education page can be found at: <http://www.apple.com/education/ipad/> [Accessed 14 September 2012].

technological progress.⁴ Yet, historians of modernity, like Bernhard Rieger, have shown that reception of new technologies in Europe and America has oscillated between fascination and anxiety over their super-human powers for good and ill.⁵ As much as many teachers embraced the iPad right out the box, literally, others worried that tablets risked augmenting childhood developmental problems like attention deficit disorder, media addiction and eyestrain.⁶

News columnists referenced the large volume of studies done on the influence of television and video games over the psychology and behavior of children. A divide persists between techno-enthusiasts who believe that visual learning through video games will prepare children to function in a mediatized twenty-first century work environment and specialists in media studies and child psychology who argue that excessive consumption of such games leads to violent and anti-social behavior.⁷ For supporters, like teachers in a school district in Maine who purchased iPads for their classes in 2011-2012, students' ability to interact with screens, capture images, and manipulate icons "engage with what they're learning, and promote the skills needed to effectively present

⁴ David E. Nye. *American Technological Sublime*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994, and Thomas Parke Hughes. *American Genesis: A Century of Invention and Technological Enthusiasm, 1870-1970*. New York: Viking, 1989.

⁵ Bernhard Rieger. *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

⁶ "Are iPads and other tablets bad for children?" *New York Daily News* (2 April 2012). URL: http://articles.nydailynews.com/2012-04-02/news/31276908_1_electronic-tablets-ipad-electronic-babysitter. David Pogue. "A Parent's Struggle with a Child's iPad Addiction." *The New York Times* (24 February 2011). URL: <http://pogue.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/02/24/a-parents-struggle-with-a-childs-ipad-addiction/>. [Accessed 15 September 2012]

⁷ The pro-video game position has been articulated by Marc Prensky. "Don't Bother Me, Mom, I'm Learning! How computer and video games are preparing your kids for 21st century success and how you can help." *UOC Papers* (2006). URL: <http://www.uoc.edu/uocpapers/5/dt/eng/prensky.html> and James Paul Gee. "What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy." *Computers in Entertainment* 1, no. 1 (October 2003). URL: <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=950595&CFID=116435762&CFTOKEN=87431606>. A summary of the extensive research linking video games with aggression and anti-social behavior can be found in Craig A. Anderson, Douglas A. Gentile, and Katherine A. Buckley. *Violent Video Game Effects on Children and Adolescents: Theory, Research, and Public Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

information to a room of colleagues – something that’s bound to come in handy in college or a career.”⁸ Skeptics have, by contrast, countered that there is “very little evidence that kids learn more, faster or better by using these machines.”⁹

Discourses over iPads and video games reveal the crucial role that education has played in negotiating the meanings about and the implementation of media technologies within the broader society. Teachers, techno-enthusiasts and computer companies have constructed networks between themselves to stimulate the market in and to promote the use of technologies, especially the iPad, as a revolutionary teaching device. Because these are *visual* technologies, a key focus of these discourses has been on their effects on, and even influence over, the cognitive faculties and behavior of children. For proponents, these technologies offer a more efficient or even different kind of learning experience, especially skills and capacities overlooked in traditional pedagogical methods whether it be hand-and-eye coordination, object manipulation or even just a more engaging means of involving students with course materials.¹⁰

Yet, neither the role that debates concerning the effects of visual media on children, nor that of educators in integrating media into social and institutional life has been examined by visual studies scholars. In a 2005 survey of the field, for example, some scholars identified the role that visual technologies played in their own pedagogy, but not how the field of education itself has historically served as a sphere for the construction of meaning and use of media.¹¹ Yet, researchers in visual studies have done

⁸ Florence Ion. “iPads in the Classroom are Changing the Face of Education.” *Maclife* (18 April 2012). URL: http://www.maclife.com/article/features/ipads_classroom_are_changing_face_education

⁹ Hu, “Math That Moves.”

¹⁰ Alice Mitchell and Carol Savill-Smith. *The Use of Computers and Video Games for Learning*. London: Learning and Skills Development Agency, 2004. URL: <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5270/1/041529.pdf>

¹¹ Margaret Dikovitskaya. *Visual Culture: The Study of the Visual After the Cultural Turn*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 85-118.

path-breaking work in showing how the emergence of a globalized image-based culture – which has now become digitalized – has reconfigured our understandings of the past, national and transnational identity, the body, and even the faculty of vision itself.¹² Indeed, these scholars have drawn from art history and the history of technology to show vision itself has been historically constructed and that our current mediatized age is ultimately a “scopic regime” distinct from earlier epochs.¹³

If such distinct “scopic regimes” exist, then, the role of public debates about the impacts of visual media on children bring to light the networks of advocates and skeptics that help to shape the broader institutional and social integration of these technologies and thus “concretize” these new ways of seeing. This, however, begs the question as to whether other media technologies within other national contexts experience similar processes of enthusiasm, contestation, negotiation and adoption and whether these ultimately promote new ways of seeing and of understanding images.

This dissertation argues that in the France of the 1920s and the 1930s, the cinema played the same role for educators and advocates as iPads do for their contemporary counterparts. Supporters of educational cinema argued that films were a means to enhance and improve the learning experience of children and revitalize hidebound pedagogical practices. They endorsed not only the dissemination of films but also the creation of institutional support structures that embedded cinema within the social life of students and their surrounding communities. Yet, my choice of France for this study is

¹² See Jonathan Crary. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991, Nicholas Mirzoeff. *The Visual Culture Reader*. London: Routledge, 2002, and Vanessa R. Schwartz and Jeannne M. Pryblyski. *The Nineteenth-Century Visual Studies Reader*. London: Routledge, 2004.

¹³ Martin Jay. “Scopic Regimes of Modernity.” In *Vision and Visuality*. H. Foster, ed. Seattle: Bay Press, 1988.

not merely to draw a parallel between the interwar period and contemporary times. Educational cinema movements existed in many nations, especially the major industrial countries of the United States, Britain, and Germany.¹⁴ The movement in France took a distinct trajectory based on that nation's historical experiences in the interwar period. In so doing, the French produced particular meanings about the cinematic image and its applicability in educational settings that differed from other countries. To examine the movement in France is not only to discover how media technologies were integrated (or not) within nation-specific institutional arrangements but also to understand how meanings about moving images themselves were historically constructed. Although the French educational cinema movement did not survive the Second World War, its impact on the institutionalization of cinema within French cultural life and its influence on French approaches to the cinematic image endure.

What was it about the social and political context of interwar France that gave the movement its particular shape? Much like cinematic enthusiasts in other countries, the French made big claims about the educational potential of film images. Writing in 1938, André Braun-Larrieu, a young graduate of France's most prestigious school for public administration, declared that "the cinema is a new vehicle," he asserts, "for customs,

¹⁴ For histories of early non-theatrical film in United States, see Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible, eds. *Learning with the Lights Off: Educational Films in the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; for Germany, see Susanne Unger. "Cultivating Audiences: *Filmbildung*, Moral Education, and the Public Sphere in Germany." Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2011 and Martina Roepke. "Tracing 17.5mm practices in Germany (1902-1908)." *Film History* 19, no. 4 (2007), 344-352; for Britain, see Luke McKernan. "Something More than a Mere Picture Show: Charles Urban and the Early Non-Fiction Film in Great Britain and America, 1897-1925." Ph.D. diss., University of London, 2003 and Paul Swann. *The British Documentary Film Movement, 1926-1946*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989; for other countries, see Jiří Horníček. "The Institutionalization of Classroom Films in Czechoslovakia Between the Wars." *Film History* 19, no. 4 (2007), 384-391, and, somewhat later, Eef Masson. "Celluoid Teaching Tools: Classroom Films in the Netherlands (1941-1953)." *Film History* 19, no. 4 (2007), 392-400.

fashions, products and ways of thinking.”¹⁵ Among those multiple influence, Braun-Larrieu singled out education. “Above all,” his book, *The Social Role of Cinema*, asserted, “it is incontestable that children are most easily held through the influence of cinema.”¹⁶ Because moving images had a profound psychological impact on children, he argued that they could constitute a new kind of education in the classroom: “thus, education by the cinema must not be considered as a complement to teaching, but rather as a separate kind of teaching, addressing other faculties than those solicited by conventional education.”¹⁷

As with other national cinema movements, these beliefs were shared among specific constituencies of progressive educators, representatives of the cinema industry, government ministers, and the cinema trade press. Seeing themselves apostles of modernism setting out to modernize French pedagogy, they generated a range of activities and promoted the creation of an infrastructural support network that involved the ministries of the Third Republic and the League of Nations. This sense of belonging was forcefully conveyed by Joseph Brenier, a Senator from Isère and president of the regional educational cinema office in Lyon. In a prologue that he penned to a mid-1920s technical manual by Eugène Reboul, he exclaimed: “...I fight that the cinema be moral, be popularized, and put in the hands of all educators... in a future time, each commune, each school will be equipped with its own educational cinema, and you [Reboul] will

¹⁵ André Braun-Larrieu. *Le Rôle Social du Cinéma*. (Paris: Éditions du Cinéopse, 1938), 3.

¹⁶ Braun-Larrieu, 43

¹⁷ Braun-Larrieu, 44.

have the right to rejoice and to claim for yourself a large part in its indisputable progress.”¹⁸

Interwar France, however, possessed specific qualities that both advanced and hindered the growth of the movement. Their initiatives rested on much more fragile political and institutional bases than did their compeers’ in Germany or the United States.¹⁹ For one thing, the major French production houses of Pathé-Frères and Gaumont had, by the beginning of the 1920s, lost both their earlier domination of international markets and even their own domestic movie screens. On the one hand, this encouraged these companies to cultivate educators as potential clients, however, it also meant that they did not have the financial wherewithal to build and sustain this market themselves. This was different than in America where, along with the commercial strength of the Hollywood giants, educational cinema received backing from major institutional actors such as the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Motor Company and the Rockefeller Corporation, and through the involvement of prominent universities like Columbia, Yale, and Chicago who also made and studied the effects of films themselves.²⁰

This largesse of institutional support was not available in the France of the Third Republic and, consequently, the effort to create a durable educational cinema movement depended much more on direct, and ultimately insufficient, government support as well

¹⁸ Joseph Brenier. “Preface.” Eugène Reboul. *Le Cinéma Scolaire et Éducateur*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1926), ix, xi. Translations are by the author unless otherwise attributed.

¹⁹ I use the word “cineaste” rather than “cinophile” because the latter word is associated with the post-Second World War film culture in France and connotes both a different way of looking at films and a focus on the authorial works of major directors. See Antoine de Bacque. *Le Cinéophile: Invention d’un regard, histoire d’une culture 1944-1958*. Paris: Fayard, 2005.

²⁰ Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible. “A History of Learning with the Lights Off.” In Orgeron, Orgeron, and Streible, eds. *Learning With The Lights Off*, 15-66. For Ford’s educational film project, see Lee Grieveson. “Visualizing Industrial Citizenship,” in Orgeron, Orgeron, and Streible, 107-123.

as assistance from municipalities and civic associations. Although certain ministries such as those of Agriculture and Public Instruction (renamed the Ministry of National Education in 1934) provided financial assistance for the purchase of projectors, these were ultimately insufficient for assuring continuous screenings and for repairing or replacing equipment. Moreover, the Third Republic did not develop any national policy on educational cinema. This shortsightedness caused confusion when companies offered rival film-gauges (9mm, 16mm, 17.5mm, 28mm) and ultimately produced competing catalogues of films. It was only during the Popular Front and, ultimately, the Vichy eras that the French state began to consider educational film as a matter of sustained state interest.

Ironically, the involvement of Vichy also compromised that very social and political legitimacy that educational cineastes had long sought. This revealed a conceptual complexity that, in the politicized French context of the 1930s and 1940s, made a viable pedagogical cinema more problematic: the very instability of the category, “educational.” From the beginning, educational cineastes wanted to establish rigorous criteria for films deemed “instructional” – those to be used in a classroom for specific lessons – and for films that they identified more broadly as “educational,” which appealed to the wider public of children and adults. The latter type included films on social issues like public hygiene and savings and others that provided entertainment. Although the distinction between instruction (*enseignement*) and education (*éducation*) went back to the progressive pedagogical writings of Enlightenment thinkers, cineastes found it challenging to translate these ideas into cinema and maintain distinct boundaries between the two. Their main concern was that public “educational” screenings ultimately

blurred the distinction between “pedagogy” and “spectacle” that they deemed important for their efforts to have legitimacy. Yet, the governments of the Popular Front and Vichy only destabilized this boundary further by blurring the distinction between “education” and “propaganda” when the state finally took a sustained interest in this field.

Thus, this dissertation argues that the significance of the French educational cinema movement is that it represented a *particular moment* when middle-class reformers and members of the cinema industry re-framed the cinema as a medium that could abet the Third Republic’s educational and social reformist objectives. But the material enactment of their objectives also revealed both the limitations of state support and the instability of the category of an “educational” film. The effort to demarcate “educational” from other types of film began in the pre-First World War era when individuals sought to obtain social legitimacy for the medium by opposing it to crime films. In the post-war period, the institutionalization of the movement was founded upon connecting cinema to the educational and social interests of the Third Republic, specifically for trained workers. Yet, the state, while offering subventions, never fully committed itself to it.

Moreover, while teachers and other cineastes sought to impose a strict set of characteristics for instructional films (*films d’enseignement*), it was those designated for more general cultural and moral education (*films d’éducation*) that proved to be more popular. Such “educational cinema” screenings featured everything from travelogues and documentaries to comedic films that were ultimately not as distinct from “spectacle” as its backers had hoped. Moreover, politics, as much as conceptual instability, played an important role. As Brian Goldfarb has shown, educational media is fundamentally political. In his book *Visual Pedagogy*, he argues that visual media as an active agent for

critical pedagogy aimed to awaken the political consciousness of marginalized peoples, the politics of the interwar French educational cinema movement were more conservative and contradictory.²¹ On the one hand, advocates praised themselves as agents of modernity seeking to transform the pedagogical practices of a hidebound (or text-bound) educational establishment. On the other hand, their aspirations worked *within* pre-existing institutions to fulfill the social and political goals of the Third Republic. It was a middle-class movement, made up of mainly professional men and women who ascribed to late-nineteenth century republican values – social improvements and working-class integration within the framework of the capitalist state. Even when the movement became international under the League of Nations, their aspirations were at best a benign internationalism. This meant that they could envision no other function for cinema than that of didacticism. Unlike members of the concurrent ciné-club movement, they were not interested in film for its aesthetic qualities – or even shocking effects - but only as a new and superior teaching tool to achieve what they imagined would be a more progressive approach to teaching.²²

This study, then, takes a multidimensional approach to the study of educational film. In claiming that it was through the sphere of education that the medium won social legitimacy and achieved a widespread dissemination through the nation's institutions, it focuses on the networks of middle-class reformers, teachers, and industry figures who spent the better part of two decades defining and defending this particular usage. These efforts served to attach new utilitarian meaning to what were before “disreputable”

²¹ Brian Goldfarb, *Visual Pedagogy: Media Culture In and Beyond the Classroom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 1-22.

²² See Christophe Gauthier. *Cinéphiles, Ciné-Clubs, et salles spécialisées à Paris de 1920 à 1929*. Paris: Association française de recherche sur l'Histoire du Cinéma, 1999.

images and served ultimately to domesticate cinema. Normally, we think of domestication as the way users acquire and adapt technologies to their particular needs.²³ In this case, however, it was a larger network that generated enthusiasm for the institutional use of projectors that led, ultimately, to the creation of small-gauge equipment. In this respect, too, they played a hitherto unsung role in the social legitimation of cinema. By the beginning of the 1930s, one cinema journal, *Cinéma-Éducation*, boasted that, out of 20,000 cinema screens in France, 12,000 of them were dedicated to education²⁴ - a not inconsiderable achievement.

The activities and arguments that these networks developed, however, both constructed new utilitarian meanings around cinema but also complicated what it meant for a film to be considered “educational.” For republican organizations such as the Ligue Française de l’Enseignement, the term “educational” was tied to a vision of popular education that went back to the early Third Republic. This involved showing not only instructional films, but also “social educational” documentaries on hygiene, savings, and anti-alcoholism. For the League of Nations, “educational” meant propagating the ideals of international understanding and “moral disarmament” on a worldwide scale. In Vichy, “education” meant a rejection of both those sets of values and an educational cinema devoted to *work, country, and fatherland*. In France, the meaning of “education” shifted depending on the particular political context in which films were utilized.

Finally, the dissertation intends to stress the historical specificity of the utilitarian discourse surrounding educational film. After the Second World War, a new, more

²³ Madeline Akrich. “The De-Description of Technical Objects.” In *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*. W.E. Bijker and J. Law, eds. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992.

²⁴ Marcel Colin-Reval. “Il y a en France près de 20.000 écrans, dont 12.000 d’enseignement.” *Cinéma-Éducation*, November 1931, 6. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) C.3.1.

critical approach to viewing images emerged that did not believe that the passive reception of images was such a good thing. Instead, the discourse shifted from, to borrow Charles Acland's phrase, *education through film* to *education about film*.²⁵ Although the development of the critical approach is beyond the scope of this project, I suggest that the interest and adoption of educational cinema by Vichy ultimately compromised the initial ambitions of those reformers who advocated for it. Instead of serving as an instrument for teaching and inculcating republican social values, it became a tool for an authoritarian state. And while pre-Second World War critical analyses of the filmed image by critics like Riccardo Canudo, Louis Delluc, Rudolf Arnheim, Sergei Eisenstein, and Jean Epstein survived, the more utilitarian doctrine of educational cineastes effectively disappeared.²⁶ Here, we can see the groundwork for the postwar critiques of Jean Baudrillard, Guy Debord, and Paul Virilio who saw in the pervasiveness of visual media a new form of political power where images or "the spectacle" constitute the objects of circulation within late capitalism, the subjectivities of those existing within this framework, and a new overarching optics for the perpetuation of power.²⁷

That is to say, in the post-Second World War period, French thinkers took a very different view about the relationship of cinema, and images more generally, to political power than they had before. While some regional film offices limped into the 1950s, educational cinema never again held the interest of the government or professional elites.

The 1946 Langevin-Wallon educational reform plan never made mention of films,

²⁵ Charles R. Acland. "Classrooms, Clubs, and Community Circuits: Cultural Authority and the Film Council Movement." In *Inventing Film Studies*. L. Grieveson and H. Wasson, eds. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008), 149-181.

²⁶ See Abel. *French Film Theory and Criticism*. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988.

²⁷ Jean Baudrillard. "Simulacra and Simulations." In *Selected Writings*. M. Poster, ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 166-184, Guy Debord. *Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books, 1995. Paul Virilio. *Open Sky*. (London: Verso, 2008), esp. 35-45. See also Jacques Ellul important study of *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. K. Kellen and J. Lerner, trans. New York: Knopf, 1965.

despite the fact that both of its authors had been involved in educational cinema during the interwar years. And neither the United Nations nor UNESCO, the successor to the League of Nations' International Institute, sponsored another film institute although they gradually incorporated media programs into their activities. With the exception of the League de l'Enseignement's bulletin and *Cinéopse*, other periodicals were not revived, and trade journals, like *Cinéopse*, did not accord educational cinema its pre-war prominence.

Consequently, the rediscovery of educational cinema has only been a recent development. In France itself, educational cinema began to disappear from historical accounts even before the Second World War. While Guillaume-Michel Coissac's 1925 study - the first comprehensive history of French cinema – integrated educational cinema into the larger narrative of the medium's development, it had relegated to inconsequentiality by the immediate post-war period. Already, by 1935, Maurice Bardèche and Robert Brasillach's *Histoire du Cinéma* makes little mention of educational cinema, and by the time of George Sadoul's postwar studies on *Le cinéma: son art, sa technique, son économie* (1948) and *Histoire d'un art: le cinéma des origines à nos jours* (1949), it had disappeared entirely. English-language historians of French cinema have generally followed suit. Exhaustive histories of pre-Second World War French cinema range from summaries of standard documentary cinema but not to educational films.²⁸

²⁸ Of the former, see Richard Abel. *The Ciné Goes to Town, French Cinema 1896-1914*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 42-43, 57; among the latter, Alan Williams. *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992, is a fairly standard account that emphasizes key figures and relegates discussion of documentary film to the New Wave; Colin Crisp. *The Classic French Cinema, 1930-1960* (London/Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993) concentrates heavily on industrial aspects like production, structure, and personnel; and while its companion volume discusses teachers and students only in terms of their representation in other film genres, see *Genre, Myth and Convention in the French Cinema, 1929-1939*. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002; Susan Hayward. *French National Cinema*, 2nd. ed. London: Routledge, 2005, also provides much detail on the

Within cinema studies more generally, histories of documentary film have tended to ignore educational cinema in favor of either surveys of well-known filmmakers or theoretical approaches that interrogate its genre specificity and narrative characteristics.²⁹ Early cinema as a field of specialized research extends back to the 1970s has generally focused on studies of genres and specific filmmakers; their relationship to earlier forms of mass culture and, more recently, practices of spectatorship.³⁰

In 1992, a single study on the French regional offices of educational cinema by Raymond Borde and Charles Perrin appeared. Their main goal was to provide a specific time-line of developments and basic data on their collections.³¹ Four years later, the archivist Armelle Sentilhes published a short history of classroom films in France that focused on the interwar period.³² Finally, in 2004, a collection edited by Béatrice de Pastre-Robert, Monique Dubost and François Massit-Folléa entitled *Cinéma pédagogique*

industry's history, and production and distribution practices, but is focused on the ways in which cinema constructed a "national identity." Books on interwar French cinema like Dudley Andrew. *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995, focuses on the development and provides diagetic readings of "Poetic Realist" films; Jean-Pierre Jeancolas. *Le Cinéma des Français: 15 ans d'années trente (1929-1944)*. Paris: Nouveau Monde Éditions, 1995, treats documentary and actuality (newsreel) films only in the context of the Popular Front and the immediate pre-World War Two period.

²⁹ Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane. *A New History of Documentary Film*. New York: Continuum, 2005 mainly focuses on U.K. and North American-based filmmakers. For an analysis of documentary film's characteristics and genre specificity, see Bill Nichols. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts Within Documentary*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991.

³⁰ Among many examples, see the collected essays in Thomas Elsaesser and Adam Barker, eds. *Early Cinema: Space-Frame-Narrative*. London: British Film Institute, 1990 and in Leo Charney and Vanessa Schwartz, eds. *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, For filmmakers, see Charles Musser. *Before the Nickelodeon: Edwin S. Porter and the Edison Manufacturing Company*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991 and Tom Gunning. *D.W. Griffith and the Origins of American Narrative Film*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991. For genre, see Ben Singer. *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. For spectatorship, see the classic study by Miriam Hansen. *Babel and Babylon: Spectatorship in American Silent Film*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991 and, more recently, Shelley Stamp. *Movie-Struck Girls: Women and Motion Pictures After the Nickelodeon*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000.

³¹ Raymond Borde and Charles Perrin. *Les Offices du cinéma éducateur et la survivance du Muet (1925-1940)*. Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1992

³² Armelle Sentilhes. "L'Audio-Visuel au Service de l'Enseignement." *Gazette des archives*, no. 173 (1996), 165-182.

et Scientifique, although still primarily focused on the issue of rediscovering archival collections, sought to broaden the research agenda to investigate screening practices as well as debates within the educational cinema movement (specifically between fixed and moving images in the classroom).³³ In addition, fine studies of major filmmakers by Josette Ueberschlag and Valérie Vignaux have both discussed the production of specific films and provided extensive diegetic analyses of them.³⁴

Interest among American-based scholars has emerged only very recently and, as in France, often at the initiative of archivists and preservationists. Peter J. Bloom's excellent *French Colonial Documentary* (2008) situates educational cinema within a larger rhetoric of French colonial humanism. Both at the 1931 Colonial Exhibition and within the colonies themselves, specifically Indochina, films were made to "make France known to the colonies, and the colonies known to France."³⁵ Thus, a specific educational film emerged to meet colonialist imperatives. Alison J. Murray Levine's recent work, *Framing The Nation* (2010), discusses the ways in which documentary and educational films were used to promote French national regeneration in the wake of the First World War.³⁶ And a recent dissertation on Germany by the anthropologist Susanne Unger shows conclusively how that nation's educational cinema was infused with a commitment

³³ Béatrice de Pastre-Robert, Monique Dubost and François Massit-Folléa, eds. *Cinéma pédagogique et Scientifique. À la redécouverte des archives*. Paris: École Normale Supérieure Éditions, 2004.

³⁴ Josette Ueberschlag. *Jean Brérault, l'instituteur cinéaste (1898-1973)*. Saint-Etienne: Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 2007; and Valérie Vignaux. *Jean Benoît-Lévy ou le corps comme utopie. Une histoire du cinéma éducateur dans l'entre-deux-guerres en France*. Paris: Association Française de Recherche sur l'Histoire du Cinéma, 2007.

³⁵ Peter J. Bloom. *French Colonial Documentary: Mythologies of Humanitarianism* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 127.

³⁶ Alison J. Murray Levine. *Framing the Nation: Documentary Film in Interwar France*. New York: Continuum, 2010.

toward social morality and the production of post-WWII democratic citizenship in the Federal Republic.³⁷

Academic interest has grown most dramatically, however, in the field of American cinema history. In the past decade, some scholars have turned their attention to the development of the film studies field and have produced interesting research on the presence of film as an object of knowledge, and within different academic/institutional contexts.³⁸ From this disciplinary interest in film studies, academic scholars, often working with film archivists and preservationists, have begun to look closely at films within educational contexts. Even there, however, pre-Second World War movements have tended to be ignored in favor postwar developments.³⁹ Two recently published anthologies have set out to explore a wide range of issues surrounding this previously marginalized cinematic form as well as considering its early history. *Learning With the Lights Off* (Oxford, 2012) provides a survey of American educational film through 22 essays, ranging in topics from institutional practices to the creation of film markets.⁴⁰ *Useful Cinema* (Duke, 2011) looks at specific educational uses such as worker training and health care, exhibition spaces, and the practice of educational film production.⁴¹

I draw my arguments from four distinct fields: French social history, educational history, visual and cinema studies, and technology studies. Consequently, it does not approach French educational cinema in the way that Vignaux, Ueberschlag and Levine do, in their focus on individual filmmakers or diegetic analysis of individual films. In

³⁷ Unger. "Cultivating Audiences."

³⁸ See Dikovitskaya. *Visual Culture*; Lee Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, eds. *Inventing Film Studies*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008.

³⁹ Geoff Alexander. *Academic Films for the Classroom: A History*. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2010; and Brian Goldfarb. *Visual Pedagogy: Media Cultures in the Classroom*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002.

⁴⁰ Orgeron, Orgeron, and Streible, eds. *Learning with the Lights Off*.

⁴¹ Charles R. Acland and Haidee Wasson, eds. *Useful Cinema*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011.

contrast to Bloom's excellent study, I have chosen to minimize discussion of colonial cinema. This is both because I am interested in the networks of supporters and adherents in the metropole that gave the movement its viability and my sources provided me only a minimal amount of information of their colonial counterparts.

This approach bears somewhat more similarity to that of Unger, whose work traced the history of German educational film and analyzed how teachers actually used films to promote civic engagement and morality. Like her, I am interested in seeing what people thought they were doing when they advocated for educational film; but as ethnographic field work is not a possibility (barring a time machine), my dissertation instead asserts that there's a historical specificity to the educational cineastes' arguments. The interwar period represented a unique crystallization via the formation of extensive networks of teachers, writers, government officials, and industry officials, through which a particularly utilitarian notion of cinema was advanced and given material support. And its lack of success can help us to understand how a more critical discourse of cinema prevailed in the postwar era.

A word about my sources. Early in this project, I made a decision to focus on the actors involved in promoting educational film, not the films themselves. This is a story about a *movement*, e.g., the people, journals, associations, and institutions that promoted or supported this particular use of cinema. Instead, I rely almost exclusively on a wide array of printed sources: educational film journals, correspondence, brochures, meeting notes, government reports, newspaper accounts, equipment bills and film scripts. I was interested in the claims that these people made for film, their intellectual justifications, and how they succeeded in building networks that extended from the humblest French

schoolhouse to the League of Nations. In the future, a broader treatment will involve seeking out the available films as a way to delve deeper into the argument about the overlapping of educational film with other genres. That cineastes were at times concerned, and at other times enthusiastic about this blurring is well documented. But I hope one day to show how this instability was expressed in more films than the ones briefly analyzed in chapters four and five.

This dissertation reconstructs the history of this movement chronologically and thematically throughout its five chapters. Chapter one comprises its pre-history, when cinema was itself emerging in the first decades of the twentieth century. Films had originally appeared as novelty attractions in traveling fairs until the large production houses of Pathé-Frères and Gaumont developed cinema theaters in Paris in 1907-1908.⁴² Although immensely popular, cinema retained a poor reputation due to what was perceived to be its pernicious suggestive influence over juveniles, despite the creation of genres such as historical films and filmed theater.⁴³ Specifically, the widespread fears over juvenile crime in the period 1909-1912 led those who supported the cinema to adopt a counter-argument: if crime films produced bad behavior, educational films could

⁴² Jean-Jacques Meusy. *Paris-Palaces, ou, le temps du cinéma (1894-1918)*. Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1995 and Abel. *The Ciné Goes To Town*, 25-46.

⁴³ Richard Abel has examined the creation of these genres extensively in his *The Ciné Goes To Town*, 246-277, and 302-325. See also: Alain Carou. *Le cinéma français et les écrivains: Histoire d'une rencontre, 1906-1914*. Paris: École nationale de chartes, 2002; Elizabeth Ezra has discussed how the establishment of fixed theaters after 1907 disciplined viewers to observe middle-class properties in "The Cinemising Process: Filmgoing in the Silent Era." In *The French Cinema Book*. Michael Temple and Michael Witt, eds. (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 74-81. Peter Decherney has discussed this in the American context in his *Hollywood and the Culture Elite: How the Movies Became American*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. For censorship, the most recent comprehensive work for France has been Albert Montagne's *Histoire juridique des interdits cinématographiques en France, 1909-2001*. Paris: L'Harmattan, 2007. Although it provides updates, it does not differ significantly from Paul Leglise's classic *La Politique du cinéma français: le cinéma et la IIIème République*. Paris: L'Herminier, 1970. The most comprehensive works for the United States are Lee Grieveson. *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early Twentieth-Century America*. Berkeley: University of California, 2004; and Paul S. Moore. *Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.

produce a morally responsible citizenry and provide guidance and training for careers. A cinema devoted to instruction was the flip side to the crime film: instead of spurring juveniles to criminal activities, it would educate and moralize them.

Chapter two analyzes the intellectual arguments that educational cineastes developed in the 1910s to legitimate cinema as a teaching tool and the first steps they made toward institutionalizing it. Specifically, they drew on the work of the experimental psychologist, Alfred Binet, to argue that cinema had a “suggestive” influence over juvenile minds and that this could be used to produce a more immediate and effective pedagogy. They connected this intellectual justification with France’s shortage of labor power to argue that cinema could play a key role in vocational education. By framing cinema in this way, cineastes encouraged state authorities to institutionalize cinema through subventions and material support.

Chapter three examines the movement’s initiatives in the 1920s, and specifically the way that they sought to create institutional structures to produce, distribute and archive educational films. It was during this decade that the movement’s contradictions began to emerge. The creation of nation-wide structures was coupled with meager state resources, resistance by teachers and students, and frequent material problems with worn film prints and fragile projectors. Ultimately, this had the effect of making educational cinema both broad, in the extent of its dissemination of projectors and films, and shallow, because a secure financial base from which to do more than the occasional screening rarely emerged. Moreover, the lack of state direction meant that competing manufacturers brought a variety of small-gauge projectors onto the market, creating multiple catalogs

and confusing potential clients. These forms of resistance – technological, material, and financial – hindered the movement's effectiveness.

Chapter four shows how French educational cinema moved into the international public sphere with the League of Nations' creation of the International Institute for Educational Cinema in Rome. This had the effect of blurring the boundaries between educational cinema and the League's own internationalist politics. In their interactions with other member states, however, the French delegation found themselves marginalized by American and German representatives, leading them to a more nationalist defense of their industry. Finally, chapter five argues that, however different, both the Popular Front and the Vichy regime's more sustained efforts ultimately destabilized the boundaries between educational cinema and propaganda. Vichy, especially, sought to develop educational cinema and tasked its Education Ministry to conduct a national equipment survey with the aim of fitting out the nation with standardized projectors.

By tracing out the vicissitudes of this movement over thirty-odd years, I seek not only to show that films were the iPads of the interwar period but that, in constructing a utilitarian notion of the cinema, educational cineastes achieved social legitimacy for the medium and its widespread dissemination among villages and towns throughout France. They also helped to spur the creation of cinema institutions that persist today in archives like the Bibliothèque Robert-Lynen in Paris and the Cinémathèque Française. The educational cinema movement is long gone but its traces remain.

Chapter 1: The Cinema's Legitimation Crisis: Making the Case for Educational Film, 1900-1918

In 1913, Adrien Collette, a geography teacher and headmaster at a boys' school in central Paris, raised the necessary funds to purchase a film projector and set up a screening room. His intentions were initially modest: in his view, films would serve as simple auxiliaries to “geography, natural history, elementary technology, vocabulary, and French composition lessons.”⁴⁴ Very quickly, he developed a passionate enthusiasm for this new medium. After giving demonstrations to other teachers in normal schools and in universities, he was put in charge of organizing screenings for France's largest educational civic association, the Ligue Française de l'Enseignement.⁴⁵ By 1920, the schoolmaster from the Rue Étienne-Marcel in Paris had become a passionate advocate and expert on educational cinema. That year, he commenced a regular column in the new monthly, *Cinéopse*, where he would spend the next twenty years giving advice, attacking critics, and promoting the widespread application of cinema in the nation's schools. From his very first column, he expounded on the efficiency and modernity of visual-based instruction. “The faculty of observation is one of the essential qualities of intelligence,” he wrote. “...The exercise of observation appears thus as one of the most efficacious means of intellectual education. Direct observation of things, beings, and facts can only occur, at school, in a very restrictive measure. It is necessary to include representations:

⁴⁴ A. Conte. “Géographie et Cinéma.” *Cinéopse* 3, no. 28 (December 1921), 867.

⁴⁵ Guillaume-Michel Coissac. *Histoire du Cinématographe de ses origines à nos jours*. (Paris: Éditions du Cinéopse. 1925), 573-574.

schemas, sketches, [and] photographs. Among these, cinematographic projection is the most perfect: to the form, it adds movement.”⁴⁶

Along with *Cinéopse*, Collette discovered new avenues in and audiences with which he could share his cinematic convictions. He presented his experiences in public forums such as the Société nationale des conférences populaires [The National Society for Popular Conferences] and at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers [The National Conservatory for Arts and Trades, or CNAM], France’s largest vocational school.⁴⁷ In 1922, he published one of the first technical manuals designed for schoolteachers. In April of that year, he presented a report at France’s first national conference on educational cinema, held at CNAM.⁴⁸ The role that Collette played in spreading the good word about cinema’s pedagogical potential was so great that *Cinéopse* reported on a fête organized in his honor in March 1922, where he was named “inventor of the educational cinema.”⁴⁹ *Cinéopse*’s editor and publisher, Guillaume-Michel Coissac, also paid tribute to his efforts in his massive *Histoire du Cinématographe de ses origines à nos jours* (1925), where he asserted that because of Collette’s “personal influence, the clarity and precision of his demonstrations, and the continuity of his action,” the industry mogul Charles Pathé had christened him “the apostle of educational cinema.”⁵⁰

Adrien Collette may have been an especially zealous “apostle,” but he was hardly the only one. Indeed, during the 1910s a growing number of teachers, journalists,

⁴⁶ Adrien Collette. “Les projections cinématographiques à l’École.” *Cinéopse* 2, no. 8 (April 1920), 124.

⁴⁷ For Collette’s January 1921 talk at the Société nationale des conférences populaires, see L.R. “Cinéma scolaire.” *Cinéopse* 3, no. 19 (March 1921), 165-167; his CNAM lecture can be found in A. Collette. “Le cinéma éducateur.” *Cinéopse* 4, no. 31 (March 1922), 244-245.

⁴⁸ Adrien Collette. *Les projections cinématographiques d’enseignement*. Paris: Service d’Enseignement de Pathé-Consortium-Cinéma, 1922. For Collette’s report at the CNAM conference, see “Communication de M. Collette.” *L’Art à l’école* 14, no. 78 (May-June 1922), 83.

⁴⁹ “Fête du Cinéma d’Enseignement: Organisée le 4 mars 1922 à la Salle du Globe en l’honneur de M. Collette.” *Cinéopse* 4, no. 32 (April 1922), 331.

⁵⁰ Coissac, *Histoire*, 574.

intellectuals, and film industry people also discussed, debated, and championed the use of cinema as a teaching tool. At first most advocates were individual practitioners like Collette, who initially saw in cinema an auxiliary or compliment to the classroom lesson. By the end of the decade, however, educational cinema had become a “cause” for those who believe that the medium could improve students’ learning experiences and even, in some cases, transform dominant pedagogical practices. In another film journal, the critic Henri Diamant-Berger wrote, “the ideal goal of all serious pedagogy is to instruct and to amuse, by generating interest and avoiding fatigue. The cinema, incontestably, is able to realize this ideal in an absolute and complete fashion. No subject is closed to it. It can teach everything, explain everything, and comment on everything.”⁵¹ Nevertheless, the mere articulation of these aspirations fails to explain *why* this specific application should generate a movement to support it. Since the cinema’s beginnings in the late nineteenth-century, numerous commentators proposed its adoption for a wide variety of purposes.⁵² With the exception of the ciné-clubs that emerged in the 1920s, whose members sought to establish film as a viable art form with its own aesthetic and canons, no other approach to cinema generated as much sustained interest or sense of mission as those who came to form the educational cinema movement.⁵³

How did educational film come to be seen as a cause that rallied pedagogues rather than as a simple new tool? This chapter argued that the emergence of a *movement* for the deployment of educational cinema on a national scale can be understood only by

⁵¹ Henri Diamant-Berger. “Le Cinéma d’enseignement.” *Le Film* 3, no. 29 (30 September 1916), 5.

⁵² For example. “La vulgarization scientifique par le cinématographe.” *Le Cinéma-L’Écho du Cinéma réunis*. 30 August 1912, 4; “Géographie et Cinématographie,” *Le Cinéma-L’Écho du Cinéma réunis*. 23 August 1912, 4; Georges Dureau. “Pour l’Aviation Militaire.” *Ciné-Journal* 5, no. 184 (27 March 1912), 3-4.

⁵³ Christophe Gauthier. *La passion du cinéma: cinéphiles, ciné-clubs et salles spécialisées à Paris de 1920 à 1929*. Paris: Association française de recherche sur l’histoire du cinéma : Ecole des Chartes, 1999.

situating the activities of advocates within the socio-economic context of the emergent film industry and seeing their efforts as a response to the public and governmental reactions produced by films themselves. As film going became a widespread and largely urban phenomenon after 1907-1908, government officials and other presumptive guardians of the Republic's morality became deeply concerned with its influence over young people. A rising tide of protest over crime films prompted demands for greater state regulation and surveillance over the film industry and even prompted the shuttering of many municipal theaters.⁵⁴ At the same time, the French production giants – Pathé-Frères and Gaumont – were beginning to face increasing competition to their domination of international markets by American producers, especially the consortium of film companies under the Motion Pictures Patents Company controlled by Thomas Edison.⁵⁵

Consequently, “education” provided a way of articulating a positive social role for the cinema at a time when the industry was feeling vulnerable on both its domestic and international fronts. Yet, it also took a cadre of committed individuals to articulate and define that role. Unlike Collette, who was a classroom practitioner, most of the early advocates were individuals like Edmond Benoît-Lévy, who had significant ties to the industry, or Coissac himself, a journalist, who began endorsing the pedagogical use of films as early as 1903. It was they who ultimately translated the individual efforts of practitioners into a movement for a new visual pedagogy.

Moving Pictures Into the Classroom – The Experiences of Dr. Doyen

⁵⁴ This was not unique to France. See Lee Grieveson. *Policing Cinema: Movies and Censorship in Early-Twentieth-Century America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004; Paul S. Moore. *Now Playing: Early Moviegoing and the Regulation of Fun*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008.

⁵⁵ Richard Abel. *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American, 1900-1910*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

From the earliest writings on the emergence of cinema, writers have connected its historical development to nineteenth-century scientific studies on motion and perception.⁵⁶ Recent scholars have probed into this technological “archaeology of the cinema,” to use Laurent Mannoni’s phrase, to show how scientific endeavors formed part of a collective effort to locate mechanically reproducible images as the dominant forms of knowledge acquisition and documentation.⁵⁷ Jonathan Crary’s seminal research has revealed the faculty of vision itself to be a historically constructed and progressively destabilized through the proliferating signs, symbols and devices of modern science and capitalism. “New modes of circulation, communication, production, consumption, and rationalization,” he contends, “all demanded a new kind of observer-consumer.”⁵⁸ According to Crary, nineteenth-century studies into physiological optics and the creation of stereoscopes and dioramas destabilized the older conceptions of vision away from the autonomous and knowing viewer of phenomena in the pre-modern era to one where “vision is redefined as a capacity for being affected by sensations that have no necessary link to a referent, thus imperiling any coherent system of meaning.”⁵⁹ Lorraine Daston’s and Peter Galison’s work has shown the consequences of this dethroning of the corporeal observer as guarantor of verifiable knowledge: “objectivity” became associated with photographic images that were held to be free from the inherent flaws and biases of

⁵⁶ See Georges Demény. “Les origines du cinématographie.” *Ciné-Journal* 2, no. 48 (18-25 July 1909), 4-9, and no. 49 (26 July-1 August 1909), 3-4. E. Kress. *Histoire du cinématographe*. Paris: Comptoir d’Édition de “Cinéma-Revue,” 1912; Coissac, *Histoire*, 44-138; and Georges Potonniée. *Les Origines du Cinématographie*. (Paris: Paul Montel, 1928), 1-19. 35-54.

⁵⁷ Laurent Mannoni. *The Great Art of Light and Shadow*. R. Crangle, trans. and ed. Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2000; and Virgilio Tosi. *Cinema Before Cinema: The Origins of Scientific Cinematography*. S. Angelini, trans. London: British Universities Film & Video Council, 2005.

⁵⁸ Jonathan Crary. *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth-Century*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 14.

⁵⁹ Crary, *Techniques*, 91.

human vision.⁶⁰ Photographic technology established a new standard for verifiability, distinct from older eighteenth-century notions of “truth-to-nature” where artists sought to draw the characteristic, or idealized, forms of such natural phenomena as plants or anatomical features. The new “mechanical objectivity” that emerged with the camera, repressed “the willful intervention of the artist-author, and to put in its stead a set of procedures that would...move nature to the page.”⁶¹

The belief that photographs could serve as a form of objective documentation extended into cultural practices as well as scientific research. Amateur photographic societies, which had originated with the Société Française de Photographie in Paris in 1855 and had proliferated into a nationwide network by the century’s end, organized excursions to villages and towns to record France’s rich architectural heritage, while photographic portraits would come to constitute one’s authentic identification on official documents.⁶² Curiously, photographers also discovered that their images’ “objectivity” went beyond representational exactitude to reveal phenomena unknown to the human eye. Alphonse Bertillon, for example, developed a system of photo identification that classified individuals according to anthropomorphic features visible only to the trained eye.⁶³ As historians of science like Jimena Canales, Hannah Landecker, and Marta Braun have shown, such photographic investigations into the imperceptible laid the

⁶⁰ Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison. *Objectivity*. New York: Zone Books, 2007. On the influence of nineteenth-century theories of perception on cinema, see Michael Chanan. *The Dream that Kicks: The Prehistory and Early Years of Cinema in Britain*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 54-68.

⁶¹ Daston and Galison, 121.

⁶² M. Christine Boyer. “*La Mission Héliographique: Architectural Photography, Collective Memory and the Patrimony of France, 1851.*” In *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 21-54. Elizabeth Anne McCauley. *A.A.E. Disdéri and the Carte de Visite Portrait Photograph*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. The photographic societies formed a Union Nationale des Sociétés Photographiques in 1892 with fifty affiliates. By 1905, this number had grown to sixty-three. See Union Nationale des Sociétés Photographiques de France. *Annuaire de 1909*. Paris: Gauthier-Villars, 1909.

⁶³ Josh Ellenbogen. *Photography and the Imperceptible: Bertillon, Galton, Marey*. Ph.D. diss: University of Chicago, 2005.

technological groundwork for the cinema. Astronomers like Jules Janssen developed modified cameras like the photographic revolver to record the 1874 transit of Venus, and scientists like Jean Comandon developed microcinematography to examine the bacterial and cellular worlds.⁶⁴ The most important precursor to cinema, repeatedly invoked by early cineastes themselves, was Étienne-Jules Marey's studies in animal motion.⁶⁵ In studying imperceptible bodily movements through creating a rapid series of images, Marey "spatializ[ed] time with his camera..."⁶⁶ The photographic work of Marey and his assistant Georges Demeny demonstrated that time-duration could be both observable and measurable. Other scientific research, such as the speed-of-light measurements performed by the physicists Alfred Cornu and Albert A. Michelson, traced out even smaller time increments, while an amateur savant named Albert Kahn based his efforts to collect a motion picture archive of all the regions and peoples of the world upon Henri Bergson's theories of duration.⁶⁷

When the Lumière brothers hosted the first public screening of their films in December 1895, there was already a developing discourse on the ability of moving pictures to reproduce and to surpass human vision.⁶⁸ Speculation on the possibility of

⁶⁴ Jimena Canales. "Photographic Venus: The 'Cinematographic Turn' and Its Alternatives in Nineteenth-Century France." *Isis* 93, no. 4 (December 2002), 585-613; Hannah Landecker. "Microcinematography and the History of Science and Film." *Isis* 97, no. 1 (March 2006), 121-132. See also Jean Comandon "Le cinématographie et les sciences de la nature." In *Le Cinéma, des origines à nos jours*. H. Fescourt, ed. (Paris: Aux Éditions du Cygne, 1932).

⁶⁵ Marta Braun. *Picturing Time: The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

⁶⁶ Braun, xix.

⁶⁷ Jimena Canales. *A Tenth of a Second: A History*. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2009), 155-178; and Paula Amad. *The Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn's Archives de la Planète* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 96-132.

⁶⁸ Indeed, it has become a trope of early French cinema histories to regard the Lumières' first films as a visual archive of provincial French bourgeois life, and to contrast their "documentary" approach to the fantasy filmmaking of Georges Méliès. See Alan Williams. *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking*. (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1992), 27-31, and Charles Drazin. *French Cinema* (New York: Faber and Faber, 2011), 1-19, for representative accounts. Richard Abel's *The Ciné Goes to Town*,

film as an educative medium followed immediately. After watching some of the first Lumière documentary presentations in 1896, Jules Claretie, playwright and member of the Académie Française, enthused about cinema's uncanny ability to make the photographic reproduction of reality "alive through curiosity" and advocated using film to recreate previous historical eras.⁶⁹ In 1898, Boleslas Matuszewski, a Polish photographer residing in Paris, also published a short tract on cinema as a new source for history because "animated photography has a character of authenticity, exactitude, and precision that belongs only to it."⁷⁰

That same year, Eugène-Louis Doyen (1859-1916), a French surgeon, was the first person known to employ films for instructive purposes.⁷¹ Employing two camera operators, Doyen initially filmed six medical operations out of a total of sixty that he would shoot by 1906. Beyond using the resultant films in classroom training that aided instruction in surgical techniques and professional demeanor, he also screened them at scientific conferences. For later writers and historians like Coissac, Doyen was the first educationalist cineaste, and Coissac's *Histoire* quotes at length from an 1899 article that the doctor published in the *Revue critique de Médecine et de Chirurgie* [Critical Review of Medicine and Surgery] in which he extolled the efficiency of cinema-based training.

"If you film a typical operation," Doyen wrote, "you will make understandable in less

places the Lumière films more within the tradition of *actualités*, which were designed for immediate consumption and prefigured newsreels rather than archival records. See Abel. *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 91-92. Other scholars have challenged the tendency to frame French cinema history within the binary of Lumière and Méliès, see Michael Temple and Michael Witt. "Introduction: Hello Cinema!" In *The French Cinema Book*. M. Temple and M. Witt, eds. (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 9-17.

⁶⁹ Jules Claretie. "Le spectre des vivants... (1896)" In *Le Cinéma: naissance d'un art, 1895-1920*. D. Banda and J. Moure, ed. (Paris: Flammarion, 2008), 42-44.

⁷⁰ Boleslas Matuszewski. "Une nouvelle source de l'histoire." In *Écrits cinématographiques*. M. Mazaraki, ed. (Paris; Association Française de Recherche sur l'Histoire du Cinéma, 2006), 9.

⁷¹ Tiago Baptista. "Il faut voir le maître: A Recent Restoration of Surgical Films by E.-L. Doyen (1859-1916)." *Journal of Film Preservation* 70 (2005), 44-50; and Thierry Lefebvre. "Eugène-Louis Doyen." In *The Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*. R. Abel, ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), 192.

than a minute to a thousand people that which a session could only demonstrate to a small number of students, placed in proximity to the professor.”⁷²

Based on the existing accounts, however, Doyen’s pedagogical application of cinema found few immediate imitators. Coissac’s *Histoire* noted that, after 1901, a Professor Garrigou-Lagrange incorporated film into his meteorological studies, but his account reports nothing else until Jean Comandon’s pioneering work in micro-cinematography after 1907.⁷³ One reason for this slow adoption is suggested by the decision of Doyen to discontinue filmmaking in 1906. His decision to forego films as an instructional tool underscored the difficulty in demarcating a clear distinction of such films from more “spectacle” fare. In the first decade of French cinema, films were exhibited as novelty items within the pre-existing repertoires of the *café-concert*, the traveling fair, and the music hall.⁷⁴ As one element within these larger spectacles, these films served, to use Tom Gunning’s phrase, as a “cinema of attractions”: a non-narrative form that “denoted early cinema’s fascination with novelty and its foregrounding of the act of display.”⁷⁵ One of Doyen’s cameramen was selling copies of his surgical films to traveling fairs to show as an attraction that prompted a hostile reaction by the medical community. Doyen angrily filed a lawsuit against his associate for copyright infringement.⁷⁶ While he won legal recognition of authorship, he attempted

⁷² Doyen quoted in Coissac, *Histoire*, 527.

⁷³ Coissac, *Histoire*, 540. It must be noted that Comandon was first and foremost a researcher and the *Histoire* does not indicate that he designed or produced his films for classroom instruction. See Thierry Lefebvre. “Jean Comandon” and “Scientific Films: Europe” In *The Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*. R. Abel, ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), 141-142, and 566-568.

⁷⁴ Charles Rearick. *Pleasures of the Belle Époque: Entertainment and Festivity in Turn-of-the-Century France*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985; Vanessa R. Schwartz. *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris*. Berkeley: University of California, 1998.

⁷⁵ Tom Gunning. “‘Now You See It, Now You Don’t’: The Temporality of the Cinema of Attractions.” In *The Silent Cinema Reader*. L. Grieveson and P. Krämer, eds. (London: Routledge, 2004), 42.

⁷⁶ Baptista, 46; Abel, *Ciné Goes to Town*, 27-28.

unsuccessfully to control his films' exhibition by stipulating in his distribution contract with Charles Urban Trading Company (UK), who acquired the rights to his films, that they were to be shown only in scientific contexts. The firm, however, sold copies to fairground exhibitors.⁷⁷ The unstable distinction between “pedagogical” and “spectacle” both prompted the withdrawal of Doyen from active film production and exhibition and provided an early foretaste of anxieties among many advocates that sought to demarcate a specifically “educational” cinema off from more entertaining and spectacle genres.

Doyen's initial efforts at film production thus revealed the ambiguous status of the cinema in its first decade: was it a viable medium for education or did such films simply constitute an “attraction” for spectacular consumption? Histories of early cinema have emphasized how it was associated with cheap amusements that were deemed inappropriate for middle- and upper class audiences.⁷⁸ In France, the issue of cinema's disrepute was compounded by two factors: a perception of the physical danger of attending cinema shows, following the tragic May 1897 fire at the annual Bazar de la Charité in Paris that incinerated over one hundred women from the upper bourgeoisie and nobility and, more enduringly, the ambiguous legal status of the new medium. Unlike the “legitimate” French theater, whose censorship regime, initiated by Napoleon, had grown increasingly lax under the Third Republic, early films were exhibited in venues that were classified as *spectacles de curiosité*.⁷⁹ These consisted of the aforementioned traveling

⁷⁷ Baptista, 47.

⁷⁸ See Abel, *Ciné Goes to Town*, 9-15. For America, see Charles Musser. *The Emergence of Cinema: The American Screen to 1907*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1990), 297-336.

⁷⁹ For an overview of theater-state relations, see F.W.J. Hemmings. *Theatre and State in France, 1760-1905*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994 and Robert Justin Goldstein. *The War for the Public Mind: Political Censorship in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000. Even the monarchical governments of the Ancien Régime sought to discipline what they perceived as the potentially subversive behavior of theater audiences. See Jeffrey S. Ravel. *The Contested Parterre: Public Theater and French Political Culture, 1680-1789*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999.

fairs as well as “marionettes, *cafés-chantants*, *cafés-concerts* and other establishments of the same kind....” and featured songs, parodies and skits that spoke to their working-class clientele.⁸⁰ In April 1884, the Third Republic passed a municipal law that gave mayors complete regulatory power over performances of *spectacles de curiosité*.⁸¹ Nonetheless, the law also allowed the state-appointed prefects to override mayors who failed to shutter spectacles that were deemed offensive to public morality or seditious. A contemporary commentator underlined the seriousness with which mayors were expected to keep watch over such entertainments: “with regard to spectacle establishments, the mayor has the right and *the duty* to keep watch in the name of public order and notably to *forbid* or close down productions capable of troubling it.”⁸²

When Doyen was making his films between 1898 and 1906, therefore, there were two distinct legal definitions for public entertainments: one where “legitimate” theatrical oversight was subject to a largely inactive and underfunded commission, the other where mayors and prefects held absolute power over popular spectacles. Given their exhibition in popular venues, authorities placed films within the category of *spectacles de curiosité*,

⁸⁰ Neville M. Hemmings. *Film Censors and the Law*. (London; George Allan & Unwin, 1967), 332 and, M. Scott Haine. *The World of the Paris Café: Sociability Among The French Working Class, 1789-1914*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

⁸¹ One premise for the municipal law was the effort to reconcile republicans’ desire to maintain social order with their goal to fashion a republican polity. As scholars like James R. Lehning, Sudhir Hazareensingh, Philip Nord, and Pierre Rosanvallon have shown, the Third Republic consistently sought to establish stolid republican values in its citizenry while, at the same time, remaining disquieted by popular gatherings and associations that could lead to civil disorder. The Municipal Law was one attempt to square this circle by leaving surveillance and actions against spectacle establishments up to the individual discretion of mayors and prefects. See James R. Lehning. *To Be A Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early Third Republic*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001; Sudhir Hazareensingh. *From Subject to Citizen: The Second Empire and the Emergence of Modern French Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998, and “The Société d’Instruction Républicaine and the Propagation of Civic Republicanism in Provincial and Rural France, 1870-1877.” *Journal of Modern History* 71, no. 2 (June 1999), 271-307; Philip Nord. *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1998; and Pierre Rosanvallon. *Le modèle politique français: la société civile contre le jacobinisme de 1789 à nos jours*. (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2004).

⁸² M. Grelot, quoted in René Bérenger. *Manuel pratique pour la lutte contre la pornographie*. (Paris: Imprimerie Mouillot, 1907), 79.

as was shown when the Paris police suppressed the final reel of a screening in 1901.⁸³ Yet, there was no actual legal *definition* of the cinema that secured its status. Although scientists and researchers were discovering marvelous scientific and pedagogical possibilities, the cinema was more often associated with the most disreputable and proletarian of entertainments in the popular mind and among state officials.

Articulating Cinema's Educational Potential – Benoît-Lévy and Coissac

The experiences of Eugène-Louis Doyen demonstrated how an unwitting teacher-practitioner could find his educational films re-appropriated as a *spectacle de curiosité*. Consequently, despite being accorded legal authorship, he neither continued to use nor articulated any further defense of cinema as a pedagogical tool. Instead, the initial argument for educational cinema was developed by men whose professional lives overlapped the spheres of education, cinema, and journalism – Edmond Benoît-Lévy (1858-1929) and Guillaume-Michel Coissac (1868-1946). Born into an Alsatian family, Benoît-Lévy began his career as a business lawyer and as a lecturer, and helped to found the Société populaire des Beaux-Arts in 1894 [Popular Society of the Arts].⁸⁴ A Freemason and a member of France's largest educational civic association, the Ligue Française de l'Enseignement, Benoît-Lévy was committed to the Republican values of secular and compulsory education. "Knowledge," for men like him, was "an instrument in the service of democratic values."⁸⁵ He also developed an interest in phonographs,

⁸³ Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town*, 27.

⁸⁴ Jean-Jacques Meusy. "Edmond Benoît-Lévy." In *The Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*. R. Abel, ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), 65-66; Valérie Vignaux. *Jean Benoit-Lévy ou le corps comme utopie: une histoire du cinéma-éducateur dans l'entre-deux-guerres en France*. (Paris: Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma, 2007), 11-14; and Saint-Mesmin. "Notre Directeur." *Phono-Gazette* 1, no. 1 (1 April 1905), 2.

⁸⁵ Vignaux, *Jean Benoit-Lévy*, 12.

which led him to move into the orbit of Charles Pathé whose firm, along with producing motion pictures, also manufactured record players, and to found his own journal, *Phono-Gazette* in April 1905. Benoît-Lévy's journal provided thorough coverage of Pathé's operations and featured articles demonstrating the interest that phonographs had excited among educators in the field of foreign-language acquisition.⁸⁶

Phono-Gazette's coverage soon extended to films. While Benoît-Lévy later claimed that he recognized the need for an educational cinema for children as early as 1904, this wasn't immediately reflected in the pages of his journal.⁸⁷ In October, 1905, he rechristened the journal *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* – in the first issue of which he published a notice on “The Introduction of Cinema into Teaching.”⁸⁸ This very brief article listed a series of screenings of early films on metallurgy at the l'École Central des Arts et Manufactures [Central School for Arts and Manufacturing] the previous February, but provided no further details. It seems likely that his ideas on educational cinema developed more gradually as he presented them publicly for the first time at the 1906 Congress for Social Education, a yearly gathering that brought together educationalists and government ministers dedicated to advancing the Republic's goals of secular and popular education.⁸⁹ Recognizing his energy and talents, Charles Pathé formed a partnership with him to open the company's first cinema theater – the Omnia-Pathé in

⁸⁶ See Francis Mair. “Les établissements Pathé.” *Phono-Gazette* 1, no. 4 (15 May 1905), 56-57, and no. 5 (1 June 1905), 70-72. “Le Phonographe et les langues vivantes.” *Phono-Gazette* 1, no. 10 (15 August 1905), 150.

⁸⁷ See Edmond Benoît-Lévy. “Le cinéma et les enfants.” Speech given at the International Conference on Cinematography. (Paris, 1926). Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Arts du Spectacle, 4° - COL – 80/8 (3)

⁸⁸ “Ciné-nouvelles: Introduction du cinématographe dans l'Enseignement.” *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* 1, no. 13 (1 October 1905), 208.

⁸⁹ While I was unable to locate the 1906 proceedings, a speech from an earlier conference outlines the intellectual and political agenda of these conferences. See Duprat, Guillaume Léonce. *Éducation sociale et solidarité: Étude critique des rapports présentés au Congrès international de l'éducation social 1903*. Paris: Libraries-éditeurs, 1903.

Paris – at the end of 1906, when the industry began to shift away from selling films to independent fairground proprietors to renting them to distributors for exhibition in theaters.⁹⁰ Benoît-Lévy was consequently well-placed as proprietor of Pathé’s largest theater and as director of the industry’s first trade journal when he chose to promote his interest in educational cinema. Indeed, Coissac himself would later acknowledge Benoît-Lévy’s role in defining the “scholarly mission of film” as the “artisan at the first hour”⁹¹

Unlike his more entrepreneurial colleague, Guillaume-Michel Coissac’s interest in educational cinema began at an earlier date. Although his origins are obscure, he was a militant Catholic, unlike the Freemason Benoît-Lévy. He began to work for la Bonne Presse, the largest Catholic publisher of educational materials, in 1890 and was placed in charge of their visual education division six years later.⁹² Then 1903, Coissac left la Bonne Press to become founding editor of *Le Fascinateur*, where he would publish a series of articles on early, tentative explorations by Catholic organizations into educational cinema.⁹³ One such article proclaimed that “the printing-house perhaps will be dethroned one day by the image, because while the press can only develop themes, [and] expose abstract ideas, the image, far better than it, strikes the senses and the imagination, and forcefully, rapidly allows concrete ideas to enter the intelligence.”⁹⁴ Coissac was also the first to recognize the importance of technological mastery and published one of the first technical manuals for operating projectors, *La Théorie et la*

⁹⁰ On this shift, see Jean-Jacques Meusy. *Paris-Palaces ou le temps des cinémas (1894-1918)*. (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 1995), 143-151; and Abel, *Ciné*, 25-34.

⁹¹ Guillaume-Michel Coissac. *Le Cinématographe et l’enseignement*. (Paris: Librairie Larousse/Éditions du Cinéopse, 1926), 3.

⁹² Laurent Mannoni. “Guillaume-Michel Coissac.” In *The Encyclopedia of Early Cinema*. R. Abel, ed. (London: Routledge, 2005), 132-133.

⁹³ All citations from *Le Fascinateur* courtesy of Richard Abel. I was unable to consult these sources myself. Anon. “Les Images sans rareilles.” *Le Fascinateur* 1, no. 7 (1 July 1903), 177-178; Paul Feron-Vau. “L’Oeuvre du fascinateur.” *Le Fascinateur* 2, no. 13 (1 January 1904), 5-6.

⁹⁴ Feron-Vau. “Précieuse Bénédiction.” *Le Fascinateur* 2, no. 18 (1 July 1904), 163.

pratique des projections, in 1905. He would stay at *Le Fascinateur* until the outbreak of World War I, using the journal as a platform for his views. After the war, he would found *Le Cinéopse*, a trade journal that would provide the broadest forum for educational cinema until the Second World War.

Nonetheless, it was Benoît-Lévy who appears to have been most active in promoting a pedagogical cinema. Along with his presentation at the 1906 Social Education Congress, he also spoke at the annual conferences of the Ligue de l'Enseignement. *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* reprinted his speeches at these events about educational cinema in a series in the fall of 1908.⁹⁵ The articles examined different facets and advanced proposals for their application. In one, he lamented the “extraordinary slowness” of modern technologies to reshape the Republic’s schools. “Our educational system is an old machine,” he asserted, “that is so complicated that one is reluctant to change a wheel without fearing to have to change the whole mechanism.”⁹⁶ By contrast, cinema would not only revitalize education but also serve as an agent of progress and social transformation – for example, by promoting anti-alcoholism among working-class audiences. “The cinema is life itself,” he enthused, “with all its good and bad! We can lead the public to the good, to the beautiful, to the useful, and to progress! The cinema will get them there faster than books or lectures.”⁹⁷

But in what manner would films accomplish this? In another article, Benoît-Lévy argued that films could make contributions to both *enseignement*, classroom-based

⁹⁵ Edmond Benoît-Lévy. “Communication sur le cinématographe et l’instruction publique.” *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* 4, no. 86 (15 October 1908), 757-758; “L’Éducation Sociale par le Cinématographe.” *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* 4, no. 87 (1 November 1908), 774-775; “Le Cinématographe éducatif.” *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* 4, no. 89 (1 December 1908), 808-809.

⁹⁶ Benoît-Lévy. “Communication sur le cinématographe et l’instruction publique,” 757.

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, 757.

teaching, and *éducation*, a more public-oriented form of instruction that sought to foster moral and intellectual development and that encompassed subjects as diverse as hygiene, natalism, and popular history. This belief in popular education was central to the social vision of those who led the Third Republic. During the nineteenth century, radical republicans contested with the Catholic Church over the nature of and the authority over of France's schools. Republicans believed that only when the popular classes attained literacy could they throw off the reactionary rule of priests and participate as equal citizens in a republican nation.⁹⁸ Once the Third Republic was established, its leaders established secular and compulsory education under the 1882 Ferry Laws to instill these values into the masses. "Education was a tool with which to govern," according to Janet Horne. "If a citizen, in turn, could learn to govern himself... then France would theoretically no longer be tempted by authoritarian regimes."⁹⁹ This republican commitment to mass education led to the creation of such societies as Benoît-Lévy's Société populaire des Beaux-Arts and the Société des Universités populaires, [Society of Popular Universities].¹⁰⁰ As we will see in the next chapter, social education appealed to republicans like Benoît-Lévy because it promoted popular adherence to the Third Republic by producing a "disciplined" working class that would observe appropriate living habits and accept the republican social order.¹⁰¹ In the post-World War One

⁹⁸ Eugen Weber. *Peasants Into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977; Katherine Auspitz. *The Radical Bourgeoisie: The Ligue de l'enseignement and the origins of the Third Republic*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982; Judith F. Stone. *The Search for Social Peace: Reform Legislation in France, 1890-1914*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985, and Hazareesingh. "The Société d'Instruction Républicaine."

⁹⁹ Janet Horne. *A Social Laboratory for Modern France: The Musée Social and the Rise of the Welfare State*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002), 50.

¹⁰⁰ Benoît-Lévy's nephew, Georges, played a prominent role in the latter organization, see Vignaux, 15.

¹⁰¹ Sanford Elwitt. *The Third Republic Defended: Bourgeois Reform in France, 1880-1914*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 220-226.

period, Benoît-Lévy and other cineastes would succeed in convincing government officials that films could be used as tools for middle-class social reform.

Benoît-Lévy's interest in cinema thus incorporated both a desire to reform the hidebound (or text-bound) schools (*enseignement*) and to promote a public education (*éducation*) that would sustain the republic's values and social agenda. Indeed, films could simultaneously merge both forms by making classroom instruction more stimulating and enjoyable by engaging and entertaining students. "L'Enseignement and l'Éducation are not...two cables that must be considered individually," he wrote, "they must, on the contrary, together form a harmonious ensemble destined to guide the child through to adulthood."¹⁰² Learning must be enjoyable, and films would ideally represent the external world in an engaging manner, as a "reviving and regenerating instrument."¹⁰³ Films must instruct *and* amuse - students could "seize on the intimate details of the lives of beasts, on the lives of enormous beings like elephants in the forest, of that of laboring insects."¹⁰⁴ The visual pleasure of looking would become the basis for a more profound form of learning: through "the habit of seeing, of thinking, of reflecting, [films] will continue to provide them with better instruction than lessons studied in a book."¹⁰⁵

Benoît-Lévy and Coissac were thus two crucial early proponents of the cause of educational cinema and were able, especially in the case of the former, to use institutional associations to further their views. Beginning in 1907, Benoît-Lévy sponsored meetings, including one at Le Havre in 1909 where he screened non-fiction films like *Voyage à Colombo, Du Cap au Caire* [From the Cape to Cairo], *Le Mines et forges de Decazeville*

¹⁰² Benoît-Lévy. "L'Éducation Sociale par le Cinématographe," 774.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 774.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 774.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 774.

[The Mines and Ironworks at Decazeville].¹⁰⁶ The following year, Edouard Petit, the League's vice-president and inspector general for public education, more cautiously argued that cinema could prove more intellectually stimulating than teaching with still images.¹⁰⁷ In 1910, both Coissac and Benoît-Lévy gave presentations on educational cinema at the first international congress on cinematography and its applications in Brussels.¹⁰⁸ By the beginning of the teens, however, with growing turbulence in the film industry, the French state came to challenge Benoît-Lévy's sanguine views on educational film while, paradoxically, offering support for those opposed to those who saw films mainly as a new medium for immortality and juvenile delinquency.

René Bérenger, Crime Films and the Dark Side of Seeing

Film historians have generally pointed to the period 1906-1907 as a transformative moment where the cinema industry, both in France and in other national contexts, sought to attract artistic and social legitimacy by reaching out to middle- and upper class audiences.¹⁰⁹ Pathé and Gaumont, the two largest production houses, expanded their interests into theatrical exhibition both to attract these audiences and to obtain a greater foothold over the lucrative business of film distribution. Rather than sell their films to fairground proprietors, where they would have no control over their

¹⁰⁶ Frédéric Delmeulle. *Contribution à l'Histoire du Cinéma Documentaire en France: Le cas de l'Encyclopédie Gaumont (1909-1929)*. (Villeneuve d'Ascq: Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2001), 41.

¹⁰⁷ Anon. "Le cinéma scolaire." *Bulletin du Cercle Toulousain de la Ligue de l'Enseignement*. Numéro spécial, 1920, 5.

¹⁰⁸ See Delmeulle, 44-45, and folder on 1910 Congress at Département des Arts du Spectacle, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Site Richelieu, 4°-COL-80/4 (1).

¹⁰⁹ Abel, *Ciné*, 25-46, and "The Men and Women Who Made French Cinema." In *The French Cinema Book*. M. Temple and M. Witt, eds, (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 18-33; Williams, *Republic of Images*, and especially Meusy, *Paris-Palaces*, 129-174. For the U.S., see Eileen Bowser. *The Transformation of American Cinema*. Berkeley: University of California, 1990.

subsequent use, Pathé and Gaumont would instead rent them through distributors to show in fixed venues.¹¹⁰ As previously noted, Benoît-Lévy opened Pathé's first cinema theatre, the Omnia-Pathé in Paris, in December 1906, and its success led to a rapid proliferation. By April 1907, *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* boasted: "we have counted... more than 100 cinema houses [*cinématographes*] in continuous operation in Paris and earning... receipts of up 100,000 francs per day."¹¹¹ New investment consortia were organized to convert buildings into theaters, the most impressive being the conversion of the immense Hippodrome at the Place Clichy into a theatre seating 3,400 people.¹¹² Pathé himself boasted four large theaters by 1907.

These elaborate "palaces" were created not only to increase revenue or to strengthen control over distribution, they were also part of Pathé and Gaumont's strategies to win over middle-class audiences. To complement the "theatricalization" of cinema going, producers also developed new "literary" genres like the historical film and art films.¹¹³ Specialty film companies like Films d'Art and the Pathé-affiliated Société cinématographique des auteurs et gens de lettres (S.C.A.G.L.) mounted prestige productions of historical and literary works such as *L'Assassinat du Duc de Guise* (1908) that was penned by a member of the Académie Française and featured a cast from the Comédie-Française. The more profitable genres were comedies and melodramas that

¹¹⁰ As Richard Abel has shown, however, the efforts of the studios to work with independent distributors was soon shown to be unwieldy. Consequently, Pathé quickly develop its own distribution arm. After the First World War, it would concentrate exclusively on distribution and exhibition (and equipment manufacture) to the exclusion of film production. See Abel. "The Men and Women Who Made the French Cinema." In *The French Cinema Book*. M. Temple and M. Witt, eds. (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 18-33.

¹¹¹ François Valleiry. "Les Cinématographes à Paris." *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* 3, no. 49. (1 April 1907), 131. The article does not distinguish between theatres exclusively showing films and places where films were shown as a part of a repertoire spectacle.

¹¹² Meusy (1994), 173-174. Gaumont, Pathé's more conservative competitor, refrained from entering the exhibition sector in this early (1906-1908) period.

¹¹³ For the transition to narrative cinema: see Abel, *Ciné*, 179-297 and Alain Carou. *Le cinéma français et les écrivains: histoire d'une rencontre 1906-1914*. Paris: École nationale de Chartes, 2002.

attracted the popular classes more and hence formed the greater part of their profits.¹¹⁴ One new genre in particular, the crime film, contradicted the industry's efforts at social legitimation and also brought it into open conflict with state authorities. In so doing, companies compromised their own efforts at legitimacy by reinforcing cinema's association with the socially disreputable *spectacles de curoisité*.

The first crime films were series centered on detective heroes such as Nick Carter (the Éclair company) or Nick Winter (Pathé). Even though these films upheld the Republican social order in showing the ultimate triumph of the representative of the law, trade magazines like *Ciné-Journal* were already responding to charges that cinema was becoming a "school of corruption" as early as 1909.¹¹⁵ Yet, by 1911-1912 crime films underwent a significant transformation that re-centered the narrative focus on the criminal rather than on the hero.¹¹⁶ Éclair's series, *Zigomar*, and subsequent films tapped into anxieties over rising crime, prostitution, and violent accidents that had all been stoked by the popular press.¹¹⁷ Many of these fears were related to the dramatic growth of industrialization and urbanization of Paris and its immediate suburbs where the population had reached nearly three million and was increasingly composed of immigrants from southern Europe.¹¹⁸ Films capitalized on these fears and especially on

¹¹⁴ Edmond Sée. "A travers la press – cinématographie." *Phono-Ciné-Gazette* 4, no. 79 (15 March 1908), 530.

¹¹⁵ Georges Dureau. "Le Cinématographe est-il une école de corruption?" *Ciné-Journal* 2, no. 55 (6-12 September 1909), 1-2; and Dureau. "Un Accès de Pudeur." *Ciné-Journal* 2, no. 62 (24-31 October 1909), 3-4.

¹¹⁶ Abel, *Ciné*, 354-355.

¹¹⁷ For crime, see Robert A. Nye. *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France: The Medical Concept of National Decline*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984; on prostitution, Alain Corbin. *Women for Hire: Prostitution and Sexuality in France After 1850*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1992. For the press's role in stoking urban anxieties, see Gregory K. Shaya. "Mayhem for Moderns: The Culture of Sensation in France, c. 1900." Ph.D. diss.: University of Michigan, 2000.

¹¹⁸ Michel Winock. *La Belle Époque: la France de 1900 à 1914* (Paris: Perrin, 2002), 69. For the *banlieues*, see Jean Bastié. *La croissance de la banlieue parisienne*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964) and Tyler Stovall. *The Rise of the Paris Red Belt*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1990).

crimes involving young people such as prostitutes and gangs of young men from Paris's suburbs known as "apaches" and "bandes à Bonnot," (automobile thieves), the latter named for its leading practitioner, Jules Bonnot, whose dramatic death during a gun fight with police in early 1912 would provide fodder for film producers. In spite of an actual decline in the rate of juvenile crime, popular perception to the contrary made public safety an important topic in the press and in political debate.¹¹⁹ As Judith Stone has argued, "security... was the central objective which drew all sectors of the bourgeoisie together... All agreed that their security could be jeopardized by the new conditions of an industrializing society and the new, militant demands of an enfranchised working class."¹²⁰

The vice-president of the French Senate, René Bérenger (1830-1915) was a major force for moral reform legislation and a key advocate for the surveillance and censorship of public spectacles.¹²¹ Originally from the Drôme, he worked as an *avocat générale* (assistant public prosecutor) in Grenoble and Lyons before his election to the Senate in 1875. Although he was a committed republican, he was also a devout Catholic who believed that, while the Church should have no influence over public affairs, "the state would lose its sense of duty if it failed to grant not only its protection but also its favor to those with religious convictions."¹²² By the mid-1890s Bérenger had committed himself wholeheartedly to the fight against prostitution and public displays of immorality. Ironically, he invoked a similar argument to Benoît-Lévy's on the primacy of vision; his

¹¹⁹ Winock, 176.

¹²⁰ Stone, 23.

¹²¹ For a summary biography, see Annie Lamarre. "René Bérenger." In *Les immortels du Sénat 1875-1918: Les cent seize inamouïbles de la Troisième République*. J.M. Mayeur and A. Corbin, eds. (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1995), 222-225.

¹²² Lamarre in Mayeur and Corbin, 223.

central goal, he claimed, was “to ‘purge’ the street and the public spaces, to fight against ‘the teaching through the eyes’ of immorality.”¹²³ If Benoît-Lévy believed that the sensory experience of watching films could stimulate children’s interest through direct visual engagement, for Bérenger it was susceptible to overwhelming young minds. Discussing theatrical shows, he contended that “the arrangement of the hall, the *mise-en-scène*, the lighting, the music, the costumes, as well as the unfolding action and the performances of the actors, collude to give greater force to the physical sensation and to fix it in the memory.”¹²⁴

Bérenger’s *Manuel pratique pour la lutte contre la pornographie* [*Practical Manual for the Fight Against Pornography*] (1907) drew a blanket indictment over all forms of mass culture, claiming that “the press and, in particular, the illustrated journal...[was] one of many agents of demoralization” but so were “writings, printings other than books, posters, drawings, engravings, paintings, emblems and obscene images.”¹²⁵ To show was to seduce and persuade – not to teach. The experience of being a spectator risked rendering an impressionable mind more susceptible to immoral influences so that, as the leader of the *Ligue Marseillaise pour la défense de la moralité* (and Bérenger’s acolyte) put it, spectators “listen to and applaud in our principal theaters the most proscribed dialogues, the most daring and raciest scenes.”¹²⁶ To assume that popular spectacles could be anything *but* “schools for crime” would have struck the senator as a contradiction.

¹²³ Corbin, 463.

¹²⁴ Bérenger, 74.

¹²⁵ Bérenger, 68, 117.

¹²⁶ M.E. Delibes. *Ligue Marseillaise pour la défense la moralité publique: Assemblé générale tenue le 26 avril 1904, au palais de justice*. (Marseille: Barlatier, 1904), 8.

After founding the Ligue pour la lutte contre la Licence des Rues [League for the Fight Against Licentiousness in the Streets] in 1894, Bérenger assisted in forming other secular moral associations that came together as a federation, Fédération des sociétés contre la pornographie, under his direction, in 1905. This network of associations targeted theatrical performances and exerted pressure on mayors to exercise their authority over popular spectacles.¹²⁷ They succeeded, for example, in getting six plays they deemed immoral banned between 1900 and 1906. Given the state's lack of legal clarification, Bérenger and other moralists felt that mayoral authority extended to the cinema as a *spectacle de curoisité*. A 1910 editorial in *Ciné-Journal* complained: "this strange disdain of art... does not wish to give to cinema the privilege that is usually conceded to the [legitimate] theater. [That the] cinema [is] a moralizer and educator... [and] one of the forms of modern dramatic art."¹²⁸ The very sensory qualities that made cinema's potential as an educational tool so powerful for Benoît-Lévy and other defenders of cinema was exactly why Bérenger and his associations wanted it under such close surveillance.

Bérenger also had sponsored a criminal law in 1898 that allowed for the prosecution of underage offenders. In its first four years, over 1,300 youths were brought in front of tribunals, although the majority was ultimately acquitted.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, the popular press continued to fan widespread anxieties over apache gangs so that the French

¹²⁷ In one case, a Lyonnais theatre owner, Martini, failed to win his suit against one league when he argued that such protests had reduced the turnout for two of his productions. The Lyonnais civil tribunal ruled that the public had the right to express opprobrium and displeasure about theatrical performances and that "each person is free to judge and to censure plays, provided that the critiques produced be exempt from bad faith and are disinterested. See Bérenger, 130.

¹²⁸ George Dureau. "Le Sénateur Bérenger contre le cinématographe." *Ciné-Journal* 3, no. 109, (24 September 1910), 3.

¹²⁹ Jacques Bourquin. "René Bérenger et la loi de 1898." *Revue histoire d'enfance irrégulière* 2, 1999. <http://rhei.revues.org/document31.html>. [Accessed August 4, 2012]

Legislature reinstated the death penalty for capital crimes in December 1908.¹³⁰ The development of crime films, then, enabled the film companies to tap profitably into these social anxieties, but also pitted them against powerful figures like Béranger who would wield political muscle against them.

Emerging Commercial Vulnerabilities – and Potentialities

If the creation of cinema theaters and popular genres after 1907 helped French film companies to consolidate control and to enhance their domestic revenues, they were facing a different situation in their international markets. As one of the first heavily capitalized production firms, Pathé-Frères had reigned dominant in international markets, including the United States, from 1905 through to the end of the decade.¹³¹ By 1908-1909, however, U.S. companies were challenging Pathé's domination of the American market by creating films with "American subjects" such as "Indian pictures," while the American press grew increasingly hostile to French films. In addition, the George Eastman Company, who sold Pathé film stock for productions, pressured the French firm to join the Motion Picture Patents Company (MPPC), Thomas Edison's powerful licensing consortium.¹³² Pathé's decision to join in December, 1908 appears to have been influenced both by Eastman and by the French firm's fear that Edison would align with Gaumont and other French companies to push Pathé out of the American market.

¹³⁰ Youth gangs were first called "apaches" in a 1902 column that likened their criminal activities to the supposed barbarism of Apaches tribes in the American West. See Nye. *Crime, Madness and Politics in Modern France*.

¹³¹ Richard Abel. *The Red Rooster Scare: Making Cinema American 1900-1910*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1999), 48-73.

¹³² Michelle Millar. "A Re-Examination of Key Milestones in the Development of the Industry." In *The French Cinema Book*. M. Temple and M. Witt, eds. (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 36-41.

In effect, Pathé's signing with Edison, the rise of rival American firms, and the company's inability to adapt quickly enough to American tastes meant that it rapidly lost its international domination beginning in the nineteen teens. By 1910, American audiences were flocking to American films while Pathé's "art films," which had served as a cultural legitimation strategy, were increasingly ignored. On the home front, while French firms continued to dominate the domestic market, they suffered from soaring production costs due in part to the rising price of film stock.¹³³ Pathé, who had spurred the industry's centralization in 1907, now took the opposite tack. In 1912-1913, he began slowly to move out of fiction-film production and to concentrate instead distributing and exhibiting films made by affiliates like S.C.A.G.L. as well as those produced by foreign companies. This move toward decentralization, as Richard Abel and others have pointed out, would define the character of the French industry thereafter.¹³⁴ While Hollywood companies were growing into major vertically-integrated corporations centered around studio production, French film production was to become characterized by smaller companies and "director-units" that would pull together financing on a project-by-project basis, leaving the entire industry more vulnerable to economic crisis when these units struggled to obtain financing in hard economic times.

In this increasingly turbulent environment, educational films and equipment appeared as a promising potential niche market. In 1911, a teacher at a *lycée* (secondary school) in Versailles introduced films into his natural history courses and, within two years, many of the elite Parisian *lycées* were showing films in their classrooms.¹³⁵ Both

¹³³ Abel, *Ciné*, 46-48.

¹³⁴ Abel, *Ciné*, 48-50; although set somewhat later, this is also the argument of Colin Crisp. *The Classic French Cinema, 1930-1960* (London/Indianapolis: I.B. Tauris/Indiana University Press), 39-42.

¹³⁵ Coissac. *Le Cinématographe et l'enseignement*, 4.

major French firms began to make tentative moves into developing smaller gauge equipment for home and institutional use. In 1912, Pathé introduced a smaller gauge (28mm) projector, the KOK that they marketed for home use. Gaumont, who, according to Frédéric Delmeulle, still prioritized film production over equipment manufacture, also began to organize an educational film division. Along with the Ligue de l'Enseignement, the company sponsored a screening at its Gaumont-Palace theater in Paris in December 1911 that was attended by over 3,000 students and teachers.¹³⁶ These were, however, at best, inchoate measures: although the Pathé-KOK would prove to be highly successful system until the early 1920s, educational and small-format cinema remained a marginal interest to the industry.

Crime Films and the Stigmatizing of the Cinema

Despite the proselytizing efforts of Benoît-Lévy and Coissac, and the modest forays by Pathé and Gaumont, interest in educational films paled alongside the growing popularity of crime films. In January 1909, the first four criminals charged under a renewed capital punishment law were executed in the town of Béthune. Despite the Ministry of Justice's circular prohibiting filming of the execution, a skillful Pathé cameraman managed to capture it, and the company promptly released *La quadruple exécution capitale de Béthune* (1909). The Interior Ministry under Georges Clemenceau immediately reacted by banning all public showings of execution films and reasserted cinema's status as a *spectacle de curiosité* in a ministerial circular, affirming mayoral and prefectural jurisdiction over them. Cinematic spectacles, the circular read, "did not belong with the representation of dramatic works, in the sense of the law, but rather in the

¹³⁶ Delmeulle, *Contribution à l'histoire*, 52-53.

category of *spectacles de curiosité*....”¹³⁷ But as the circular was not an act of law, essentially it begged the question over the question of the social and legal status of cinema.¹³⁸ Despite the best efforts of Benoît-Lévy and Coissac, the trade press, led by *Ciné-Journal*, responded to these attacks by asserting the similarity of the cinema to the theater rather to its documentary or educative value. “In itself,” *Ciné-Journal*’s editor Georges Dureau argued, “the cinematographic film is only a theatrical expression of life; it must be judged as independent from all other [artistic] forms because it is moral, not scientific.”¹³⁹ Consequently, cinema was only another form of theater, and it could not ‘teach’ aberrant behavior any more than could the classics. “There are antique tragedies filled with such ‘criminal acts,’” another editor later complained, “and I don’t know whether Senator Béranger [sic] himself would rise up against ‘Oedipus Rex’ or ‘Iphigenia.’”¹⁴⁰ The implication of Dureau’s was clear: cinema should be accorded the same respect, and the same lax intervention among state officials, as the legitimate theater.

When the trade press did acknowledge the pernicious influence of crime films, it blamed them on unscrupulous filmmakers on the margins of the industry, or to regrettable financial necessity. “Can one suppose that [exhibitors] would consciously commit the fault of giving the essentially neutral, public condemnable pleasures or emotions?” Dureau asked. “This would mean believing that they are capable of suicide, since

¹³⁷ Albert Montagne. *Histoire juridique des interdits cinématographiques en France (1909-2001)*. (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2007), 23. See also Neville Hemmings. *Film Censors and the Law*. London: George Allen & Urwin, 1967; and Paul Leglise. *La politique du cinéma français: le cinéma et la IIIème République*. Paris: Lherminier, 1970.

¹³⁸ Montagne writes: “In 1909, no legislative text and no juridical act specified the cinema as a *spectacle de curiosité*.” *Histoire juridique*, 24.

¹³⁹ Georges Dureau. “La Cinématographie est une oeuvre d’art: elle n’est au service exclusive ni de la morale ni de l’enseignement.” *Ciné-Journal* 4, no. 160, (16 September 1911), 3-4.

¹⁴⁰ F. Laurent. “La Tragédie au Cinéma.” *Le Cinéma* 1 no. 17, (21 June 1912), 1.

inevitably their theaters would be promptly closed or deserted.”¹⁴¹ Discussing a controversy in the town of Fontainebleau over a film featuring a duel, *Ciné-Journal* acknowledged the cinema’s role as an organ for information, but only as a means of explaining away any culpability. “It often happens,” Dureau disingenuously asserted, “that the impartial witness that is our camera lens records many regrettable incidents.”¹⁴² Education was not, at this point, employed as a counter-argument to the growing accusations against the industry for affronts to public morality. Indeed, as late as September 1911, Dureau was publishing editorials that argued for the primacy of cinema’s *artistic* value, not its educational worth. The main object of a film, he asserted, is “to make us *laugh* or to *move* us.”¹⁴³

However artistic or stirring such films were, it was clear by mid-1911 that Bérenger and his moral associations were targeting cinema shows. *Ciné-Journal* reported that the Société central de protestation contre la licence des rues [The Central Society for Protesting License on the Streets] was circulating a petition demanding more vigorous prosecutions against “pornography,” with the group listing *cinématographes* as “one of the great dangers at this time.”¹⁴⁴ The Parisian Ligue contre la licence [League Against License] seconded the call for municipal authorities to “act using all means – legal procedures [*démarches*], the press, protests, petitions, posters – upon the *mayor*, who has all the necessary powers to forbid and even suspend immoral productions.”¹⁴⁵ That crime films were the source of these actions appears evident from a letter that *Ciné-Journal*

¹⁴¹ George Dureau. “Le Cinématographe est-il une école de corruption?” *Ciné-Journal* 2, no. 55, (6-12 September 1909), 1.

¹⁴² Georges Dureau. “Les Duels et le Cinéma.” *Ciné-Journal* 4, no. 129, (11 Février 1911), 4.

¹⁴³ Georges Dureau. “Le Cinématographie est une Oeuvre d’Art: elle n’est pas au service exclusif ni de la morale ni de l’enseignement.” *Ciné-Journal* 4, no. 160 (16 September 1911), 3-4.

¹⁴⁴ Georges Dureau. “Surveillons nos programmes!” *Ciné-Journal* 4, no. 150, (8 July 1911), 6.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

received from the Dioceses of Lyon. The Archbishop complained that many parents were shocked to find that in the so-called children's' shows there were "scenes of apaches robbing passers-by, breaking into houses, assassinating their owners, or contains scenes of domestic quarrels...which often end in murder or suicide."¹⁴⁶

The protests over immoral films even reached the floor of the Senate in late 1911 when the conservative Lyonnais senator, Paul Cazeneuve, sought to include cinema under the 1882 anti-obscenity law that set fines and jail sentences for those committing offense to public morals. Cazeneuve's rationale mirrors Bérenger's and even Benoît-Lévy's arguments: it was not just the specific content, but the entire sensorial experience that influenced the spectator's thinking when watching a film:

I will say that, on the influence it exercises on spectators, there is an incontestable danger in the animation of scenes, as a result of movement. The animated image has a suggestive influence that no one can misunderstand and is as pernicious as it is immoral.... If you examine closely a band of celluloid, you will not see obscene images; it is only a series of small drawings destined to succeed each other very rapidly to produce the desired effect by the unrolling of the film...¹⁴⁷

Bérenger and the moral associations were succeeding by the end of 1911 in turning crime films into an issue that they could use to argue for greater municipal surveillance of cinema theaters. Not yet having formulated an effective response to such a concerted assault, the industry fell back either on hasty self-exculpations, drawing inconsistent parallels with the theater or, at particularly bleak moments, indulging in a rhetoric of persecution. At the end of 1911, Dureau lamented "...the film industry is more and more under surveillance by our zealously anti-pornographic, moralizing magistrates... the

¹⁴⁶ "Surveillons nos programmes." *Ciné-Journal* 4, no. 148, (24 June 1911), 15.

¹⁴⁷ "La Cinématographie devant le Sénat." *Ciné-Journal* 4, no. 171, (2 December 1911), 13-14.

public authorities are watching for an occasion to impose restrictive rules on us, in the name of the outraged prudery of I do not know which spectators.”¹⁴⁸ These rhetorical strategies proved fruitless when the mayors of several French towns decided to shutter their cinema theaters in the summer of 1912.

The wave of cinema closings that frightened the industry was instigated by the release of two films in the Éclair company’s *Les Bandits en Automobile* series – *L’Auto Grise* (April 1912) and *Hors-la-Loi* (May 1912). The films were inspired by the rash of armed automobile thefts in the winter of 1911-1912 led by a gang headed by a professed anarchist, Jules Bonnot and recreated their exploits. The “bande à Bonnot’s” crime spree prompted questions about the police’s ability, which did not abate with the gunning down of Bonnot and the arrest of his gang in late April.¹⁴⁹ Éclair produced the films to take advantage of the gang’s notoriety, and, based on the surviving advertisements, *Hors-la-Loi* appeared to recreate the fatal shootout with the police that killed Bonnot the previous month.¹⁵⁰ Given the social panic and the affront to the police that the Bonnot gang provoked, sensationalistic ad lines like *Hors-la-Loi*’s – “Nothing more terrible or more frightening has ever been put on the screen” – were courting trouble.¹⁵¹ The mayor of the small town of Belley (Ain) was the first to close the cinema in early June, an action that was strongly supported by the Paris daily, *Le Temps*. The newspaper claimed that such crime films actually served as a form of propaganda and cultural validation for apaches and ‘bandes à Bonnot: “it’s with a certain pride that apaches see in the newspapers and in

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 13.

¹⁴⁹ Indeed, the “security crisis” caused by the Bonnot gang’s spree led to important reforms in France’s police forces. See Laurent Lopéz. “1912, l’affaire Bonnot: les effets contradictoires d’une crise sécuritaire sur les polices et la gendarmerie.” *Socio-logos. Revue de l’association française de sociologie* 2 (2007). <http://socio-logos.revues.org/521> [Accessed August 8, 2012].

¹⁵⁰ See the advertisement in *Ciné-Journal* 5, no. 195 (18 May 1912), 64-65.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 64-65.

film the portrait and the exploits of their comrades...”¹⁵² The industry immediately suffered an even more devastating setback when Edouard Herriot, the mayor of Lyon and rising left Radical republican, also forbade all screenings of films representing criminal acts on June 14.

It was one thing for the mayor of Belley to close his local cinema, quite another to have the mayor of France’s second largest city follow suit. If *Ciné-Journal*’s response to the mayor of Belley’s interdiction was measured and a little condescending, Dureau took Herriot’s actions much more seriously. In an open letter to Herriot, he appealed to the mayor’s republican political convictions and his considerable cultural background to ask why he was singling out the cinema.¹⁵³ Herriot was already a powerful figure in the Radical party (and would eventually serve three times as Prime Minister), and he was presumably responding to pressure from the moral leagues.¹⁵⁴ Lyon was the only city with two active moral leagues – the Ligue Lyonnaise contre l’immoralité de la rue, and the Ligue française pour le relèvement de la moralité [Lyon League against immorality in the street and French league for the restoration of morality]—the latter of which was described by Bérenger as “one of the most active of our societies,” and whose leader served on the executive committee for Bérenger’s federation.¹⁵⁵

While local pressures prompted his actions, Herriot’s action opened the floodgates nationwide. By August mayors had issued *arrêtés* (orders to close) in Hyères (Var), Bordeaux, Marseilles, Lille, Rouen, Montpellier and Aix-en-Provence. Elsewhere,

¹⁵² Reprinted in Georges Dureau. “Le Cinéma tel que le juge la grande presse française.” *Ciné-Journal* 5, no. 199, (15 June 1912), 3.

¹⁵³ Georges Dureau. “Lettre ouverte à M. Herriot, maire de Lyon et à ses imitateurs.” *Ciné-Journal* 5, no. 201, (29 June 1912), 3-5.

¹⁵⁴ Gérard Chauvy. *Edouard Herriot (1872-1957) et la radicalisme triomphant*. (Lyon: LUGD, 1996); Louis Muron. *Eduoard Herriot (1872-1957)*. (Lyon: Éditions Lyonnaises d’Art et d’Histoire, 1997); and Edouard Herriot. *Jadis*. Vol 1. (Paris: Flammarion, 1948).

¹⁵⁵ Bérenger, 83.

mayors required all films to be submitted for municipal review before exhibition.¹⁵⁶

Taken aback by the onslaught, the cinema press did an about-face. It abandoned the appeal to the artistic worth of cinema and adopted a strategy that invoked these films for documentary rather than artistic worth. *Ciné-Journal* chastised the mayor of Belley for disingenuously wanting to eliminate “scenes of documentary footage” when it was precisely their documentary-like neutrality that made the Bonnot films fundamentally moral. “Only cinema documents taken with care, with method, will remain like impartial witnesses to these tragic moments...”¹⁵⁷ Dureau launched the same critique at Herriot: “if you respect the liberty of the press, respect equally our works of *actualité* and information, taken in the same manner as in the newspapers.”¹⁵⁸ Benoît-Lévy drew the same connections, as expected, when he wrote that closing the cinemas was absurd because “everyone can read in the newspapers detailed accounts of these crimes, and everyone can see drawings and photographs which recall [*se rapporter*] them.”¹⁵⁹

Yet, *Éclair*'s *Bandits en Automobile* films were *not actualités* (newsreels) or documentaries, but staged recreations designed for popular consumption. To call them documentaries or actualities was, on one level, simply to obfuscate. Many mayors saw through Dureau's arguments and considered the *Éclair* films as *spectacles de curiosité*, not as an actuality or documentary. Moreover, Chanot, the mayor of Marseilles, claimed, “there is a difference between cinema and theater. Only adults and people of a certain age go to the theater; the cinema, on the contrary, has above all a clientele of children.”¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Leglise, 30, and Georges Dureau. “De la valeur des arrêtés municipaux contre certains films.” *Ciné-Journal* 5, no. 208, (17 August 1912), 3

¹⁵⁷ Dureau. “Le Cinéma tel que le juge la grande presse française.” 4.

¹⁵⁸ Dureau. “Lettre ouverte à M. Herriot,” 4.

¹⁵⁹ Edmond Benoît-Lévy. “En plein arbitraire.” *L'Écho du Cinéma*, 5 July 1912, 1.

¹⁶⁰ “Le Jugement de Marseilles.” *Ciné-Journal* 6, no. 236, (1 March 1913), 17.

When the issue over the closings entered the courts in the fall of 1912, questions about the nature of film's effects on spectators were publicly argued. In one case the mayor of Hyères brought five charges against a theater proprietor, Giraudon, for showing five films that portrayed criminal acts. In October, the magistrate recognized the legality of the mayor's action, upholding the cinema's status as a *spectacle de curiosité*, arguing that "cinematic spectacles are only images, the photography of a dramatic work; they are not made for the same audiences... they set out rather to excite and sometimes to surprise public curiosity..."¹⁶¹ Giraudon appealed the ruling, and his defense provided expert testimony from a philosophy professor, L. Fouassier, which was subsequently published in *Ciné-Journal*. In defending the exhibitor, Fouassier asked whether crime films were immoral because they led to imitation. Although he acknowledged "the power of images to reinforce themselves in our memories," as representations and not actualities, they could not provoke criminal thoughts in the majority of the population.¹⁶² Since each of the five films' scenarios ultimately upheld the law and public morality, mere *representations* of criminal acts were not enough to induce criminal behavior except in those that were already predisposed.

This testimony helped Giraudon win appeal in February 1913, but it reinforced the court's decision that cinema was a *spectacle de curiosité*, not a neutral carrier of information nor a variant of the theater.¹⁶³ In Marseilles, another theater owner was similarly acquitted although, as in Hyères, the judge upheld the mayor's power of

¹⁶¹ Quoted in Leglise, 31.

¹⁶² L. Fouassier. "Les Erreurs de la censure: L'Affaire Giraudon." *Ciné-Journal* 6, no. 245 (3 March 1913), 29-30.

¹⁶³ Georges Dureau. "Deuxième procès! Deuxième victoire! Le Fédération du Midi triomphe encore à Hyères." *CJ* 6/236, 1 March 1913, 3; and "Le jugement d'Hyères," *Le Cinéma et l'Écho du Cinéma Réunis*, 28 February 1913, 4.

interdiction. “The judgment,” Dureau argued, “agreed with the Marseilles mayor...on the validity of his power since it placed cinema in the category of *spectacles de curiosité* and not in that of the legitimate theater.”¹⁶⁴ While the cinema press celebrated these acquittals as victories against municipal overreach, the rulings gave mayors, and by extension the Republican state, the first legal recognition of their authority over cinema exhibition. In April 1913, the Minister of the Interior issued another circular to the prefects, ordering them to forbid the showing of cinematic representations of recent crimes in their departments.¹⁶⁵ Finally, an April 1914 Conseil d’État ruling placed cinema officially within the category of *spectacle de curiosité*, upholding mayoral and prefectural oversight. “Thus by the outbreak of war,” Hemming notes, “a firm control had been established by local authorities, and through them by the Minister of Interior, over the exhibition of films.”¹⁶⁶

The controversy over crime films showed up the inconsistencies in the arguments made by defenders of the cinema industry. After initially asserting the cinema’s affinity with the legitimate theater, they shifted their arguments to stress the documentary and actuality aspect of film when confronted with crime films that represented actual incidents. While none of these arguments succeeded in changing the legal status of the cinema, it did open a space for considering the social influence of cinematic images, especially those that purported to be of a documentary character. This shift to considering the document-aspect of films was paralleled, and reinforced, by increasing appeals to their educational role.

¹⁶⁴ Georges Dureau. “Un premier pas vers la justice: Le jugement de Marseille.” *CJ* 6/233, 3 February 1913, 4.

¹⁶⁵ Hemmings, 334.

¹⁶⁶ Hemmings, 337.

Reframing Cinema: Building The Case for Educational Film

Even though crime films proved to be a lucrative genre for the industry, they did reinforce cinema's "low" status within the Republic's legal framework. Yet, if the arguments in the trade journals that crime films were a form of actuality or documentary were ultimately unsuccessful, they did indicate that some were looking to non-fiction genres to provide social legitimation. Testimonials on behalf of non-fiction film had begun to appear with increasing frequency in the cinema press during and after 1912. As one article for Pathé newsreels put it, "everywhere [the cinema] is the first to view and to record, and everyone it is the first to view and make known [?]. Whether it be events of capital importance or scenes of daily life, it is the impartial eye that sees all and records all."¹⁶⁷ "*Voir, c'est savoir*," went the article's byline – seeing is knowing. Indeed, during 1912, *Le Cinéma* ran a series of editorials on the institutional applications of non-fiction film.¹⁶⁸ Although never completely abandoning his belief in the aesthetic primacy of cinema, even Dureau asserted in a mid-1913 *Ciné-Journal* editorial "the cinema is only a recording machine. Its function remains more impersonal than artistic. It is neutrality itself."¹⁶⁹ The trade journals also began to provide longer articles on cinema's potential social utility. In early 1914, *Le Cinéma et L'Écho du Cinéma* published articles on the "Grand Applications of Cinema" in which different ministers were interviewed on the

¹⁶⁷ "Le Journal Cinématographique." *Le Cinéma-L'Écho du Cinéma*, (15 May 1912), 2.

¹⁶⁸ See "Colonisation et Cinématographie," "Géographie et Cinématographie," and "La Vulgarisation Scientifique par le Cinématographie." *Le Cinéma-L'Écho du Cinéma réunis*, (10 August 1912), 4, (23 August 1912), 4, (30 August 1912), 4.

¹⁶⁹ Georges Dureau. "La Cinéma ne fausse pas la Vie." *Ciné-Journal* 6, no. 257 (19 July 1913), 3.

possibilities of employing cinema for training in agricultural techniques as well as on railroad machinery.¹⁷⁰

Among the most frequently reported of these utilitarian applications was education. In 1912, *Ciné-Journal* published a long article by an anonymous writer called Yhcam. The author advocated a cinema for children that would be “written especially for them offering all the guarantees of requisite morality.”¹⁷¹ That summer, the journal also published a letter from Coissac that took issue with Dureau’s characterization of cinema as simply an entertainment medium. “We persist in believing,” Coissac contended, “that the cinema has a nobler role to play than the simple one of earning money.... The people is a large child whose education is slow, all the more reason to take it by the hand....”¹⁷² By 1913, *Le Cinéma et L’Écho du Cinéma* ran numerous articles on the increasing frequency of film screenings in schools.¹⁷³ Many of these articles, like Paul Drouard’s long series, from August through September of 1913, combined practical advice with the fervor of acolytes, offering suggestions to “win over those most skeptical to our techniques.”¹⁷⁴ Such was certainly the case with Émile Kress who, like Coissac, was also

¹⁷⁰ “Les grandes applications pratiques du Cinématographe: Les Ministres ont parlé: Il nous approuvent.” *Le Cinéma- L’Écho du Cinéma* 3, no. 119 (13 February 1913), 1. The agricultural ministry had begun to consider creating films for agricultural training, but these initiatives did not begin until after the war. See Alison J. Murray Levine. “Cinéma, propaganda agricole, and populations rurales en France (1919-1939).” *Vingtième Siècle*, no. 83 (July-September 2004), 21-38.

¹⁷¹ Yhcam. “Cinematography.” In *French Film Theory and Criticism, Vol. 1 – 1907-1929*. R. Abel, ed. and trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 68.

¹⁷² G.M. Coissac. “De la moralité du public au cinématographe: Réponse d’un confrère.” *Ciné-Journal* 6, no. 207 (10 August 1912), 15.

¹⁷³ “Le Cinéma à l’École,” *Le Cinéma-L’Écho du Cinéma* 2, no. 51 (7 March 1913), E.L. Fouquet. “L’Instruction par le Cinéma.” *Le Cinéma-L’Écho du Cinéma* 2, no. 19 (11 April 1913); “Le Cinématographe et l’Éducation Populaire.” *Le Cinéma-L’Écho du Cinéma* 2, no. 72 (11 July 1913); Paul Drouard. “Le Cinéma Éducateur.” *Le Cinéma-L’Écho du Cinéma* 2, no. 76 (8 August 1913), no. 78 (22 August 1913), no. 79 (29 August 1913), and no. 83 (26 September 1913); André Savignon. “Le Cinématographe au Lycée.” *Le Cinéma-L’Écho du Cinéma* 2, no. 85 (18 October 1913); “Le Cinéma à l’École.” *Le Cinéma-L’Écho du Cinéma* 2, no. 91 (21 November 1913)

¹⁷⁴ Drouard. “Le Cinéma Éducateur.” 26 September 1913.

responsible for some of the earliest published technical manuals for projectionists.¹⁷⁵ His *De l'Utilité du Cinématographe dans l'Enseignement* [The Usefulness of Cinema in Teaching], the first published book on the subject, used Rousseauian principles to argue that cinema would better suit the natural inclinations of children to explore and engage visually with the world than more conventional book-bound approaches. This argument, as chapter two will demonstrate, drew on earlier arguments for a progressive, child-centered education that developed in the Enlightenment and that would be actively promoted in civic associations in the Third Republic. Kress asserted, “the author of *Émile* sought to form in his student’s spirit ‘a storehouse of knowledge that would serve as his education during his youth and his conduct at all times.’ If educational cinema had to define its reason for being, it could not choose another definition.”¹⁷⁶ *De l'Utilité* also argued that, by incorporating films into geography, history, and science lessons, students would also develop an appreciation for the benefits of human progress and modernity.¹⁷⁷

Kress’s book indicated a different way of considering how images could influence children; instead of leading them into crime, they could be the instigator of practical knowledge and morality. Contrasting “good” educative images with “bad” spectacle images allowed supporters of educational cinema to argue that cinema could, in effect, reform itself by becoming a pedagogical tool. As one writer put it, “nothing blocks [the cinema] from joining the useful to the agreeable and to become, for the people, a theater,

¹⁷⁵ Émile Kress. *Comment on installe et administre un cinéma*. Paris: Comptoir d'édition de “Cinéma-revue,” 1913. Kress also published the first known book on French cinema history: *Historique du Cinématographe*. Paris: Comptoir d'Éditions de Cinéma-Revue, 1912.

¹⁷⁶ Émile Kress. *De l'Utilité du Cinématographe dans l'Enseignement*. (Paris: Charles-Mendel, [n.d.]), 22. The holdings of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France show that all of Kress’s dated publications range from 1910 to 1916; moreover, Kress mentions the growing interest in cinema among schoolteachers but does not identify specific schools as did Coissac’s accounts of Paris lycées in 1913. A rough estimate would date the book to about 1913-1914.

¹⁷⁷ Kress, 29-30.

a collaborator, and an auxiliary instructor at the same time. We let children go to the cinema, the moment has come for cinema to come to the children.”¹⁷⁸ This writer, Lucien Descaves, was a member of a civic association named the Société Française de l’Art à l’École [The French Society of Art in the School] formed in 1908, whose mission was to foster the creation of clean, aerated, and attractive schools that allowed children to interact with art and nature and more efficaciously developed their faculties and individual morality.¹⁷⁹ The group’s sixth congress, held in Bordeaux in late May 1912, just as the crime film controversy was beginning, put educational cinema on its agenda and called for the incorporation into primary education of films “whose unity and veracity must be uniquely attended to.”¹⁸⁰ The society volunteered itself to be the arbiter of all films designed for classroom use and suggested that any films not on their approved list should be proscribed.

The following year, the Société de l’Art à l’École’s seventh congress made the distinction between the positive pedagogical film and negative spectacle film more assertively. A correspondent wrote “for each instructive or salutary film which passes in front of the spectators’ eye, the cinema presents ten others in which the child only sees ugliness, immorality, vice, and obscenity... it is the representation of a thousand other horrible or mendacious subjects that can only leave destructive traces in the spirits of children.”¹⁸¹ It was the responsibility of educators to use travelogues and other “responsible” subjects as a way to combat the pernicious effect of bad films. The Ligue

¹⁷⁸ Lucien Descaves. “Le Cinéma scolaire.” *L’Art à l’École* 5, no. 39 (May 1912), 108.

¹⁷⁹ “Aux Éducateurs, aux Artistes, aux Amis de la Jeunesse Française.” *L’Art à l’École* 1, no. 1 (June 1908), 1.

¹⁸⁰ “Voeux émis par le 6e Congrès.” *L’Art à l’École* 5, no. 44 (December 1912), insert.

¹⁸¹ “Voeux émis par le 7e Congrès: Causes d’Art et Cinématographes” *L’Art à l’École* 6, no. 51 (July-August 1913), 45.

Française de l'Enseignement, which had been one of Benoît-Lévy's first public forums, put educational cinema on its platform at the 1914 congress in Nantes and would begin hosting *cinéma éducateur* – non-classroom based - screenings in 1916 for students from Paris and its immediate suburbs.¹⁸² The repertoire featured natural history, technology, and geography films and was so popular that “parents sought authorization to attend regularly at the same time as their children.”¹⁸³

By the outbreak of the war, writers like Coissac and Émile Kress, and civic associations such as the Société de l'Art à l'École were building a compelling case for educational cinema that added to the earlier arguments a new moral rationale that contrasted “good” educational films from “bad” criminal spectacles. This good/bad binary became explicit in a wartime treatise by a Catholic moralist, Édouard Poulain, who argued that cinema was both a “school of vice” and “a school of education, moralization, and popularization.”¹⁸⁴ While Poulain summarized most of the key anti-cinema arguments - he recited recent cases where crime films had led apparently to acts of juvenile delinquency – he saved his sharpest daggers for a popular fiction writer, Guy de Téraumont, who had characterized the medium as mere corrupting spectacle in the large Parisian daily, *La Presse*.¹⁸⁵ In an editorial, Téraumont refuted those who argued that cinematic representations led to direct imitation in susceptible viewers. Dismissing the possibility that the cinema could have any educative or moralizing effect, he dismissively recommended that parents who were offended by cinematic content take

¹⁸² Anon. “Le cinéma scolaire.” *Bulletin du Cercle Toulousain de la Ligue de l'Enseignement*. Numéro spécial, 1920, 6.

¹⁸³ Adrien Collette. “Le Cinéma à l'École et l'École au Cinéma.” *Cinéopse* 3, no. 24 (August 1921), 540.

¹⁸⁴ Édouard Poulain. *Contre le Cinéma, Pour le Cinéma*. Besançon: L'Imprimerie de l'Est, 1917. A similar argument was made by Pierre de Casabianca, a Parisian lawyer, in his *Comment préserver l'enfance des dangers du cinéma? Ile Congrès International pour la protection de l'enfance*. (Brussels, 1921), 5-6.

¹⁸⁵ Guy de Téraumont. “Chronique: Les Méfaits du Cinéma.” *La Presse*, 16 January 1917, 1.

their children to see theatrical classics at the Théâtre-Français or the Odéon instead. Poulain's response was both a shrill rant against Téraumont and a passionate argument for cinema's educative potential. "By the fact that it is a reproduction of human acts," he asserted, "whether real or imaginary, there can be both a beneficial – and a maleficent – cinema."¹⁸⁶

If moralists like Poulain no longer dismissed cinema as mere spectacle entertainment, whatever the law said, they still wanted to establish boundaries for what constituted "educational" fare. Poulain's book rejected as corrupting all "criminal reporting, court proceedings, capital executions, scandals and all events that had no beneficent claim on the social interest...[such as] the Johnson-Jeffries boxing match...and such romantic adventures even when their scandalous display of passion doesn't lead to crime."¹⁸⁷ Educational subjects were, by contrast, those which "instruct the masses usefully, cleanly, and agreeably in the diverse domains of knowledge...those which restore, purify, and cleanse the public taste...those which transform themselves into a tool of progress, an instrument of national formation and instruction, a machine for 'cerebral hygiene,' in the words of Auguste Comte..."¹⁸⁸ Yet Poulain's effort to draw distinct boundaries between educational films and "immoral" films pointed to an ongoing issue faced by later advocates: by what and whose criteria was a film to be classified as "educational?" If by "educational film," one meant not only films designed for classrooms but those that "restor[ed], purif[ied], and cleans[ed] the public taste," almost any film could conceivably be included under this definition. As the movement began to

¹⁸⁶ Poulain, 59.

¹⁸⁷ Poulain, 128.

¹⁸⁸ Poulain, 128-129.

obtain institutional support in the 1920s, the lack of clarity over the specificity of educational cinema would lead to additional confusion and frustration.

The First World War Era: Commercial Contraction, Building Momentum for Educational Films

With the onset of the First World War, however, questions concerning categorization had to be delayed until the future. The industry had more immediate concerns: by the summer of 1914, American firms had established distributing companies in France that were flooding screens with their product; of 20,000 meters of film exhibited in Paris in June 1914, Richard Abel estimated that 17,000 were from foreign producers.¹⁸⁹ The war's crippling effects on production – the entire industry closed down for the final five months of 1914 due to material and personnel shortages – ultimately cost French film companies their own domestic market, as Hollywood films increasingly came to dominate their screens.

The popularity of the crime film genre combined with the serious economic contraction prompted the film companies to produce more series films as an economic necessity. When *Zigomar* proved profitable for Éclair, Gaumont developed two of the most famous feature-length crime series in the silent era – *Fantômas* (1913-1914) and *Les Vampires* (1915-1916), both directed by Louis Feuillade.¹⁹⁰ Consequently, the Conseil d'État's 1914 classification of cinema as a *spectacle de curiosité* neither seriously averted crime film production nor tempered the anger of the Republic's

¹⁸⁹ Richard Abel. *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1914-1929*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 9.

¹⁹⁰ See Vicki Callahan. *Zones of Anxiety: Movement, Musidora, and the Crime Serials of Louis Feuillade*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005; and Robin Walz. *Pulp Surrealism: Insolent Popular Culture in Early Twentieth-Century Paris*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

moralists against the industry. Just before the war's outbreak, *Ciné-Journal* lamented that Bérenger was about to embark on another campaign of censure (and pointed the finger at small, independent exhibitors to boot).¹⁹¹ Crime series' popularity continued to reinforce the belief that such films instigated criminal activity, and prompted additional state intervention during the war. Persistent complaints by mayors, university rectors, and public prosecutors led the Interior Ministry in 1917 to create a commission for the regulation and perfection of the cinema.¹⁹² The report, written by the future prime minister Étienne Flandin, proposed the creation of a central committee, placed under the Minister of Public Education, that would require all films intended for exhibition in France to be submitted for screening and, upon approval, the issuing of a visa—a regime that went into effect after the war.

Yet, if Gaumont was now a leading producer of crime film series, it sought to present itself as involved in educational cinema as well. By early 1913, it began to produce its *Encyclopédie Gaumont* series, which would be in circulation by the outbreak of the war.¹⁹³ Yet the films may simply have been re-purposed newsreels and travelogues – titles included *Les Tuileries en fleurs* [Flowers in the Tuileries Garden], *Notre-Dame de Paris*, *Inondations de Paris. Place du Havre* [Floods in Paris, Place du Havre – referring to the 1910 Paris floods] – brought under the “educational” rubric, a practice that would be repeated by other companies after the war. Gaumont himself also sought to show a personal level of engagement, when he, along with Benoît-Lévy, Collette, Herriot,

¹⁹¹ Georges Dureau. “M. Bérenger nous menace du rétablissement de la Censure.” *Ciné-Journal* 7, no. 305 (27 June 1914), 3.

¹⁹² Casabianca, 10-11. Benoît-Lévy was active at this time in appealing mayor-ordered closings of cinema theaters, another series of which occurred in the spring of 1917. See letter to the Mayor of Caen, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Arts du Spectacle, 4° - COL – 80/2 (2); his report on the closings can be found at BNF – Arts du Spectacle 4° - COL – 80/1 (1).

¹⁹³ Delmeulle, 54-56.

members of the Chamber of Deputies, and directors of primary and second education were made members of an extra-parliamentary commission on educational cinema in 1916.¹⁹⁴ This commission originated from a proposal by Jean-Louis Breton, a Socialist Senator and director of France's national office of technological research and innovation since the outbreak of the war, and it was placed under the aegis of Paul Painlevé, the Minister of Public Instruction. Although Herriot used his presence on the commission to denounce the influence of crime films, in general the commission focused on the positive goals of how and to what extent films should be incorporated into public instruction.¹⁹⁵ Its 1920 report would lay the groundwork for the Republic's engagement with educational cinema.

Along with his membership on the commission, in the spring of 1917 Benoît-Lévy established a new, though short-lived association, the Ligue Française du Cinématographie, in which he sought to bring together "those who loved cinema without being professionals," although Gaumont and the camera manufacturer Jules Demaria were also listed as members.¹⁹⁶ This meant bringing together members of the industry and France's cultural elite through social occasions that would serve to support the industry's objectives of promoting the medium's social and cultural value. Edmond Rostand was named honorary president, and the writers Léo Claretie and Collette attended the group's one sponsored banquet in 1918. As part of its goals to "encourage, protect, and develop the cinema arts and industry," this new league proposed to "give,

¹⁹⁴ August Bessou. *Rapport Général sur l'emploi du cinématographe dans les différentes branches de l'enseignement*. Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1920), 1-2. "La Commission Extraparlementaire du Cinéma d'Enseignement." *Le Cinéma-L'Écho du Cinéma* 5, no. 266 (19 May 1916).

¹⁹⁵ On Herriot, see Coissac, *Le Cinématographe et l'Enseignement*, 5.

¹⁹⁶ Benoît-Lévy provided a short history of the group's activities in an interview years later. See Paul Souillac. "Un heure avec M. Benoît-Lévy." *Cinéopse* 8, no. 79 (March 1926), 239-240. One copy of their meeting notes can be found at BNF – Arts du Spectacle 4° - COL – 80/30.

free of charge, every Thursday morning, instructional screenings to school children in Paris and the provinces” and planned to ask “film studios [éditeurs] to loan us documentary and scientific films, etc... [and] cinema theater managers to rent us space...”¹⁹⁷ It is likely, based on a 1917 typewritten manuscript preserved in his archives, that Benoît-Lévy gave his by-now familiar stump-speech on educational cinema to the group.¹⁹⁸ While the group did not last long, it demonstrated the ways in which educational cineastes like Benoît-Lévy were moving “educational cinema” out of the sphere of the individual practitioner like Adrien Collette and into a broader (if still narrow) public. Moreover, individual teachers themselves also had begun to publish accounts of their experiences with using films in their classrooms and offered advice about obtaining films and equipment and organizing screenings.¹⁹⁹ By the end of the war, educational cineastes had succeeded both in establishing important institutional affiliations and in creating a discourse centered on the utility of cinema as a pedagogical instrument.

Conclusion

While the origins of educational cinema can be traced back to nineteenth-century scientific studies in motion and time, it was slow to develop during the first decade of its existence. Dr. Doyen’s practice of shooting training films was a seemingly isolated endeavor, cut short when such films were re-configured as a mass cultural *spectacle de*

¹⁹⁷ BN Arts et Spectacles 4-COL-80/30. See also “La Ligue du Cinématographe.” *Le Film*, 5, no. 110-111, (29 April 1918) to which the group changed its name after its first year.

¹⁹⁸ Edmond Benoît-Lévy. “Conference: Cinéma d’enseignement (1917).” BNF – Arts du Spectacle 4° - COL – 80/30

¹⁹⁹ See Ch. Morlevat’s series, “Le Cinéma à l’École – Opinion d’un instituteur.” *Le Cinéma-L’Écho du Cinéma* 5, no. 220 (25 August 1916), no. 221 (1 September 1916), no. 222 (8 September 1916), no. 223 (15 September 1916), and no. 224 (22 September 1916); and Léon Guillet. “Le Cinéma et l’Enseignement.” *Filma* 10, no. 21 (1-15 April 1918), 2.

curiosité. It was only when middlemen-advocates like Edmond Benoît-Lévy and Guillaume-Michel Coissac began to frame a pedagogical role for cinema that an audience gradually began to build. This progressive enrollment first started within associations that were committed to the secular, progressive values of the Republic and among the industry professionals that would have attended the 1910 Brussels conference.

A clear build up in interest, however, did not occur until just before the First World War. This was due to three factors: 1) The cinema industry itself was beginning to undergo serious financial contractions due to the loss of worldwide market domination and encroachment by American competitors, 2) The popularity of crime films series reinforced the popular association of films with lower-class *spectacles de curiosité* and also invited state repression, and 3) Civic associations like the Société de l'Art à l'École and the Ligue de l'Enseignement only began to engage seriously with the potentialities of educational film at this time. Educational cinema could then respond to multiple needs. On the part of hard-nosed businessmen like Léon Gaumont, it functioned as a dual strategy to develop a new market in a period of economic contraction and to ingratiate his company with a political establishment that found his lucrative crime film genres offensive. For figures like Coissac, Benoît-Lévy, and Collette, however, the educational cinema represented the potential of reshaping French education and providing a more stimulating and engaging learning experience for students.

Yet, *why* did these “educational cineastes” believe that moving pictures taught more effectively than written texts? And, more importantly, in the absence of any systematic research into cinema’s psychological effects, why did high-placed individuals like the education minister Paul Painlevé and André Honnorat respond positively to these

arguments? If the educational cinema meant more markets and social legitimacy for the industry, we need now to understand the basis of its appeal to teachers and government officials within the French political establishment.

Chapter 2: Experimental Psychology, Middle-Class Reform and The Institutionalization of Educational Cinema, 1918-1924

In January 1920, when the Toulouse branch (*Cercle Toulousain*) of the Ligue de l'Enseignement held its first educational cinema screening, M. E. Gillard, their vice-president, used many of Edmond Benoît-Lévy's arguments concerning the centrality of vision for intellectual development and the acquisition of knowledge. "The necessity of education by the image," he confidently asserted, "no longer needs to be demonstrated; everyone knows the importance of educating the sense in the general formation of the spirit."²⁰⁰ Invoking the names of Rousseau and Pestalozzi, Gillard remarked that anyone who observed an infant's interaction with its environment was struck by "the power and the precision, and the ease and suppleness of his looking."²⁰¹ To lend credence to his case, he quoted at length from a text by Paul Painlevé, former Minister of Public Instruction during the war, who had written that the rational use of moving images would be highly beneficial because the cinema "responded to the natural taste of children for the image; it puts under their eyes objects next to ideas; it hastens the work of intelligence and aggrandizes experience."²⁰²

Gillard and Painlevé's claims, however, betrayed a certain level of overconfidence - their privileging of visual learning was not paradigmatic in the Third Republic's

²⁰⁰ Anon. "Le cinéma scolaire." *Bulletin du Cercle Toulousain de la Ligue de l'Enseignement*. Numéro spécial, 1920, 3.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, 3.

²⁰² *Ibid*, 6.

pedagogical practices or philosophy. Even after the First World War, France's educational system was highly stratified at both the primary and secondary levels, with the most elite secondary schools (*lycées*) still using the classical curriculum, and where such contemporary subjects as modern languages had been only recently introduced.²⁰³ Despite the enthusiasm of advocates like Collette, most teachers remained skeptical or even hostile to the notion that cinema could be used for classroom instruction.²⁰⁴ There had been no systematic studies, and only a few individual testimonials, as well as the ongoing endorsements of non-teachers like Benoît-Lévy and Coissac, to attest to cinema's success in the classroom.²⁰⁵ Without any empirical foundations, why did educational cineastes believe that other teachers and government officials would respond to them? What was the basis for thinking that "seeing" meant "knowing" and why was this necessarily superior to the traditional pedagogical methods?

This chapter argues that the advocates of educational cinema built institutional support by bringing together two key developments: first, the emergence of a new image-based model of the mind that had its roots in Enlightenment philosophy and nineteenth-century experimental psychology, and second, post-WWI demands for educational reform, especially in extending vocational and popular education. Educational cineastes contended that the rapid proliferating of filmic images impressed themselves on the individual mind, giving them a *suggestive* influence: the power to shape the subconscious and ultimately motivate the behavior of students. The concept of suggestion was

²⁰³ Fritz K. Ringer. *Education and Society in Modern Europe*. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 121.

²⁰⁴ H. Rébillon. "Le cinéma dans l'enseignement et ses ennemis." *Cinéopse* 4, no. 36 (August 1922),

²⁰⁵ See Ch. Morlevat's series, "Le Cinéma à l'École – Opinion d'un instituteur." *Le Cinéma-L'Écho du Cinéma* 5, no. 220 (25 August 1916), no. 221 (1 September 1916), no. 222 (8 September 1916), no. 223 (15 September 1916), and no. 224 (22 September 1916); and Léon Guillet. "Le Cinéma et l'Enseignement." *Filma* 10, no. 21 (1-15 April 1918), 2.

developed from Alfred Binet's psychological studies, where he argued that children's tendency to imitate demonstrated that learning occurred at a subconscious, non-rational level, since their minds took in the external world as a series of images.

Seen from this psychological perspective, cinema was taken a mechanistic parallel to cognitive functioning. The educational cineastes believed, along with psychologists like Hugo Münsterberg, that cinema was optimally suited for instruction given its ability to simulate cognitive functions.²⁰⁶ Consequently, they argued that visual instruction was a more direct and effective method for mass education than lectures or books; and they made this argument appealing to French government officials looking to increase educational access in order to rebuild the nation after the devastation of the First World War. The creation of institutional support (funding, libraries, sponsored public screenings) was based upon advocates' success in joining a novel psychological model of cognition to the Third Republic's objectives to extend popular and vocational education.

Studies of visual technologies have generally stressed their disciplinary power, either through their ability to construct docile subjects through such forms as photo identification and medical imaging.²⁰⁷ Other scholars, influenced by science and technology studies, have moved way from this power/knowledge binary implicit to show how photography and cinema were employed in a variety of scientific and archival

²⁰⁶ See Allan Langdale, ed. *Hugo Münsterberg on Film: The Photoplay – A Psychological Study and Other Writings*. London: Routledge, 2002.

²⁰⁷ The model for this approach is Michel Foucault's famous discussion of the Panopticon in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. A. Sheridan, trans. New York: Random House, 1977; Lisa Cartwright. *Screening the Body: Tracing Medicine's Visual Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995. John Tagg. "Evidence, Truth, and Order: Photographic Records and the Growth of the State." In *The Photography Reader*. L. Wells, ed. (London: Routledge, 2004), 257-260, and *The Disciplinary Frame: Photographic Truths and the Capture of Meaning*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2009; Georges Didi-Huberman. *The Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*. A. Hartz, trans. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003; Josh Ellenbogen. "Photography and the Imperceptible: Bertillon, Galton, Marey." Ph.D. diss.: University of Chicago, 2005

activities.²⁰⁸ Following the work of Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, they argue that photographic images have re-configured how information is presented and evaluated.²⁰⁹ Oliver Gaycken, for example, has shown how scientific films “vernacularized” their subjects through the use of filmic techniques that rendered them as much or more entertaining than evidentiary. Paula Amad’s study of Albert Kahn’s Archives de la Planète shows how Kahn’s collection of documentary films from all over the world was both influenced by, and itself shaped, Bergson’s theories of the unbroken continuity of existence and the past as “an infinitely increasing stock of memories.”²¹⁰ While these studies offer thorough analyses of specific practices, they do not consider the ways in which ideas about visually based knowledge filtered into the broader public sphere. By missing this substratum of adherents and their activities, visual studies scholars fail to consider the broader social implications of these new media.

Historians of early-twentieth French society and education have, in their turn, not considered how photography and visual objects affected teaching practices or what role cinema and other media played in shaping pedagogical practices in this era.²¹¹ Instead, histories of French education have traditionally stressed its central role in disseminating the secular values, and securing the political legitimacy, of the French Republic.²¹²

Recently, both American and French scholars have called attention to the politicization of

²⁰⁸ Oliver Gaycken. “Devices of Curiosity: Cinema and the Scientific Vernacular.” Ph.D. diss.: University of Chicago, 2005. Jimina Canales. *A Tenth of a Second: History: A History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

²⁰⁹ Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison. *Objectivity*. New York: Zone Books, 2007.

²¹⁰ Paula Amad. *Counter-Archive: Film, the Everyday, and Albert Kahn’s Archives de la Planète*. New York: (Columbia University Press, 2010), 122. See also the special issue, “Le cinéma d’Albert Kahn: quelle place dans l’histoire?” *Les Cahiers de la Cinémathèque*, no. 74, December 2002.

²¹¹ Françoise Mayeur. *Histoire générale de l’enseignement et de l’éducation en France: Tome 3, De la Révolution à l’école républicaine (1789-1930)*. Paris: Perrin, 2004; and Antoine Prost. *Histoire de l’enseignement et de l’éducation. Tome 4. Depuis 1930*. Paris: Perrin, 2004.

²¹² Weber. *Peasants Into Frenchmen*; Caroline Ford. *Creating the Nation in Provincial France: Religion and Political Identity in Brittany*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993; and Jacques Ozouf and Mona Ozouf. *La République des instituteurs*. Paris: Seuil, 1992.

the teaching faculty after the First World War – its national syndicate was first organized in 1919 – and especially on the influence of pacifism and the growth of right-wing attacks on teachers’ supposed “defeatism” that would later lead to national defeat in 1940.²¹³ Moreover, the educational cinema movement was also part of this reformist discourse. Made up of middle-class, largely (but not completely) secular professionals, they believed that cinema could further the government’s political and pedagogical goals, both in extending mass education and especially vocational and technical training to make up for the shortages of skilled labor following the war. While they imagined that films could revolutionize (or, at least, greatly facilitate) teaching, they shared the same political outlook as their non-cinematic colleagues: an educated laity that adhered to, and worked within the institutional framework of, the Third Republic. Far from being an avant-garde or revolutionary art, educational cineastes saw the medium as a tool for middle-class social reform.

In order to understand the appeal of the educational cineastes’ argument, this chapter will first analyze its origins in both Enlightenment theories of sensationism and nineteenth-century work in experimental psychology. Following which, it will show how members of the movement used these ideas to support the creation of an institutional framework of libraries, archives, programs, and affiliated organizations that allowed for the purchase of projectors and films for the Republic’s schools.

Sensationism and The Origins of Visual Pedagogy

²¹³ Oliver Loubes. *L’École et la patrie: Histoire d’un désenchantement*. Paris: Éditions Belin, 2001; Mona L. Siegel. *The Moral Disarmament of France: Education, Pacifism, and Patriotism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; Jean-Michel Chapoulie. *L’École d’État conquiert la France*. (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010), 299-325; and Ringer, *Education and Society*, 126-131.

“At the base of all intellectual development,” wrote one schoolmaster and editor of an ephemeral journal, *Ciné-Schola*, “the master places observation... As such, maps and paintings, museums, books with multiple illustrations are precious. The cinema completes these techniques; it synthesizes them, by adding movement to them. In the darkness, excellent milieu of receptivity, the child will learn faster and better; the acquisition of knowledge will be durable.”²¹⁴ As the quotation indicates, advocates for educational cinema based their arguments, in part, upon a long history of visual devices, from maps and museums to magic lanterns in the nineteenth century.²¹⁵ From the Renaissance through the eighteenth-century, optical cabinets, museum displays, and illustrated books formed a repertoire of optical devices used to instruct and entertain.²¹⁶ Many Enlightenment thinkers, however, came to distrust visual devices as instruments of learning. To thinkers such as Hume and Rousseau, images were unstable, deceptive, and attractive rather than veridical. The historian Barbara Stafford has characterized their view of images as “exist[ing] ambiguously in between entertainment, performance, and practical instruction.”²¹⁷ Images were seen as easily manipulated, deceptive, and likely to produce conviction through visual attraction and pleasure rather than through any logically or demonstrably attained proof of veracity.²¹⁸

²¹⁴ Charpentier. “La cinématographe dans l’Enseignement Primaire.” *Ciné-Schola* 2, no. 3 (January-February 1923), 1-2.

²¹⁵ On magic lanterns, see Carla Conrad Freeman. “Visual Media in Education: An Informal History.” *Visual Resources* 6, no. 4 (1990), 327-340, Jennifer F. Eisenhauer. “Next Slide Please: The Magical, Scientific and Corporate Discourses of Visual Projection Technologies.” *Studies in Art Education* 47, no. 3 (Spring 2006), 198-214; and Verity Hunt. “Raising a Modern Ghost: The Magic Lantern and the Persistence of Wonder in the Victorian Education of the Senses.” *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, no. 5 (November 2008). <http://www.erudit.org/revue/ravon/2008/v/n52/019806ar.html>

²¹⁶ Barbara Maria Stafford. *Artful Science: Enlightenment Entertainment and the Eclipse of Visual Education*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994. For the origins of scientific collections, see Paula Findlen. *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California, 1994.

²¹⁷ Stafford, 218.

²¹⁸ Stafford, 125.

They wrote extensively on education, however, and sought to develop a new pedagogical philosophy. This stemmed from both a reaction against the abuses and limitations of Jesuit establishments and the growing belief that education should center on the needs and inclinations of the individual child. In *Émile* (1762), the most famous example, Rousseau attacked the hidebound emphasis on rules and reading, with their emphasis on memorization, arguing that “children learn best when guided by their needs, are attracted to things they can see, feel and understand clearly, and absorb information through experience rather than precepts.”²¹⁹ Yet, as Natasha Gill has recently argued, philosophes also struggled against their contradictory notions over the goal of education – on the one hand, they believed instruction should enable self-cultivation according to an individual’s interests while, on the other hand, they also recognized that education had to form “virtuous citizens,” who would accept limitations to individual ambition in order to achieve social cohesion. Philosophes like Étienne-Gabriel Morelly, Abbé Duclos, and Rousseau “aspired to reconcile a child’s need for self-expression with requirements of communal life and thereby to create a *naturally sociable individual*, a being who is not coerced into virtue but whose personal nature includes and thrives on its own social dimension.”²²⁰ In order to resolve this paradox, they developed two separate, but mutually reinforcing, approaches. They termed *éducation* as the cultivating of an individual’s morality and civic responsibility, while *enseignement* was a more utilitarian method of instruction in formal subjects or techniques. Instruction would endow students

²¹⁹ Natasha Green. *Educational Philosophy in the French Enlightenment: From Nature to Second Nature*. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 185.

²²⁰ Green, 4.

with skills and practical knowledge, while *éducation* “taught men their rights and duties in society, indicating the relation of individual advantage to the general good.”²²¹

These pedagogical ideas were grounded upon theories of sensation, first articulated by Locke in his *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) but developed in France by Morelly, Duclos and Condillac. Sensationism denies the existence of innate ideas and argues that all human understanding is grounded in bodily – that is, sensory - experience. Morelly’s *Essai sur l’esprit humain ou principes naturels de l’éducation* (1743) corporealized cognition and asserted that instruction needs to be sensually pleasing if it is to engage and to cultivate the child’s inner sentiments.²²² These ideas were further developed by the Swiss lawyer and educational theorist, Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827).²²³ Influenced by Rousseau and his own experiences in teaching young children, he argued that sensory perceptions were the basis for intellectual, practical, and moral education. He also believed that parents and teachers needed to shape the child’s external environment so that he or she could cultivate and refine their perceptual sensibilities according to their level of intellectual development. The belief that “*actual sensory experience carefully organized and systemically worked out* [author’s emphasis] is the only sound basis of instruction” became Pestalozzi’s guiding principle.²²⁴

²²¹ Keith M. Baker. *Condorcet: From Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 286, and 285-303. Condorcet, it should be noted, opposed this binary model, insisting on on *enseignement* (instruction) rather than *éducation*, given that the latter inculcated specific political beliefs.

²²² For the development of the notion of subjectivity and sentiment, see Jerrold Siegel. *The Idea of the Self: Thought and Experience in Western Europe Since the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; and William M. Reddy. *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.

²²³ Thomas E. Smith. “Rousseau and Pestalozzi: Emile, Gertrude, and Experiential Education.” In *Sourcebook of Experiential Education: Key Thinkers and Their Contributions*. Thomas E. Smith and Clifford E. Knapp, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 26-32.

²²⁴ J.A. Green. *The Educational Ideas of Pestalozzi*. (London: W.B. Clive, 1905), 94.

Sensationism and the progressive reforms advocated by Enlightenment-era thinkers posited a new pedagogical model that challenged the primacy of textually-based instruction that emphasized rote memorization; instead, they called for a “child-centered” model that shaped learning to the child’s innate inclinations. Educational cineastes would deploy the sensationists’ argument but with a twist – they delimited the Enlightenment’s conception of a child’s “natural inclinations.” For advocates like Benoît-Lévy and others, the child’s “natural inclination” was defined by their attraction to *visual* stimuli. Thus, the Rousseauian natural inclination of the child was subtly shifted to an acknowledgement of that of the young spectator’s tendency to absorb and to imitate the actions on a cinema screen. This conceptual shift was only made possible through the advent of suggestion theory in nineteenth French psychology.

The Republican Schoolhouse – And the Limits of Progressive Education

Although sensationist ideas would come to form the intellectual foundation of the educational cinema movement, they had little purchase in French educational practices in the nineteenth century. Although Napoleonic reforms were aimed at creating a technocratic elite, the Emperor also preserved the classical curriculum along with his insistence on math and science.²²⁵ And despite reforms like the 1833 Guizot Law that required each community to have a primary school and each *département* to have a normal school, there was little evident change either in the curriculum or in teaching practices. Mid-nineteenth century teacher manuals emphasize rote instruction based on

²²⁵ Ringer, *Education and Society*, 115. Image-based instruction was not completely unknown in other countries, such as Joseph Lancaster’s early nineteenth-century optical reading stations. Patricia Crain. “Children of Media, Children as Media: Optical Telegraphs, Indian Pupils, and Joseph Lancaster’s System for Cultural Replication.” In *New Media 1740-1915*. L. Gitelman and G.B. Pingree, eds. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 61-89.

textual memorization.²²⁶ If anything, the Falloux Laws of 1850 strengthened the conservatism of France's educational system in allowing private Catholic primary schools to be established and to co-exist alongside public ones.

It was not until the re-emergence of republican political culture during the latter liberal phase of the Second Empire (1861-1869) that the subject of education became enshrined as a "progressive" political objective.²²⁷ The republican activists who would establish the Third Republic in 1871 redefined schools as intellectual laboratories for creating a new republican polity. Based on their readings of Enlightenment figures like Condorcet, republicans associated mass education with social progress. "Liberty and democracy follow from it," writes Theodore Zeldin, summing up their attitudes, "because enlightened citizens would know how to order public affairs; equality would be advanced, because the hidden talents of the poor would be revealed..."²²⁸ With the establishment of the Third Republic in 1871, its leaders saw public education as an agent for instilling the values of civic republicanism. The Ligue Française de l'Enseignement, founded by Jean Macé in 1866, became France's largest civil association for the promotion of secular education and included most of the leading pedagogues and many important political figures in their membership rolls.²²⁹ Sudhir Hazareensingh has also shown how another group, the Société d'Instruction Républicaine established a nation-

²²⁶ M. Daligault. *Cours pratique de pédagogie*. (Paris: Dezobry et E. Magdeleine, 1851).

²²⁷ The literature on French education and its role in securing the values of the Third Republic is immense. My discussion has been informed by the following texts: for the late Empire, Philip Nord. *The Republican Moment: Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), 31-47; James R. Lehning. *To Be a Citizen: The Political Culture of the Early French Third Republic*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2001), 35-57; Eugen Weber. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977); Jean-Marie Mayeur and Madeleine Rebérioux. *The Third Republic from Its Origins to the Great War*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 109-122.

²²⁸ Theodore Zeldin. *France 1848-1945: Intellect and Pride*. (New York: Oxford, 1973), 151.

²²⁹ Katherine Auspitz. *The Radical Bourgeoisie: The Ligue de l'Enseignement and the Origins of the Third Republic, 1866-1885*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982; Zeldin, *Intellect and Pride*, 151-154.

wide network of adherents to teach republican values to France's rural inhabitants.²³⁰

Within the school system itself, the Republic enacted laws and measures to extend access. The 1882 Ferry Laws created free and compulsory primary schooling and ministers attempted to expand opportunities for secondary education, establishing limited schools for girls and some vocational training.²³¹ Towards the turn of the century, republican civil associations fostered initiatives in what they called "social education."²³² These comprised "popular universities," and evening courses in a wide variety of academic and technical subjects for working people.

There were limits, however, to the progressiveness of these initiatives, many of which were aimed at reconciling the working classes to the Republic and at staving off the risk of popular political action. Education, according to Sanford Elwitt, held the key to social peace because "it places working-class education within a comprehensive system of social management."²³³ Moreover, many initiatives, and especially the popular universities were short-lived, although adult evening courses and public lectures would become two of the major venues for *cinéma d'éducation*. Within the educational system itself, the Ferry Laws did not ultimately expand access to secondary schooling, and

²³⁰ Sudhir Hazareensingh. "The Société d'Instruction République and the Propagation of Civic Republicanism in Provincial and Rural France, 1870-1877." *Journal of Modern History* 71, no. 2 (June 1999), 271-309.

²³¹ The Republic continued the special vocational secondary curriculum created by Napoleon III's education minister, Victor Duruy until it was folded its standard curriculum in 1891. On Duruy, see Sandra Horvath-Peterson. *Victor Duruy & French Education: Liberal Reform and the Second Empire*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984; for girl's and women's education, see Jo Burr Margadant. *Madame le Professeur: Women Educators in the Third Republic*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, and Kathleen Alaimo. "Adolescence, Gender, and Class in Education Reform in France: The Development of the *Enseignement Primaire Supérieur*, 1880-1910." *French Historical Studies* 18, no. 4 (Autumn 1994), 1025-1055.

²³² Sanford Elwitt. *The Third Republic Defended: Bourgeois Reform in France, 1880-1914*. (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 217-259.

²³³ Elwitt, 220.

effectively codified a two-tiered system that reinforced class divisions.²³⁴ This underlying conservatism extended to classroom pedagogy itself and remained wedded to the traditional textbook methodologies where the authority of the instructor reigned supreme. In secondary education, the classical curriculum obdurately persisted revealing “an aristocratic conception of culture dear to the hearts of a good part of the French bourgeoisie.”²³⁵ “Student-centered’ instruction was only practiced by certain independent instructors like Macé himself who, as a teacher at a girls’ school, abolished memorization and homework in favor of using theater and country walks to spur the curiosity of his students.²³⁶

“Image-Motors” and Suggestion Theory – Psychology and the Privileging of Vision

If the reforms of the early Third Republic demonstrated their class-bias and their adherence to traditional institutional practices, the emerging field of experimental psychology would allow progressive educators, and ultimately cineastes, would provide the intellectual foundation for a new visual-based pedagogy that was championed by educational cineastes. Their arguments were ultimately grounded in the psychological studies done by Alfred Binet (1857-1911), who had begun his career under the Jean-Martin Charcot at Paris’s La Salpêtrière hospital²³⁷ As a student at the Sorbonne, Binet was influenced by the Scottish educationalist Alexander Bain’s studies on the senses and Hippolyte Taine’s study on intelligence (*de l’Intelligence*, 1870). Taine argued that the

²³⁴ Mayeur and Rebérioux, 109-110; Ringer, 125-126.

²³⁵ Mayeur and Rebérioux, 110.

²³⁶ Zeldin, 152-153.

²³⁷ This discussion of Binet has been largely informed by François-Louis Bertrand. *Alfred Binet et son oeuvre*. Paris: Félix Alcan, 1930 and Serge Nicolas. *Histoire de la psychologie française: Naissance d’une nouvelle science*. (Paris: In Press Éditions, 2002), 139-164. John Carson has explored Binet’s central role in the construction of intelligence testing in *The Measure of Merit: Talents, Intelligence and Inequality in the French and American Republics, 1750-1940*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 113-158.

image was the basic form of all mental operations and, consequently, the brain's two main cognitive functions were perception (receiving images in the mind) and memory; higher-order activities like concept formation and analysis was a result of the brain associating different mental-images together.²³⁸ For Binet, Taine's model of mental images was valuable because, like the eighteenth-century sensationists, it corporealized the formation of ideas, concepts and memories within the eye, the brain and the motor neurons. A person's visual field was continually constituted and re-constituted through the continual interplay between retinal images that recorded the phenomenal world of objects, and memory-images that provided consciousness of duration, space, and time.²³⁹

Taine's theory of image-association, however, failed to account for the more advanced mental and motor activities of personality, ethics, and morals. Binet sought a more dynamic model to explain the relationship of mental images to human action, and found inspiration in the sociologist Alfred Fouillée's concept of "*idées-forces*" (idea-forces). Introduced in an 1879 article for *Revue philosophique*, Fouillée postulated that ideas were not simply static representations of the external world but, "containing as they did an element of feeling and will as intellect, they tended spontaneously to exteriorize themselves in action."²⁴⁰ In *L'évolutionnisme des idées-forces* (1890), Fouillée argued that interrelationships between mental images created ideas that constituted the basis for human action:

²³⁸ Hippolyte Taine. *De l'Intelligence*. 6th ed. (Paris: Hachette, 1892), 23. His concept of "association of ideas" has a long history in British philosophy going back to Locke. See John Locke. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. P.H. Nidditch, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 394-401, and Peter Garratt. *Victorian Empiricism: Self, Knowledge, and Reality in Ruskin, Bain, Lewis, Spencer and George Eliot*. (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2010), 127-160.

²³⁹ Bertrand, 140.

²⁴⁰ See Alfred Fouillée. "La Philosophie des Idées-Forces." *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* 4, no. 8 (July 1879), 1-32. The quotation comes from J.E.S. Hayward. "'Solidarity' and the Reformist Sociology of Alfred Fouillée, I." *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 22, no. 1 (January 1963), 213.

The mental laws of association, for example, involve other laws with which they are connected, those of the cerebral mechanism. Thus, it is because there is a *contiguity* in the brain even between two images, that one recalls the other... it is also because two cerebral vibrations, in fact, succeed each other that the representation that corresponds to the first tends to awaken that which corresponds to the second; it is finally because the succession of two cerebral waves modifies nervous cells and enables its proper reproduction that a certain mental *habitude* is born and that a connection is established between the first representation and the second..²⁴¹

Fouillée made mental images dynamic: they were not simple pictures but “a group, a fusion, a complex, a multiplicity.”²⁴² Binet rechristened Fouillée’s notion as *images-motrices* [“image-motors”] to stress the mechanical aspect of this process of sense-impression translating itself into action.²⁴³ He located the kinesthetic influence of *images-motrices* within multiple levels of consciousness. Binet distinguished between ideas and emotions that, unlike the former, resided in the non-rational subconscious. Emotions were not sources of knowledge but the faculties “where interests, preferences, and convictions are born” – they were the source of behavior and they provided the ends to which ideas are applied.²⁴⁴ Thus, human action was not necessarily impelled by purposive intention, but was shaped by the accumulation of mental images and the emotions that they engendered.

After adopting Fouillée’s hypotheses of “*idées-forces*,” Binet decided to test it through an analysis of behavior. After studying the effects of hypnotism in Charcot’s lab, he co-authored an article in *Revue philosophique* in 1886 describing how mental images had a suggestive power over behavior. “It is evident that,” Binet and his co-author concluded, “in the mind of the hypnotized, the association of images produces the

²⁴¹ Alfred Fouillée. *L’évolutionnisme des idées-forces*. (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1890), 23-24.

²⁴² Binet quoted in Bertrand, 138.

²⁴³ Bertrand, 147.

²⁴⁴ Binet quoted in Bertrand, 272.

conviction that corresponding events have passed in the same order, since each image is produced in its turn before his eyes, and that the order of the image becomes for him, a sensible fact.” Thus, “every time that images are associated, they produce a judgment.”²⁴⁵ Not satisfied with his observations on hypnotized patients in Charcot’s hospital, Binet extend his research into a normal human population that he felt would provide the “motor” influence of images - schoolchildren. In 1894, he published the results of his investigations in *Revue philosophique*. In an article on “the natural suggestibility of children,” Binet and his co-author Victor Henri, concluded that suggestibility was inherent within children based upon their facility for imitation and that the degree to which they were influenced by external images depended upon their age.²⁴⁶

If learning was, at its most fundamental level, imitative, then, it could not be derived from the purposive application of rational-critical faculties, but was instead “in the motive power of ideas and images.”²⁴⁷ The mental operations involved in knowledge-acquisition and concept-formation occurred at a subconscious level, and, therefore the formation of personality, and the motivation for action, was based on the unconscious accumulation and association of millions of images from a person’s external environment. *Suggestion* – the ability of mental images to produce behavior and motivate behavior – radically challenged the conventional notion that learning was a willful conscious process. “The primary characteristic of suggestion,” Binet wrote in his study *La Suggestibilité* (1900), “is thus to presuppose a dissociated activity; the second characteristic consists, to a more or less advanced degree, of the unconscious; this

²⁴⁵ Alfred Binet and Charles Féré. “Expériences sur les images associées.” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 11, no. 21 (January 1886), 162.

²⁴⁶ Alfred Binet and Victor Henri. “De la suggestibilité naturelle chez les enfants.” *Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger* 19, no. 38 (October 1894), 337-347.

²⁴⁷ P. Félix Thomas. *La Suggestion dans son rôle dans l’éducation*. (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1895). 45.

activity, which suggestion sets in motion, thinks, combines ideas, reasons, feels and acts without the conscious and directing *me* able to account for the mechanism producing these actions.”²⁴⁸

Other pedagogues, however, regarded this “suggestive” tendency of children toward emulation, as a frightening source for potential social disruption, especially in an age of burgeoning mass culture. Writing in 1885, A. Vessiot, a school inspector and member of the High Council for Public Instruction, railed against the “school of the street” in which the schoolchild was “dazed by the noise, intoxicated by movement, attracted to all these display windows that direct and mislead his curiosity, that provoke all manner of desire in him, that awaken endlessly renewed sensations....”²⁴⁹ He deplored the popular press’s ability to saturate impressionable minds with criminal accounts because “novice [criminals], beginners learn from such reading to improve their methods, perfect their skills... they feel awakened within them a sentiment of emulation that cannot but be formidably profitable.”²⁵⁰ Like Bérenger and his moral leagues, pedagogues like Vessiot feared the distracting and corruptive potential of mass culture. They wanted students to learn self-discipline through reading and analysis than to surrender to the visual spectacles of urban modernity.

Rather than resist the suggestibility of images, Binet and his followers believed that the correct pedagogical approach was to recognize their central role in the intellectual and emotional formation of children. He argued for replacing traditional methods of education, which he deemed “too generalized, too vague, too literary, too

²⁴⁸ Alfred Binet. *La Suggestibilité*. (Paris: Schleicher, 1900), 12.

²⁴⁹ A. Vessiot. *De l'éducation à l'école*. (Paris: A. Ract et Cie., 1885), 194-195.

²⁵⁰ Vessiot, 53.

moralizing, too verbal and too predictable.”²⁵¹ If infants and small children were to be exposed to positive images and sensations they would acquire “as fast as possible, the habit of perceiving congruently, to feeling exactly, and to idealize finally by themselves.”²⁵² Focusing on the child’s perceptual powers would provide a more immediate and lasting basis for developing good mental habits. Unlike literary or theoretical instruction, which a follower of Binet characterized “weakens in us spontaneity, élan, and trust,” the suggestive power of mental images “offers us the idea, no longer under its abstract form, but well under its living form.”²⁵³

In *La Suggestion: Son rôle dans l’éducation* (1895), the philosophy professor Félix Thomas argued that the role of the parent and of the educator is to gently and gradually direct a child visual fascination with objects onto more elevated pursuits. In time, the child will develop the capacity to compare, analyze, and make judgments. Engaging a child visually was the portal to his or her later cultivation. “In order that our suggestions bear fruit,” Thomas argued, “we call an infant’s attention not to complex objects, whose beauty, to be well understood, demands an intellectual culture which they do not yet possess, but to *very simple objects* that are right in front of them and do not demand reflection.”²⁵⁴ And, as a child focuses on specific details, these “contribute to educating the eyes, order, harmony, grace and above all *symmetry* that exist in the orders of nature.” Thus, Thomas concludes, “as much as a child learns to see, it will be able to receive a more elevated education.”²⁵⁵

²⁵¹ Binet quoted in Bertrand, 288.

²⁵² Binet quoted in Bertrand, 266.

²⁵³ Thomas, *La Suggestion*, 105, 104.

²⁵⁴ Thomas, 126.

²⁵⁵ Thomas, 127.

Another professor of philosophy, Frédéric Queyrat, argued a similar point in his *L'Abstraction et son rôle dans l'éducation intellectuelle* (1895). All learning begins with perception and gradually develops into more complex forms of reasoning. “After the image, the idea,” he declaims, “after the facts, the laws; after intuitive learning, abstract learning – such must be the direction and task of intellectual education.”²⁵⁶ In order to move to complex, abstract reasoning, the student first had to master *intuitive* reasoning – that is, learning to see. “To see is not to regard, and if the child *regards*, in the true sense of the word, that is to say ‘to observe’, he pays attention,” Queyrat concluded, “he compares more or less consciously what he sees to what he has seen, he reflects, he judges and thus he makes abstractions.”²⁵⁷ Binet considered such vocational subjects as stenography and foreign languages – “those which require less with regard to profound conceptions than a sort of mental aptitude” – as best suited to a visually based pedagogical approach.²⁵⁸ Without needing to engage in detailed textual analysis, a rapid repetition of material produced greater retention and better mastery over the material. Binet’s emphasis on vocational education would be paralleled by the educational cineastes in the early 1920s.

Although suggestion theory and visual pedagogy did not translate into mainstream pedagogical practice, by the beginning of the twentieth century, progressive educationalists and psychologists were publishing treatises. Along with Thomas and Queyrat, Gabriel Compayré’s *Cours de Pédagogie* [Pedagogy Courses] (1897) included a long chapter on “the education of the senses,” in which he recited Rousseau and

²⁵⁶ Frédéric Queyrat. *L'Abstraction et son rôle dans l'éducation intellectuelle: étude de psychologie appliquée*. (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1895), 1.

²⁵⁷ Queyrat, 108.

²⁵⁸ Binet quoted in Bertrand, 290.

Pestalozzi and stressed the importance of training children to see.²⁵⁹ Paul Lacombe's *Esquisse d'un Enseignement basé sur la Psychologie de l'Enfant* [Sketch for an Instructional Method Based on the Psychology of the Child] (1899) also emphasized the need to cultivate the child's voluntary and active imagination.²⁶⁰ There were also some published manuals on using visual materials in classroom instruction such as Marie Pape-Charpentier's *Enseignement par les yeux* [Teaching By the Eyes] (1868), which went through seven editions by 1911, and Claude Augé and Maxime Petit's *Histoire de France en images* [History of France in Images](1896) being the two most popular and reprinted works.²⁶¹ Even though there was no widespread adoption of visually-centered pedagogy within French educational institutions, suggestion theory provided a basis for later arguments that insisted that cinema provided a more immediate and accessible means of instilling lessons over forcing students to read. The intellectual rationale provided by experimental psychological was translated into action by cineastes within civic associations and among the progressive wings of the teaching corps.

Defining Cinema Enseignement and Éducation – Persisting Legitimation Anxieties

When Edmond Benoît-Lévy, Adrien Collette and other advocates were first articulating an educational role for cinema, they were drawing on well-established discourses both in psychology and in the Third Republic's rhetoric of secular and social education. Moreover, civil associations had already played an important role in

²⁵⁹ Gabriel Compayré. *Cours de Pédagogie: Théorique et Pratique*. (Paris: Librairie Classique Paul Delaplane, 1897), esp. 73-90.

²⁶⁰ Paul Lacombe. *Esquisse d'un Enseignement base sur la Psychologie de l'enfant*. Paris: Armand Colin, 1899.

²⁶¹ Marie Pape-Charpentier. *Enseignement par les yeux: Zoologie des salles d'asile et des écoles élémentaires. 50 images d'animaux divisées en 5 séries*. 7th ed. Paris: Hachette, 1911; Claude Augé and Maxime Petit. *Histoire de France en images, à l'usage des tout petits*. 21st ed. Paris: Larousse, 1902.

disseminating, and applying, ideas about visual instruction. While the Ligue de l'Enseignement had begun cinema screenings in 1916, its Toulouse branch claimed to have used magic lantern projections of fixed images in adult education courses twenty years before.²⁶² Similarly, the Société de l'Art à l'École, in addition to putting educational cinema on their 1912 and 1913 conference agendas, presented some sample films to the Municipal Council of Paris in July 1914 as part of a “talk on the invention of cinema in scholarly methods.”²⁶³ Although pre-First World War activities failed to generate much in the way of official interest, the climate had changed after 1918. This was due, in part, to the growing number of teacher-practitioners and advocates, and partly due to a growing need for skilled labor to assist in the material reconstruction of the country.

Some supporters either were in different branches of government, or connected to these who were. Along with Coissac, who founded the monthly trade journal, *Cinéopse* in September, 1919, the important advocate was Léon-Eugène Emmanuel Riotor (1865-1946). The son of a Lyonnais printer with republican convictions, Riotor began his career as a poet before coming to Paris in his twenties, where he became a journalist and associated within the capital's literary and press circles.²⁶⁴ A prodigious author, he wrote numerous novels before discovering a talent for administrative work, becoming vice-president of three associations - the Société des gens des lettres [Men of Letters Society], the Association syndicale de la critique littéraire [the Syndical Association of Literary Criticism], and the Commission du Vieux Paris [Commission of Ancient Paris, a

²⁶² Anon. “Le cinéma scolaire.” *Bulletin du Cercle Toulousain de la Ligue de l'Enseignement*. Numéro spécial, 1920, 6.

²⁶³ Guillaume-Michel Coissac. “La Ville de Paris et le cinéma.” *Cinéopse* 14, no. 158, (1 October 1932), 379.

²⁶⁴ His biography can be found in “M. Léon Riotor, Président de l'Art à l'École.” *L'Art à l'École* 25, no. 130, (January-February 1932), 1-2.

historical preservationist society]. As one of the original members of the Société de l'Art à l'École, he shared the group's mission to promote an artistic, hygienic, visually oriented and child-centered pedagogy. He had also become a member of Paris's Municipal Council where, with another councilor named Léopold Bellan (1857- 1936), he became an important advocate for cinema and convinced the council to provide some of the first public funds to support it.

One of these initiatives was a proposal for the Municipal Council to organize cinema screenings for public school students.²⁶⁵ Riotor's language in this proposal is revealing both in his acknowledgement of the suggestive influence of films and his efforts to assert their positive educative potential. It was true that "in the darkness and the silence, [cinematic] visions provoked the imagination, reflection, the cerebral functioning [*l'automatisme cérébral*] [which was] so powerful in children." But wait! Films could be appropriately educative if "they limited themselves to a simple and scientific form, as a mere document, far from romantic conceptions or buffooneries."²⁶⁶ Having made the same argument at the Art à l'École's October 1919 meeting, Riotor made a concerted effort to distance educational film from its associations with the *spectacles de curiosité* and place it firmly within the sphere of instruction.²⁶⁷ For his proposed public school cinema screenings, he proposed a stern diet of natural history, industrial, and geographical documentaries with only a "comic or sentimental" film at the end only as long as it elevated or corrected students' spirits.²⁶⁸

²⁶⁵ Léon Riotor. "Proposition au nom de la 4e Commission tendant à l'organisation de séances cinématographiques pour les enfants des écoles publiques." Conseil Municipal de Paris, no. 114 (1919). Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Arts du Spectacle, 4°-COL-80/12.

²⁶⁶ Riotor, "Proposition," 2.

²⁶⁷ Léon Riotor. "La Société de l'Art à l'École et le Cinématographe." *L'Art à l'École*, vol. 12, no. 67, December 1919, 24.

²⁶⁸ Riotor, "Proposition," 2.

Riotor's insistence on the documentary aspect of cinema had another motive in addition to asserting its social legitimacy. There was the ongoing question of what constituted an educational film. How was it to be demarcated from other genres like travelogues or historical films where the boundaries were porous? More important was concern over translation: how were the pedagogical concepts of *enseignement* and *éducation* to be embodied cinematically? If a *cinéma d'enseignement* seemed a fairly straightforward term for classroom-specific films centered on a particular topic and designed to serve as an auxiliary to the authority of the teacher, the *cinéma d'éducation* remained vague. As one teacher defined it, it consisted of "many interesting and instructive films commented upon by a teacher. It is a sort of *educational spectacle*, it cannot be a lesson."²⁶⁹ It was just these sorts of educational spectacles, however, that the Ligue de l'Enseignement were sponsoring as a means to attract audiences to screenings and to promote a socially edifying notion of cinema. Consequently, journals like *Cinéopse* and most cineastes regarded both as necessary for their success.

For purists like Riotor and Adrien Collette, however, "educational spectacle" was too close to "spectacle" *tout court*, and they insisted that a firm line be drawn between the two forms. In his book, *Les projections cinématographiques d'enseignement* (1922), Collette makes clear the connection between the *cinéma d'enseignement* and sensationist pedagogy. "The direct observation of things, beings and facts is one of the sources of human knowledge," his tract begins, "and one of the conditions of intellectual development in children."²⁷⁰ For children unable to visit a castle or observe nature up

²⁶⁹ M. Goutière-Vernoelle. "Rapport présenté au 37e Congrès de la Ligue de l'Enseignement, tenu à Nancy du 30 septembre au 2 octobre 1921." *Cinéopse*, vol. 3, no. 28., December 1921, 372.

²⁷⁰ Adrien Colette. *Les projections cinématographiques d'enseignement*. (Paris: Service de l'Enseignement de Pathé-Consortium, 1922), 1. Fondation Jérôme Seydoux-Pathé [FJSP] PRO-P-172.

close, cinematic images provide the best means for developing their sensibilities. Nonetheless, such films needed to eschew cinematic qualities that may prove distracting or entertaining, students' interest was supposed to be cultivated through a precise representation of objective reality. Not as entertainment but "specially-made teaching films must be considered as precious documents destined to render lessons more alive, more precise and more fruitful."²⁷¹ A properly constructed instructional film instructs not only on the subject of its representation, but also on how to observe the images themselves and thus "produces energetic seeing, assures the acquisition of precise and durable knowledge... opens the school to multiple manifestations of life, extending, into infinity, the students' field of observation."²⁷²

Although Riotor and Collette made a clear distinction between the two types of educational cinema, confusion between the two persisted. The categories were never stable – even the more restricted category of *cinema d'enseignement* could provoke questions of authority: who decided what was appropriate for classroom use? If film companies re-purposed old footage and marketed it as educational, did that make them so? And if certain genres like travelogues crossed the boundaries between *enseignement* and *éducation*, how stable was any distinction between the two? The confusion led to many repeated and insistent re-assertions of the differences between the two, but it underscored persistent anxieties about the extent to which cinema could escape being a "spectacle." Collette lamented that the confusion between the two types was the main cause of "mistakes, false starts and the poor use of people's good will and financial

²⁷¹ Collette, 1.

²⁷² Collette, 2.

credits.”²⁷³ By arguing that educational cinema should be, on the one hand, a rigid document-like tool for instruction and, on the other, an entertaining medium for cultural and moral cultivation, advocates found themselves unable to reconcile their pretenses to pedagogical respectability against accusations that their activities simply bedecked entertaining movies in a teacher’s attire.

Tentative Initiatives and the 1920 Bessou Report

If the efforts to delineate specific *enseignement* and *éducation* films revealed persistent anxieties about cinema’s social legitimacy, the immediate post-war period also marks the first time that senior government officials and some ministries began to interest themselves in the new medium. Before the war, the Third Republic began to expand the number of commercial and vocational schools due to demands from industrialists for trained workers. Although these schools did provide access to working-class and lower-middle-class students, before the war their enrollment numbers were limited: the commercial schools only trained 1,700 students per year, the technical training schools, about 45,000.²⁷⁴ These establishments were generally not supported to the same extent as traditional and, according to education historian Charles R. Day, their growth was slowed due to an ongoing controversy between the Ministries of Commerce and Public Instruction over who had final authority over them. After the war, progressive educationalists demanded greater access to vocational training. In 1919, the government

²⁷³ Adrien Collette. “Cinéma Scolaire.” *Cinéopse* 2, no. 16 (December 1920), 525. In a 1926 interview, Benoît-Lévy admitted that “too often, *films d’enseignement*, *éducateur* and documentaries are confused. Each has its function, its genre, its technical specificity, and responds to an exact application.” E. Roux-Parassac. “Nos enquêtes chez les Éditeurs des films.” *Cinéopse* 8, no. 79 (March 1926), 247. Nevertheless, as late as 1936, the Lyonnais critic H. Revol was writing columns defining the distinction between the two. See H. Revol. “Films d’Enseignement.” *L’Écran Lyonnais*, April-May 1936, 3.

²⁷⁴ Charles R. Day. *Schools and Work: Technical and Vocational Education in France Since The Third Republic*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2001), 24.

passed the Astier Law that mandated three years of vocational training for any student not in full-time instruction after school-leaving age.²⁷⁵ Moreover, the Ministry of Public Instruction's technical education division, under the direction of Edmond Labbé from 1920 to 1933, initiated France's first vocational-based guidance counseling, started apprenticeship courses in factories, developed a national system of vocational certificates, expanded adult evening courses, and opened sixteen new professional schools.²⁷⁶

This interest in vocational and technical education reflected the social and economic crisis facing France following the labor power drainage of the First World War and the demand among industrialists for trained workers. The war had not only depleted the number of male workers – France lost 1.9 million men during the conflict - but also intensified the de-population of agricultural regions as well.²⁷⁷ As Tyler Stovall has recently observed, demands for consumer goods and necessities radicalized working-class politics and fueled the 1919-1920 strike waves.²⁷⁸ Consequently, Third Republic officials proved more willing to consider the cinema as an agent for social education. As early as 1918, André Honnorat, a deputy from the Basses-Alpes, submitted a proposal asking that the Ministers of Public Instruction and Commerce organize “in the relevant schools... technical meetings responding to the immediate post-war needs.”²⁷⁹

Two years later and now Minister of Public Instruction, Honnorat, in an interview by Coissac, expressed his view that cinema had an important part in addressing France's

²⁷⁵ Ringer, 127.

²⁷⁶ Day, 35-37.

²⁷⁷ Philippe Bernard and Henri Dubief. *The Decline of the Third Republic, 1914-1938*. A. Forster, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 78-91. For the financial and material challenges that France faced in postwar reconstruction, see Charles S. Maier's classic *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the Decade After World War I*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), esp. 135-231.

²⁷⁸ Tyler Stovall. *Paris and the Spirit of 1919: Consumer Struggles, Transnationalism, and Revolution*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

²⁷⁹ “Le cinéma dans les écoles.” *Cinéopse* 1, no. 1 (September 1919), 1.

social concerns.²⁸⁰ Declaring that no one doubted that “instruction by the image was more efficacious than... abstract lessons,” the minister hypothesized that “the adult at an evening course or public lecture [will] be methodically and largely subdued by the profound action of the fixed or animated image.” Screenings could effectively teach anti-alcoholism, building savings accounts, and hygiene. The minister saw cinema as a way to rebuild postwar social cohesion by incorporating it into the republican program of “social education” that had been developed by reformers in the 1880s and 1890s.

Other ministries were taking concrete steps as well. During the same summer, the Agricultural Ministry offered a *concours public* [public competition] offering awards up to 1,000 francs for the best script proposal for films “destined to be used, some for propaganda and agricultural teaching, others for the diffusion of rational methods and practical procedures that agriculturalists are interested in knowing.”²⁸¹ The Paris Chamber of Commerce’s (CoC) Education Commission conducted a feasibility study on incorporating films into commercial schools. A May 1920 note from the École Commerciale to the CoC suggested that while films would serve best for the training of industrial skills, nevertheless “the study of certain scientific and economic courses in our schools (physics, chemistry, natural history, economic geography, commerce) can only gain in clarity and rapidity if it is accompanied by projections judiciously chosen...”²⁸² The Chamber of Commerce commission’s final report, released in December, claimed that most commercial schools wanted to introduce films into their classes and confidently asserted that there would be “for students, a very large benefit in the rapid and easy

²⁸⁰ Guillaume-Michel Coissac. “À l’horizon.” *Le Cinéopse* 2, no. 11, (July 1920), 202.

²⁸¹ Coissac. “L’Agriculture et le Cinéma.” *Cinéopse* 2, no. 12, (August 1920), 316.

²⁸² Paul Angles. “Note sur l’emploi du cinématographe comme auxiliaire de l’enseignement commercial.” Archives de Paris, Chambre de Commerce [AP COC] 2ETP/1/2/73 23.

comprehension of the instructional material [and] that the professor would obtain more easily his intended goals.”²⁸³

The clearest expression of the government’s vision for educational cinema, however, was the report published by the Public Instruction ministry’s extra-parliamentary commission that had been initially convened during the war. Written by Auguste Bessou, a school inspector and member of the Ligue de l’Enseignement, the report cast cinema in the terms set out by suggestion theory, and as the opposite of the corrupting spectacle. “The interest in spectacles solicits the attention of students, whose imagination is lazy ” Bessou wrote. “Memories derived from animated images remain clearer and persist longer. An admirable auxiliary for the teacher, the cinema vivifies teaching, allows for the reduction of verbalism which delays and weakens ideas, and puts under the eyes the living synthesis of beings and things. ‘Seeing is almost knowing,’”²⁸⁴ Moreover, they clearly tied their investigation to France’s need to rebuild itself from its wartime devastation: “it is important to recreate by education the intellectual and moral forces that the war has swept away. To new needs must correspond new organizations.”²⁸⁵ By joining the intellectual argument derived from experimental psychology with the labor and training needs of the immediate postwar period, the Bessou commission established a firm case for government action.

The report also set out a technical plan for provisioning schools with equipment and training teachers to run projectors. Given the lack of easy-to-use and durable

²⁸³ Report dated December 4, 1920. Chambre de Commerce de Paris, Commission de l’enseignement. AP COC 2ETP/1/2/73 93.

²⁸⁴ August Bessou. *Rapport Général sur l’emploi du cinématographe dans les différentes branches de l’enseignement*. Ministère de l’Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1920), 4.

²⁸⁵ Bessou, 19.

equipment, the commission suggested a series of technical conferences so that instructors and government officials could determine the specifics of what was needed. Clearly, durability and ease-of-use were important factors, but the largest issue was over cost. The commission recommended a combination of various government and civic partnerships. “If instruction through cinema is to become obligatory, the State will need to make the appropriate financial effort... But all the charges should not weight completely upon it. The departments, the communes, the alumni associations, the popular education societies... will aide in the diffusion of a teaching method that is as efficacious as it agreeable.”²⁸⁶ Although municipalities and private associations like the Ligue de l’Enseignement provided financial backing, cineastes would continually complain throughout the 1920s over the insufficiency of state support. The state, in their view, failed to develop a central office or mechanism to coordinate financing or planning, leaving these as *ad hoc* measures to be pursued by such individual actors as teachers, school administrators, and regional civic associations.

Moreover, the Bessou report also tempered some of the cineastes’ more grandiose aspirations. The commission made it understood that they were neither proposing a national plan, nor endorsing the view that cinema need be integrated into all subjects. Instead, they recommended using cinema in experimental situations, or when it was impossible for students to have direct contact with an object or scene.²⁸⁷ Recognizing that many teachers feared that film projectors would replace them in the classroom, they asserted its role as an auxiliary. Filmed projections “*must coincide with a corresponding*

²⁸⁶ Bessou, 16-17.

²⁸⁷ Bessou, 8.

lesson in which it will be a natural illustration.”²⁸⁸ This subordinate status was particularly reinforced for traditional academic subjects like history, where – despite the fact that the production companies had developed the historical film genre a decade before – the report asserted that fixed images were more appropriate.²⁸⁹ Reducing the cinema’s effect to the merely illustrative may have assured the authority of the teacher, but it indicated that the commission saw its use as appropriate to specific settings: primary education and industrial training.

Indeed, it was in a sub-commission report on industrial, commercial and technical training where the most compelling arguments for adoption were voiced. “The losses caused by the war in the ranks of workers,” the report stated, “impose without reservation our engineers the most judicious of the human motor in order to obtain... the maximum result.”²⁹⁰ The author outlined how film screenings were being organized in the commercial school, training students on the specificities of regional economies and different sectors like oil or textiles. Mechanical films stressed equipment training, a particular strength of the visual method in that it allowed for close examination of complicated motions; films “[have] the incomparable advantage of allowing one to follow all the phase of numerous phenomena that escape our senses because of their

²⁸⁸ Bessou, 7.

²⁸⁹ MM. Petit et Lepas. “Rapport sur l’emploi du cinématographe dans l’enseignement de l’histoire et de la géographie.” In Bessou, 30. This cautious approach toward using films in humanities courses may reflect the growing reaction by conservative teachers against pre-war reforms that shrank the classical curriculum in favor of modern subjects like math, sciences, and modern languages. As Chapoulie observes, the years 1921-1925 were marked by an effort to restore classics to their previously dominant position. See Chapoulie, *L’École d’État*, 301-312.

²⁹⁰ M. Roux. “Rapport sur l’emploi du cinématographique dans l’enseignement technique.” In Bessou, 46.

rapidity.”²⁹¹ Technical films thus had a pedagogical and scientific value and were not “a spectacle, but a means of instruction.”²⁹²

The Bessou report both confirmed the pedagogical value of films while accommodating their application both to the needs and according to the prejudices of the public educational system. It granted legitimacy to the initiatives of individual advocates. Léon Riotor was one of the first to secure funding for his initiatives. Early in 1921, the Paris Municipal Council approved his by-then two-year-old proposition to fund public *cinéma d'éducation* screenings and awarded a subvention of 25.000 francs for the acquisition of films and projectors.²⁹³ He also provided the council a long, detailed summary of the Bessou report to the Council and gave a series of public presentations in May 1920 at the Musée de l'Enseignement public [Museum of Public Teaching], sponsored by the Ministry for Public Instruction, where such topics as how to make educational films and what subjects were appropriate for a cinematic treatment were presented.²⁹⁴

These initiatives embraced more than just training or funding equipment, they also encouraged the creation of archives and repositories where films could be collected and housed. Riotor advanced other proposals to the Council, including the creation a Paris *cinémathèque* to collect educational films as well as “all that has been recorded in the documentary, scientific, historic, and artistic domains, and all that concerns the cinema

²⁹¹ Roux, 46.

²⁹² Roux, 46.

²⁹³ Anon, “A l'Hotel de Ville de Paris.” *Cinéopse*, vol. 3, no. 19, March 1921, 169. Riotor's proposal (Conseil Municipal de Paris, 1919, no. 114) can be found in BNF Arts et Spectacles 4-COL-80 12(1).

²⁹⁴ Leon Riotor. “Rapport au mon de la 4e Commission sur ‘le Cinématographe a l'Ecole’ suite d'une proposition (Impr. N. 114 du 27 decembre 1919) tendant a l'organisation de séances cinématographiques pour les enfants des ecoles publiques, et a l'introduction du cinématographe dans l'enseignement a tous les degres.” Conseil Municipal de Paris. Session 1921, no. 1. Archives de Paris [AP] D9K3 101, p. 9

itself, its production and utilization.”²⁹⁵ In April of 1921, the Musée Pédagogique, the Ministry of Public Instruction’s main document repository, began a lending service for the 700 films in its collection.²⁹⁶ Nonetheless, the developments tended to be, at this early date, tentative and rather small-scale. Later that year, *Cinéopse* rather also reported that “the Ligue de l’Enseignement, the conference societies... the faculties, high schools, and middle schools, laboratories, specialized and professional schools... all possess their equipment and their films, although in a very small number.”²⁹⁷ Yet, at the same time, it complained that the Ministries’ subventions were insufficient for “furnishing and paying for copies of films for all scholarly establishments, the installation of cabins and machines... and the difficulty of finding producers of scholarly films.”²⁹⁸

The Bessou report set the pattern for the government’s involvement over the next decade: no central body to organize or to coordinate policy, a careful integration that focused on immediate needs and did not appear to provoke skeptical or hostile faculty, a reliance on municipalities and civic associations to make up for constrained and haphazard state funding.

A Technology for Middle-Class Reform: Cinema and the 1922 CNAM Conference

For all its limitations, the Bessou report did indicate that the state recognized a definite role for the cinema within its institutions and this prompted responses among progressive teachers as well as cinema industry figures. New, and presumably ephemeral, groups like the *Ligue pour l’Enseignement par la Cinématographe* [the League for

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 34.

²⁹⁶ Anon, “Pour le cinéma scolaire.” *Cinéopse*, vol. 3, no. 20, April 1921, 241.

²⁹⁷ Adrien Collette. “Pour le film d’Enseignement.” *Cinéopse* 3, no. 28, December 1921, 865.

²⁹⁸ Géo. Dumas. “Le cinéma à l’école est un nécessité.” *Cinéopse* 3, no. 25, September 1921, 617-618.

Cinema Teaching], who published *Ciné-Schola*, organized screenings and published articles on such subjects as adult education that reinforced the cinema's connection to the social education philosophy of the Third Republic.²⁹⁹ Moreover, Pathé-Consortium-Cinéma, the new name for the reorganized firm, and Gaumont sought to develop this new market.³⁰⁰ Pathé introduced a projector named the Pathé-Enseignement and produced a bulletin, *Le Cinématographe dans l'Enseignement*, that provided detailed descriptions of their non-fiction film releases.³⁰¹ Towns began organizing screenings for both communal schools and adult education, *Le Petit Parisien* listed screenings in Montrouge during 1921 and 1922.³⁰² The Société de l'Art à l'École took it upon themselves to review and to classify films as "educational" while the Ligue de l'Enseignement's 37th Congress attempted both to establish clear definitions between *cinéma d'enseignement* and *cinéma d'éducation*. The League also began to pressure for greater state financial and material commitments, including 25 million francs in credits, for a nation-wide survey of school to determine the extent of projector usage, and for a central office be created to coordinate the rental of films and publication of new titles.³⁰³

L'Art à l'École's most important initiative, however, was to organize the first nation-wide conference on educational cinema in April 1922.³⁰⁴ The conference provides an indication of the middle-class composition of the movement. Among the over three

²⁹⁹ E. Revillard. "Le Cinéma dans l'Enseignement Post-Scolaire." *Ciné-Schola* 1, no. 2 (December 1922), 2-3.

³⁰⁰ In 1920, Charles Pathé organized his firm into two companies; one, Pathé-Cinéma, to produce and market small-gauge film equipment like the Pathé-Baby and, after 1926, the Pathé-Rural; and Pathé-Consortium that focused on film distribution and exhibition. See Richard Abel. *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 20-21.

³⁰¹ A sample ad for the Pathé-Enseignement can be found in *Ciné-Schola* 1, no. 2 (December 1922), front matter.

³⁰² "Fait Divers." *Le Petit Parisien*, (18 January 1921), 3; (14 October 1921), 3; (31 January 1922), 3.

³⁰³ "Le Cinéma éducateur." *L'Art à l'École* 14, no. 75 (December 1921), 91.

³⁰⁴ The conference was the subject of a special double issue of the society's bulletin. See *L'Art à l'École* 14, no. 78, May-June 1922. The only extant copy that I located was at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Département des Arts du Spectacle, 4°-COL-80/4(2)

attendees were included university professors, school directors, inspectors, engineers, municipal councilors, and representatives from eight academies, nine chambers of commerce, and fifty schools. Of the latter, forty-one were teachers or directors from vocational, trade, or commercial schools.³⁰⁵

Presided over by the undersecretary for technical education, Gaston Vidal, the four-day conference was held at Paris's Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers, the largest technical training institute in France.³⁰⁶ It was organized into three sections, each of which focused on vocational or technical training: professional orientation [*orientation professionnelle*], technical instruction [*enseignement technique*], and artistic instruction [*enseignement artistique*]. A Parisian instructor named Henri Mercadier re-emphasized the continuing need to provide trained individuals for national reconstruction. France's moral and material weakness, he argued, required that "each citizen, with the force of all his intellectual, moral, and physical aptitudes, collaborative actively in the nation's prosperity."³⁰⁷ Because France still suffered from a labor shortage, Mercadier asserted that cinema needed to serve the national interest by directing young people's interests toward specific trades and by providing them with visual instruction so that they could get up to speed quickly. Another speaker, an engineer, enthused that "the cinema will come to establish exactitude though seeing [that] it will procure [for France] the great modern processes of American mechanical culture."³⁰⁸ A professor and member of the Ligue de l'Enseignement asserted that film's privileging of *vision* will teach young artisans and workers "...to observe, to pay attention, and to have imagination," and in so

³⁰⁵ "L'État des Congressistes." *L'Art à l'École* 14, no. 78, (May-June 1922), 5-14.

³⁰⁶ For a history of CNAM, see *Cent-cinquante ans de Haut Enseignement Technique au Conservatoire Nationale des Arts et Métiers*. Paris: Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale, 1970.

³⁰⁷ *L'Art à l'École* 14., no. 78, May-June 1922, 63.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 42.

doing, will lead to the “perfecting of the product of their work, both in terms of quality and output.”³⁰⁹ Other speakers invoked suggestion theory, arguing that the profusion of images could facilitate training that would otherwise require more much effort. One asserted that films were ideal for training draftsmen: “thanks to the simultaneity of images in the cinema, students could develop a quick comprehension of diverse graphical techniques.”³¹⁰

Despite the focus on vocational education, it did accommodate dissenting voices and those who sought to incorporate films into more traditional academic subjects. The head of a women’s school for industrial design reported that their use of a film called *La Dentelle* [Lace-Making] as a training tool had been counterproductive. Not only were instructors frustrated because they could not pause the film at key moments to emphasize particular techniques but she also claimed that students thought the film uninvolving.³¹¹ Representatives from more traditional establishments were also more circumspect about integrating cinema into their classrooms. In their view, cinema privileged a certain *kind* of learning style that was only appropriate for specific applications – such as vocational training – rather than in developing critical-analytical skills. A representative of the national teachers’ union, the Syndicat national des instituteurs et institutrices publics, acknowledged cinema’s persuasive power because “by the single fact that [an illuminated image] is seen, this gives the child the impression of truth,” yet he insisted that ultimately this hindered the child’s intellectual development, “teaching proceeds by analysis, cinema itself is a synthesis.”³¹²

³⁰⁹ Ibid, 36.

³¹⁰ Ibid, 77.

³¹¹ Ibid, 33-34.

³¹² Ibid, 37.

Supplying projectors was also identified as a problem, despite the fact that Pathé, Gaumont and other firms used the conference to present their line of small-gauge and institutional-use projectors to the participants. Henri Gabelle, the Conservatoire's director, restated the Bessou's report concern that "the problem that has to be resolved is to find a simple machine that is not too fragile."³¹³ Teachers wanted machines that would allow images to remain fixed, so that they could linger over specific details. Speakers also recognized the problem of financing. Schools did not have an easy way to obtain films; unlike commercial theaters, schools and educational societies did not show films for profit and thus could not use existing commercial distribution networks. By 1922, only the Musée Pédagogique had established a film lending service on a national scale even though they lacked multiple copies of the films in their collection.³¹⁴

Consequently, several participants called for governmental subventions to create regional film libraries [*cinémathèques*]. A school inspector insisted that "we have to commit to a campaign to obtain funds from the public authorities" and that a national commission needed to be established to devise a program for teaching with film.³¹⁵ At the end of the conference, the participants produced a list of twenty-three objectives (*voeux*) that reinforced the Republic's *ad hoc* and limited stance following the Bessou report. The participants wanted extended government funding but leave the actual production of films to private companies. They also called on these same companies to create

³¹³ Ibid, 25.

³¹⁴ A very cursory history can be found in Leonard A. Ostlund, "Musée Pédagogique – France's Educational Service." *Peabody Journal of Education* 34, no. 3 (Nov., 1956), 171-174. The figure of 700 in the Musée's collection comes from *L'Art à l'École*, vol. 14, no. 78, May-June 1922, 36.

³¹⁵ Ibid, 52.

specifically *educational* films where “the film is made for the lesson, not the lesson for the film” and where instructors would participate in their creation and production.³¹⁶

The CNAM conference revealed both the national reach of the educational cinema movement and the way that advocates framed the role of cinema in term of the Republic’s immediate needs and broader pedagogical values. Furthermore, the conference also revealed the challenges faced in establishing a national network of institutional clients; there was no central mechanism for the coordination of efforts, and the state was reluctant to offer financing, despite the enthusiasm of individual ministers or deputies.

Cinema’s “Peaceful Conquest”

The CNAM conference also provided additional momentum for institutionalizing cinema within the state’s establishments. In May 1923, Gaston Vidal formed a committee for Cinema Applied to Professional Instruction [*Comité du Cinématographe appliqué à l’Enseignement Professionnel.*]³¹⁷ Composed of twenty members, including Riotor, Coissac, the scientific filmmaker Jean Comandon, and Labbé, the commission was charged with studying all possible applications of the cinema to professional orientation and technical education. That October, the commission published a circular outlining its policy for using films in professional orientation, saying that such films can be used “to attract the attention of the child and make an impression in his mind.”³¹⁸ They also advised on the methods of producing professional orientation films, insisting that they

³¹⁶ Ibid, 3.

³¹⁷ G. Vidal. “Le Cinématographe et l’Enseignement Professionnel.” *Cinéopse* 5, no. 46 (June 1923), 461.

³¹⁸ “Le Cinéma et l’Enseignement professionnel.” *Cinéopse* 5, no. 52 (December 1923),

must involve collaboration between a master practitioner, a professor, and an artist; yet the circular does not indicate any budget for their creation.

In addition, the Agricultural Ministry passed a decree in April of 1923 for “the installation and use of cinema in agricultural teaching establishments and rural communes.”³¹⁹ In June, the Ministry for Public Instruction published new teaching guidelines for primary schools. These reforms embodied many of the progressive educationalists’ aspirations for a more “child-centered” and visually based pedagogical approach. For example, its proposal for geography instruction asserted that “the child must not learn the text without having seen the reality *or their most perfectly created representations.*” [Collette’s emphasis]³²⁰ The ministerial circular also endorsed the use of cinema, gratifying Collette with “official consecration that our educational images have received.”³²¹ It argued that films could also facilitate young students’ scientific knowledge and allow them to observe natural phenomena that are unavailable to them in any other way.³²² Municipalities were also more involved in financing the acquisition of equipment. In October 1923, *Cinéopse* reported that the city governments of Toulouse, Nantes, Marseilles, Rouen, and Lyon all had “conferring on their schools the necessary materials for projector and have allocated in their budgets sums necessary for film rentals.”³²³

Given these developments, it was easy for educational cineastes to believe that the cinema had achieved its long-sought social legitimacy. *Cinéopse*’s January 1924 issue

³¹⁹ “Le Cinéma à la Campagne.” *Cinéopse* 5, no. 46 (June 1923), 465

³²⁰ Collette. “Le nouveau plan d’études des écoles primaires.” *Cinéopse* 5, no. 51 (November 1923), 825.

³²¹ *Ibid.*, 825.

³²² Collette. “Les nouvelles Instructions de Ministère de l’Instruction Publique.” *Cinéopse* 5, no. 52 (December 1923), 899.

³²³ Collette. “Les prodigieux efforts de la Ville de Paris.” *Cinéopse* 5, no. 50 (October 1923), 899-900.

featured a long piece titled, “The Cinema’s Peaceful Conquest” which praised the “peaceful campaign of penetration and conquest of senior education officials.”³²⁴ The article featured positive testimonials from such key figures as Léon Bérard, the new Minister of Public Instruction, and the directors of vocational schools and the French natural history museum. M. Guillet, the director of Paris’s École centrale des Arts et Manufactures observed that projectors had been installed in all their amphitheatres and that films were being used to replace on-site visits to factories.³²⁵ Collectively, the testimonials acknowledge the cineastes’ arguments, to different degrees of applicability, on the efficiency and power of visual-based instruction.

Yet Bérard, while offering his own praise, also sounded a realistic note. If a good quality projector, he remarked, cost between 1,500 and 2,000 francs, and there were 40,000 primary schools in France, the cost to outfit all of them would run to 72 million. At best, the Ministry was able to fund about a third, while municipalities, civic associations and schools themselves had to pick up the rest of the costs. This total did not include the cost for making educational films, nor for renting them, and replacing worn-out prints and equipment. “You see,” Bérard told his interviewer, “that the organization of cinema at the primary schools is costly and complicated.”³²⁶

Conclusion

By the mid-1920s, educational cineastes had succeeded in translating their movement from the activities of individual practitioners and advocates to a gradual incorporation into the state’s primary and vocational schools. They were able to

³²⁴ Gaston Phelip. “La Conquête Pacifique du Cinéma.” *Cinéopse* 6, no. 53 (January 1924), 53-60.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 54.

accomplish this by asserting that films could provide a more efficient method for the fulfilling the Republic's need for more skilled workers, and to the progressive educationalist's aspirations for an extension of educational opportunities. They based their claims on the theory of suggestibility and the impression that images made on the minds of students. Advocates argued that films provided a more direct and immediate form of instruction over textual-based methods because the mind learned through the accumulation and association of images. In one sense, they positioned themselves as modernists, seeking to revitalize and to change pedagogical practices. In another way, however, their social outlook was framed completely within the republican culture from which they emerged. Ultimately, they regarded films as didactic instruments to advance the established educational goals of the Republic, not as an avant-garde medium that constructed new modes of visual learning through such radical styles as expressionism or techniques such as montage.³²⁷

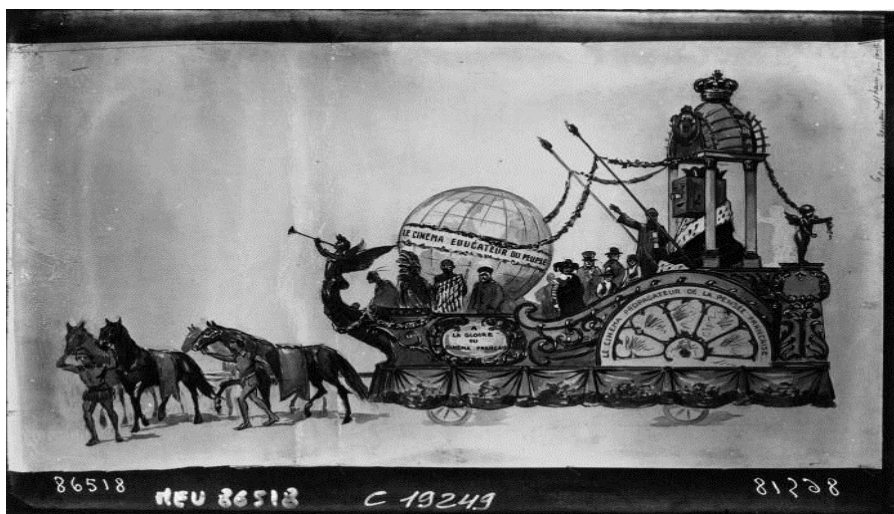
While the Bessou report and the 1922 CNAM conference generated the momentum for institutionalizing initiatives, moreover, each brought out significant weaknesses that would hamper the movement. Since state funding was insufficient for providing projectors to all schools, municipalities and civic associations were expected to make up the balance. This would ultimately highlight the problem of materiality – partial funding was available for initial purchases, but neither for film rentals nor repairs. Second, resistance continued among skeptical teachers against the encroachment of projectors into the classroom. As educational cinema initiatives continued throughout the

³²⁷ See Malte Hagener. *Moving Forward, Looking Back: The European Avant-Garde and the Invention of Film Culture, 1919-1939*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007.

next decade, these problems would hamper many teachers' efforts to incorporate films into their classrooms, and tax the confidence of many educational cineastes.

Chapter 3: Making Schools Into Markets: Negotiating the Meanings and Materiality of Educational Film, 1922-1935

In mid-1921, the Pathé-Consortium-Cinéma journal, *Le Cinématographe dans l'enseignement*, published an article titled, “The Rehabilitated Cinema.” In it, the editors reprinted an article from a journal for elementary school teachers that recounted a film about the circulation of blood, describing with wonderment how moving images were able to make visible such imperceptible processes. The editorial comment stated that it was because of films like this that “the teaching staffs are already acquainted with our work. The ones that we need to convince are in the larger public and in families.”³²⁸ While the editor’s claim that teachers were “acquainted” – and, by implication, won over – by the cinema was premature, the concern with public recognition was real.



Joe Bridge, “The Cinema Educator of the People,” 1921 print

³²⁸ Paul Reboux. “Le Cinéma Réhabilité.” *Le Cinématographe dans l'enseignement* 1, no. 5 (May 1921), 1.

In the same year, a satirical drawing (see above) was published depicting a parade float with a large globe that read “le cinéma éducateur du peuple” (“the cinema educator of the people”) and film camera pompously decked out in kingly robes.³²⁹ On the float’s side, the artist, Joe Bridge, inscribed the phrases, “to the glory of French cinema” and “the cinema, propagator of French thought,” on the wheels. This skeptical and wry response to the pretensions of the movement was also on display in *La Grimace*, a popular satirical journal, whose November, 1921, issue featured a song called, “Le Cinéma Éducateur,”

*Ah! I believe you that the cinema’s a teacher.
It teaches you to hit below the belt.
Everybody is crazy about its lying and boastful heroes.
The movies are a school for future crooks.*

*[Ah! Je vous crois qu’il est éducateur
Le cinéma!
Des mauvais coups, il est l’instigateur
Et le schéma.
De ses héros mensongers et bravaches,
Chacun raffole.
C’est au ciné que nos futurs apaches
Vont à l’école.]*³³⁰

A Parisian lawyer, Pierre de Casablanca, in a talk at an international conference for the protection of children in Belgium, reinforced the view that the suggestive influence of cinema was more of a distraction than a source for instruction. “Reality seems weak and dispersed,” he argued, whereas the cinema is much more powerful and concentrated. In fluctuating what is presented to one’s field of vision, the film constrains one’s view to

³²⁹ Joe Bridge. “The Cinema Educator of the People.” Published by Agence Meurisse, Paris, 1921. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9038337p.r=cinema+educateur.langEN>

³³⁰ L.L. Sady. “Le Cinéma Éducateur.” *La Grimace* 6, no. 242, 15-30 November 1921, 4.

alight on pre-chosen points within a desired order.”³³¹ The cinema did not train people how to see as much as it directed them; suggestibility was not a force to inculcate intellectual and moral lessons in children, but a means for surrendering themselves to the image where “receive pernicious influences for their morality and their future.”³³²

As such, the cinema was insufficient for instruction in morality or in critical-analytical thinking. Rather, it provided a valuable source for training and for instilling skills. In this way, Casabianca argued, instead of being a *spectacle de curiosité* that rendered child susceptible to malign influences, educational films could constitute “the indispensable knowledge that we hope will make every child a competent worker who understands his trade, a free citizen who will exercise his right to vote, and to become a honest man, conscientious and a value to his country.”³³³ Because educational cineastes – a national network of teachers, professors, school inspectors, directors, journalists, and cinema industry figures – positioned themselves as facilitators of the Republic’s social reform policies, they were able to win ministerial approbation and important financial backing. By 1930, Guillaume-Michel Coissac, the editor of *Cinéopse*, boasted that “in all the national territory, 10- to 12,000 establishments possess one or more film projectors. If we add *école libres*, boarding schools, soldiers’ establishments, civic groups; and if we include adult education, municipalities and all other sorts of groups, it wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that there are 16- to 18,000 projectors at work showing classroom films (*films d’enseignement*) and public educational screenings (*films d’éducation*).”³³⁴

³³¹ Ibid, 5.

³³² Ibid, 8.

³³³ L. Rebellion. “Le cinéma scolaire et ses ennemis.” *Cinéopse* 5, no. 46 (May 1923), 407.

³³⁴ Guillaume-Michel Coissac. “Le Cinéma dans l’enseignement et l’éducation en France.” *Le Tout-Cinéma* (1930), 17. UNESCO IICE CFCE Documentation C.3[1]

This achievement concealed a much more contradictory situation, however, as this chapter will discuss. Unlike Great Britain or Soviet Russia, there was no central office for the production of educational and documentary films, let alone any coordination within the industry as a whole.³³⁵ Despite the support of influential public figures, the Republic state's financial support for educational cinema remained minimal. Instead, the Republic's film policies, such as they were, were focused on two other concerns: censorship and curtailing American domination over their national market.³³⁶ Without a more interventionist state policy, cineastes felt, their initial successes would be hampered – if not undone – by the material problems involved in putting projectors into classrooms.

The problem of *materiality* hampered the effectiveness of the educational cinema movement. Here I mean the total range of physical components (projectors, screens, film stock) that required to constitute and to perpetuate educational cinema. This aspect of the materiality of cinema is often absent from cultural studies. Works in visual culture, for example, have tended to look at how the growing circulation of images represented a new

³³⁵ In the Soviet Union very quickly took control of cinema production, formally establishing the All-Russian Cinematographic Section of the Council of Ministers in 1919, see Graham Roberts. *Forward Soviet! History and Non-Fiction Film in the USSR*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 9-28. In Britain, two specific government offices successively coordinated and financed non-fiction film production: the Empire Marketing Board and, after 1933, the General Post Office whose film unit was famously under the direction of John Grierson. See Paul Swann. *The British Documentary Film Movement, 1926-1946*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 21-94; on Grierson, see Forsyth Hardy. *John Grierson: A Documentary Biography*. London: Faber, 1979.

³³⁶ On censorship, see Albert Montagne. *Histoire juridique des interdits cinématographiques en France (1909-2001)*. Paris: Harmattan, 2007; on efforts to restrain American film imports, see Richard Abel. *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 45-49; Jens Ulf-Møller. *Hollywood's Film Wars With France: Film-Trade Diplomacy and the Emergence of the French Film Quota Policy*. (Rochester, N.Y.: Rochester University Press, 2001), 45-99; and Dimitri Vezyroglou. *Le cinéma en France à la veille du parlant*. (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2011), 251-284.

spectacular urban sensibility.³³⁷ The material basis of projectors and films, however, also played a role in how they function within a social context. From this perspective, the movement's signature achievement was to disseminate cinema technologies, and to make films available to teachers and to students nation-wide, down to the remotest village schoolhouse. The infrastructural network that supported the circulation and collection of educational films would prove to be one of the movement's most lasting achievements.

This same materiality of film also created forms of resistance. Cinema apparatuses did not “bite back” - in the sense they produced unintended consequences - against their appropriation for classroom use, but their technical complexities certainly “held back” the aspirations of their most ardent supporters.³³⁸ While the Third Republic offered limited subventions, they left it up to municipalities, civic associations, and private contributors to deal with the problems of equipment maintenance and replacement and the renting and purchasing of films. Second, they failed to establish a national standard for film-gauge formats (8mm, 9.5mm, 16mm, etc.) and projectors. By leaving control over the educational film market to private companies, these latter produced an array of multiple formats and film catalogues that led to confusion among prospective institutional clients.

User-based resistance was another kind that emerged, particularly the resistance of many teachers either to even consider using films as part of their teaching, or to master the technical complexities of manipulating projector equipment. Part of this was due to

³³⁷ Vanessa Schwartz. *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siècle Paris*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999; Ben Singer. *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and Its Contexts*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

³³⁸ Edward Tenner. *Why Things Bite Back: Technologies and the Revenge of Unintended Consequences*. New York: Knopf, 1996; and Geoffrey B. Pingree and Lisa Gitelman. “Introduction: What’s New About New Media.” In *New Media: 1740-1915*. L. Gitelman and G.B. Pingree, eds. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003.

conservatism within the traditional *lycées* where the classical curriculum was vigorously defended; another part was due to teachers' complaints that film companies did not involve them in the creation of instructional films. The commercial imperatives of the cinema industry, more than pedagogical objectives, ultimately shaped the content of what was offered in brochures and catalogs. Although companies professed to involving teachers in the production of films, as late as the 1930s complaints that no true instructional films (*films d'enseignement*) were being produced, with the exception of individual teacher-practitioners, were still appearing in print. Spectator resistance refers to the preference of students and their parents for *films d'éducation* (public film screenings), rather than classroom showings. The ideal of creating an objective cinematic "document" for classroom instruction was frustrated by French peoples' preference for "educational spectacle."

Ultimately, by the mid-1930s, the educational cinema movement found itself in a contradictory situation. On the one hand, it was supported by a nation-wide network of institutions – lending libraries, groups, and journals – and supplied by the two major (Pathé and Gaumont) and many minor film and equipment manufacturers. On the other hand, advocates continued to decry its chronic under-funding, under-utilization, and lack of central coordination. Whereas in the United States, powerful state and private organizations like universities and foundations provided valuable and sustained support for educational cinema initiatives, those actors were either absent or far less involved in France.³³⁹ Moreover, there were no sustained research activities like the Payne Film

³³⁹ Alison Griffiths. "Film Education in the Natural History Museum: Cinema Lights Up the Gallery in the 1920s," Victoria Cain, "An Indirect Influence upon Industry: Rockefeller Philanthropies and the Development of Educational Film in the United States, 1935-1953." In *Learning with the Lights Off*:

Studies at the University of Chicago to provide institutional legitimation for the arguments of educational cineastes.³⁴⁰ Based on the survey of available trade journals that I conducted for this project, advocates aimed their appeals for assistance directly to the national government and grounded them more on anecdotal accounts from individual instructors as opposed to systematic studies of media influence on children. Consequently, increasing state patronage became practically the sole objective of educational cineastes whose institutional support otherwise rested on the much more financially limited municipalities and civic associations. As one regional cinema journal put it in 1932, “it is well evident that the decisive path will only be reached if the State grants not only its ‘moral support’ to private initiatives, but if it elaborates a program destined to be applied to public schools...”³⁴¹ In order to understand why cineastes looked to the French state to the extent that they did, we need to understand both the growth and the extent of the institutional support structures and the contradictions and resistances that the lack of a central state policy on films and equipment were seen to have engendered.

Developing Institutional Networks – Cinémathèques and Regional Offices

As the previous chapters have shown, advocates for educational cinema utilized their connections to civic associations and government officials to build a movement among the educated middle-class teachers, industry figures, and reformers. After the

Educational Film in the United States. D. Orgeron, M. Orgeron, and D. Streible, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 124-144, 230-248.

³⁴⁰ Mark Lynn Anderson. “Taking Liberties: The Payne Fund Studies and the Creation of the Media Expert.” In *Inventing Film Studies*. L. Grieveson and H. Wasson, eds. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2008), 38-65.

³⁴¹ “Le Cinéma Scolaire en France.” *Bordeaux-Ciné* (25 March 1932), 4. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) – C.3 [1]

April, 1922 conference at CNAM, a variety of initiatives were undertaken with the aim of building institutional support networks for the production and distribution of non-fiction films. As early as 1921, the Paris Municipal Council had explored the possibility of creating a *filmathèque* that would “constitute a central organ for information, study, and monitoring for all questions relative to this application of the cinema.”³⁴² Before the council finally authorized its creation in December 1925, four other towns – Strasbourg, Lyon, Marseille, and Saint-Étienne – had established repositories by 1923.³⁴³

The functions of the Cinémathèque de la Ville de Paris were first to provide information and offer training for teachers on using equipment, to function as an archive, organize conferences, and provide a lending service. It was to serve, therefore, as a more general and publicly accessible repository to the ones created at the Ministry of Agriculture and at the Ministry of Public Instruction’s Musée Pédagogique.³⁴⁴ Many of the films collected by the Cinémathèque were used to advance the Republic’s policies of social reform. Valérie Vignaux has assessed the Cinémathèque’s deep involvement in the “social hygiene” campaign to promote salubrious bodily care and combat venereal disease and alcoholism.³⁴⁵ Beginning in 1930, the Cinémathèque also presented colonial

³⁴² Léon Riotor. “Rapport au nom de la 4e Commission (1), pour réaliser l’organisation et le fonctionnement de Service cinématographique de la Ville de Paris.” Conseil Municipal de Paris, 129, no. 2. (1925), 2. Archives de Paris [AP] D9K3 113.

³⁴³ Raymond Borde and Charles Perrin. *Les Offices du cinéma éducateur et la survivance du Muet (1925-1940)*. (Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 1992), 10. For a description of the structure of a regional office, see “Cinémathèque Régionale du Massif Central.” *Bulletin de la Fédération des Oeuvres Scolaires et Postsecondaires Laiques du Puy-de-Dôme* 2 (December 1927), 1-3.

³⁴⁴ Nonetheless, the two ministerial repositories were quite active in film rentals and distribution. In 1925, the Agricultural Ministry had 2,145 rentals and, in 1927-1928, the Musée Pédagogique had over 44,000, see Christophe Gauthier. “Au risque du spectacle: Les projections cinématographiques en milieu scolaire dans les années 1920.” In *Cinéma pédagogique et scientifique. À la redécouverte des archives*. B. de Pastre-Robert, M. Dubost, F. Massit-Folléa, eds. Paris: ENS Éditions, 2004.

³⁴⁵ Valérie Vignaux. “Femmes et enfants ou le corps de la nation: L’éducation à l’hygiène dans le fonds de la Cinémathèque de la Ville de Paris.” *1895* 37 (Summer 2002), 23-43. On the social hygiene movement, see Virginie de Luca Barrusse. “Pro-Natalism and Hygienism in France, 1900-1940. The Example of the Fight Against Venereal Disease.” *Population* 64, no. 3 (July-September 2009), 477-506.

documentaries, advertising the romanticism and humanitarianism of France's "civilizing mission."³⁴⁶

While the ministerial repositories and the Paris Cinémathèque served as informational and exhibition hubs, the municipal repositories struggled to provide similar services to the schools in their regions. The Public Instruction ministry recognized the problem in May 1925 circular to school directors: "the most serious and inevitable limitation... is the loss of time occasioned by the movement of films, the incessant to-and-fro between different points and the consequent underutilization of films for a major part of the school year."³⁴⁷ The Ligue de l'Enseignement, whose memberships comprised many teachers and administrators from the Republic's schools, organized regional "Offices Régionales du Cinéma Éducatif."³⁴⁸ These offices purchased films or obtained them on long-term loan from the Musée Pédagogique, and they offered both public screenings in "educational" cinema with an aim to promote secular education, and instructional films in classrooms, adult evening courses and in vocational centers.³⁴⁹ A report by Julien Jenger, president of the Alpes-Maritimes office, also shows the extent to which theories of suggestion and the imperatives of republican social reform had come

³⁴⁶ Béatrice de Pastre. "Cinéma éducateur et propagande colonial à Paris au début des années 1930." *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine* 51, no. 4 (Oct.-Dec. 2004), 135-151. See also Peter J. Bloom. *French Colonial Documentary: Mythologies of Humanitarianism*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2008; and Patricia Morton. *Hybrid Modernities: Architecture and Representation at the 1931 Colonial Exposition, Paris*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003. For a discussion of the shifting approaches to France's "civilizing missions" in its African colonies, see Alice L. Conklin. *A Mission to Civilize: The Republican Idea of Empire in France and West Africa, 1895-1930*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997.

³⁴⁷ Letter from M. Lapie, Ministry of Public Instruction, dated 5 May 1925. AN F17 13378

³⁴⁸ Pascal Laborerie. "Les Offices du cinéma éducateur et l'émergence du parlant: l'exemple de l'Office de Nancy." *1895* 64 (Autumn 2011), 31-49. A brief history of the Saint-Étienne office can be found in Gérard Vial. "De l'office du cinéma éducateur à la médiathèque." *1895* 41: Special issue on archives (2003), 127-133; and Borde and Perrin, *Les Offices du Cinéma Éducateur*. A contemporary description of the formation and function can be found in A. Chatelet. "Les Offices Régionaux du Cinéma Éducatif." *Cinédocument* (October 1932), 322-325.

³⁴⁹ The major offices could obtain films one-year loan, the smaller ones for three months. See Charles Lebrun. "Conférence de M. Lebrun: L'Organisation des Cinémathèques et la Diffusion des Films d'Enseignement." *Cinédocument* (February 1932), 136.

together. “The power of suggestion,” Jenger’s report asserts, “which harvests animated images, should impose itself in the domain of instruction.”³⁵⁰ The regional offices’ role was not simply to provide films for schools to rent, but to promote the social welfare of the Republic. Films, he argued needed to be used for primary instruction but also “for social hygiene, child care, the struggle against social calamity, [they can] contribute to “vast campaigns of popular education against filth, tuberculosis, alcoholism, cancer... It fulfills these magnificent humanitarian need forcefully and easily.”³⁵¹

These offices would serve, therefore, as agents for linking films with the moralistic and educational agenda of the Third Republic. They affiliated themselves with other civic and para-governmental associations such as the Office of Social Hygiene and the National Defense Committee Against Tuberculosis. They also provided films for rentals and organized screenings in remote villages where they promoted agricultural modernization as a means to educate farmers on social hygiene and on progressive farming techniques in order to slow France’s rural depopulation.³⁵² Jenger declared that their activities “will be exercised under a secular and rational format, both on children and adults, to inculcate conceptions of the healthy and moral life, to combat bad habits and examples, even popular prejudices, the fruits of ignorance.”³⁵³ The largest and most active was the Lyon office, founded by a socialist and Freemason, Gustave Cauvin (d.

³⁵⁰ Julien Jenger. *Le Cinéma et l’Education*. (Nice: Société Générale Imprimerie, 1933), 6. UNESCO IICE-CFCE Documentation B.3. Vichy’s education ministry maintained a file on Jenger and labeled him a “doubtful person” based on his political activity during the Popular Front. Archives Nationales [AN] F17 13378/Dossier Jenger.

³⁵¹ Jenger, 11. Pathé-Consortium-Cinéma also invoked cinema’s social mission when it sponsored screenings. See Coissac. “Une Présentation de Films d’Enseignement.” *Cinéopse* 5, no. 44 (April 1923), 327-329.

³⁵² On agricultural film, see Alison J. Murray Levine. “Projections of Rural Life: The Agricultural Film Initiative in France, 1919-39.” *Cinéma Journal* 43, no. 4 (Summer 2004), 76-95, and Christine Buzzini. “La propagande par le cinéma au ministère de l’Agriculture.” *1895* 18 (Summer 1995), 129-144

³⁵³ Jenger, 6.

1951).³⁵⁴ Fascinated by cinema from a young age, Cauvin moved to Lyon in 1921 and established a regional office that year. By 1931, they sponsored 3,500 screenings of instructional films and over 6,500 other screenings divided between adult courses (340), agricultural conferences (512), professional orientation and technical training (586), social hygiene (375), and general public *cinéma d'éducation* (4,760) shows, far in excess of any other regional office.³⁵⁵

A nationwide network of regional offices – fourteen in all, including one in Algiers – had emerged by the end of the 1920s.³⁵⁶ By the end of the 1930s, the number had increased to twenty-eight before they were closed down during the Second World War. In 1931, *La Cinématographie Française* provided a survey of each of the regional office's activities – Lyon had the largest number of films in stock (3,165) and a total of 49,500 rentals; the second, Lille, had 1,642 films and total of 32,232 rentals. Owing most likely to the presence of the Musée Pédagogique and the Paris Cinémathèque, the regional office of the capital held just 350 titles, the lowest of any major city.³⁵⁷ In 1933, the League organized these offices under a collective umbrella organization, the U.F.O.C.E.L (*Union Française des Offices du Cinéma Éducateur Laïque*) [French Union of Laic Educational Cinema Offices].³⁵⁸ In this way, the League utilized the regional

³⁵⁴ Gustave Cauvin. *Brochure de présentation de l'Office Régional du Cinéma Éducateur de Lyon*. (1926). BNF Arts et Spectacles, 4-COL-80/14 (1). Cauvin also wrote a short treatise on educational cinema, *Le Cinéma éducateur à l'école et dans nos oeuvres*. Lyon: Office régional du cinéma éducateur, 1939. On Cauvin, see also Laborderie, 34-36, Borde and Perrin, 11-14 and M.C. Lebrun. "Gustave Cauvin." *Image et Son* 48 (December 1951), 4.

³⁵⁵ Gustave Cauvin. "Activité de l'Office régional du Cinéma éducateur de Lyon." *Cinédocument* (June 1933), 582-586.

³⁵⁶ Borde and Perrin, 21 and also an undated report on "Le Cinéma dans l'enseignement technique" lists these centers and their functions: AN F21 4695B.

³⁵⁷ Marcel Colin Reval. "Il y a en France près de 20.000 écrans, don't 12.000 d'enseignement." *La Cinématographie Française* (28 March 1931), 67.

³⁵⁸ U.F.O.C.E.L. *Bulletin d'information*, nos. 1, 2, and 3. 1934. UNESCO IICE CFCE Correspondence A.25.1. In 1946, the League transformed this bulletin into a fully-fledged educational cinema journal, *U.F.O.C.E.L. Informations* which, in turn, became the journal, *Image et Son* in 1951.

offices to show classroom films and host public screenings and as a means of promoting their politics of secular education. As Pascal Laborderie has observed, the implantation of regional offices occurred in areas where Freemasonry was particularly strong. “This is not surprising,” he concludes, “since thirty- to forty-percent of the instructors in laic schools, who were the principle agents in the regional offices, were masons.”³⁵⁹

Ministries other than Agriculture and Public Instruction also developed their own collections, although there was no coordination of activity between them. In Coissac’s 1930 survey, he lists collections at the Ministries of War, Marine, Public Works, Foreign Affairs, and, most prominently, the Ministry of Work, Hygiene and Social Insurance and Assistance.³⁶⁰ Most of these were fairly small; even the Ministry of Work’s National Office of Social Hygiene, possessed a total of 300 films and had 925 rentals for 1927, in the same year that the Lyon regional office hosted over 5,000 screenings.³⁶¹

Finally, a specific literature emerged to proffer the pedagogical and psychological arguments, situated educational cinema within the broader history of French national cinema, and disseminated technical instruction in the usage and handling of equipment. Coissac published one of the first comprehensive historical surveys of French cinema history, *Histoire du cinématographe de ses origines à nos jours* (1925) in which he devoted a chapter to a comprehensive treatment and rationale of cinema’s pedagogical applications. This chapter was expanded into a 200-page practical manual the following year, *Le Cinématographe et l’enseignement*. A public school-teacher from Saint-Étienne, Eugène Reboul, published in 1926 his own practical guide, *Le Cinéma Scolaire et l’Éducateur*, that included both approbations from important figures like Paul Painlevé,

³⁵⁹ Laborderie, 35.

³⁶⁰ Coissac, “Le cinéma dans l’enseignement et l’éducation en France,” 23-28.

³⁶¹ Coissac, 26.

along with technical information. In both Coissac and Reboul, technical instruction was linked to their authors' proselytizing fervor: teaching teachers how to buy and use projectors was to, in effect, facilitate a new visual pedagogy. As Reboul enthused, "we [teachers] will gain by the rapidity of [students'] comprehension and the fidelity of their memory. We will facilitate the students' efforts at assimilation and the greater ease of the schoolmaster."³⁶²

In the years following the 1922 CNAM conference, administrative and intellectual networks composed of ministerial collections, regional film offices run by the Ligue de l'Enseignement, and a burgeoning literature combined to establish the educational cinema within the fabric of French communal life. This infrastructure helped to link the cinema with the secular values of the Third Republic and familiarized films and their attendant technologies among a broad range of teachers, students, and proselytizers. Educational cineastes, however, feared that such advances would be stymied by the lack of great state assistance, especially in terms of funding and deciding upon standardized formats and equipment. Indeed, turning the state's classrooms into markets for projectors and films proved contentious in the absence of a national policy on educational cinema.

Making Schools Into Markets – The Problem of Small-Film Formats

If cinémathèques and regional offices were important sites for distribution and exhibition, educational films also constituted a new and potentially viable market from an industrial standpoint. If the commercial technology of film was to penetrate the Republic's schools, they needed to domesticate projectors and films to make them

³⁶² Eugène Reboul. *Le Cinéma Scolaire et Éducateur* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris, 1926), 7.

accessible to teachers. Domestication in this context indicated that “‘strange’ and ‘wild’ technologies have... to be integrated into the structures, daily routines, and values of users and their environments.”³⁶³ Projectors and films posed particular problems for adaptation for non-commercial users. Standard-gauge (35mm) projectors were very expensive, had several add-on costs like the lamps and the lenses, and, at a time when not all buildings had yet been outfitted with electricity, demanded additional costs unless schools purchased manual projectors that required continual hand-cranking.³⁶⁴ In its advertising strategies for the standard gauge Pathé-Enseignement stressed durability, ease-of-use and safety.³⁶⁵ After the war, the company developed an entire line of educational projectors in 1921-22.³⁶⁶ These early post-war variations, called the Appareil “Mundial Enseignement, Type A.C.” and the “Appareil d’Enseignement, Type N.A.U.” were projectors that also highlighted simplicity of use and robustness of construction and official recognition, as “adopted by the Minister of Public Instruction.”³⁶⁷ This did not mean, however, that the Ministry had designated this projector as a standard for all schools since no such policy existed in the early 1920s.

These new models were still standard-gauge 35mm projectors like the Pathé-Enseignement, expensive both to purchase and to maintain and out of the financial reach of all but Paris’s elite *lycées* and the Commerce Ministry’s vocational and commercial schools. Rural areas were effectively priced out of the market. Moreover, the expensive outlay did not necessarily produce consistently satisfactory results. Paris’ Chamber of

³⁶³ Thomas Berker, Maren Hartmann, Yves Punie, and Katie Ward. “Introduction.” In *Domestication of Media and Technology*. (Berkshire, UK: Open University Press, 2006), 2.

³⁶⁴ A spec sheet from Pathé-Consortium-Cinéma reveals that the cost for the unit, the electrical transformer, the lamp, and lenses ran to between 4,500-5,000 francs. “Devis Poste ‘Mundial Enseignement.’” Archives de Paris, Chambre de Commerce, 2ETP-1-2-73 23.

³⁶⁵ Anon. “A Travers l’Exposition.” *Cinéopse* 4, no. 33, May 1922, 441-442.

³⁶⁶ Archives de Paris, Chambre de Commerce [AP COC], 2ETP-1-2-73 23

³⁶⁷ AP COC, 2ETP-1-2-73 23/Emploi du Cinéma 1923 folder

Commerce noted that, after purchasing Pathé equipment, including accessories, for nearly 6,000 francs, they had numerous problems: “each screening costs around 10 francs of electricity and just as much for the film rental... There are short-circuits, and the school has observed that the films are poorly adapted to courses, they are only being used in two technology courses.”³⁶⁸

Moreover, teachers also complained about the difficulty of handling the projectors. Commentators repeatedly pointed out that the failure to provide adequate training was a key limitation in encouraging skeptical instructors to give films a chance. “The film along with the machine is not all,” commented one editorialist. “It is key that we train operators, in this instance teachers. Nothing is more dangerous than leaving them to trust in the product description...”³⁶⁹ Training teachers was, consequently, a part of both Gaumont and Pathé’s broader efforts to construct this market. Its journal, *Le Cinématographe dans l’Enseignement*, provided detailed descriptions both of their new catalogue releases and advice on how to fund, purchase and run projects.³⁷⁰ A technical manual co-authored by a science and a history professor, *Enseignement et Cinématographe* (1923), advises instructors to purchase “a machine built by a company whose long history guarantees its high-quality construction...”³⁷¹ At the end of the book, the authors only list films produced by Pathé-Consortium-Cinéma, making the entire manual effectively a promotional tool.

³⁶⁸ AP COC, 2ETP-1-2-73 23/Emploi du Cinéma 1923 folder, “Emploi du Cinema dans les Ecoles.”

³⁶⁹ Jehan de Vimblelle. “Chronique du Cinéma Éducateur.” *Cinéopse* 4, no. 38 (October 1922), 804-805.

³⁷⁰ A. Ballot-Beaupré. “Conseil pratiques pour trouver un Concours financier.” *Le Cinématographe dans l’Enseignement* 1, no. 5 (1 March 1921), 1;

³⁷¹ M. [Maurice] Fallex and E. Lasnier, *Enseignement et Cinématographe*. (Paris: Librairie Delagrave, 1923), 13-14.

Manufacturers also responded by developing smaller-format projectors and film stock. Although both Pathé and Gaumont had attempted to develop projectors for home use before the First World War, only KOK had met with market success. In 1923, Pathé revolutionized the small-format market when it introduced its small-format projector, the Pathé-Baby, which replaced the now-antiquated KOK system. It projected 9.5mm film through a camera whose simplified, compact design made it easy to transport, set up, and did not require as much electricity to power.³⁷² Nonetheless, the Pathé-Baby possessed also significant limitations. When it was introduced, it could only project a film total of 10 meters, barely more than a minute or two worth of footage. Even an improved model the following year could only accommodate individual 20-meter rolls.³⁷³ As the Pathé-Baby was too small, the company introduced in 1926 a new system specifically designed for educational and agricultural markets, the Pathé-Rural, that projected 17.5mm film and that was also designed for those with little technical training: “laypeople in all that concerns the cinema and the most elementary mechanical knowledge.”³⁷⁴ As Christel Taillibert has pointed out, the Pathé-Rural was designed to be not only cheaper in terms of equipment cost but its lighter construction produced less wear-and-tear on film stock

³⁷² For a history of the Pathé-Baby, see Alexandra Schneider. “Time Travel with Pathé-Baby: The Small Gauge Film Collection as Historical Archive.” *Film History* 19, no. 4 (2007), 353-360. A technical evaluation of the Pathé-Baby can be found in Anonymous. “Le Cinéma Chez Soi,” *Le Cinéopse* 5, no. 41, January 1923, 93-95. For the Pathé-Baby’s role in developing the amateur film market, see Colette Sluys. “Cinéastes du dimanche: La pratique populaire du Cinéma.” *Ethnologie française* 13, no. 3 (July-September 1983), 291-302. Léon Gaumont protested the idea that Pathé had invented the home-film market with the Pathé-Baby. In a December 1937 article for *L’Action cinématographique*, he insisted that he had developed the first portable small-format film camera, the *chronophotographique de poche*, in 1900 although it appears to have been a commercial failure. See Anon. “Une juste protestation de M. Léon Gaumont à propos du premier cinéma amateur.” *L’Action cinématographique*, December 1937. Bibliothèque du Film [BIFI], Fonds Léon Gaumont, LG714-B80.

³⁷³ See the brochure produced by Pathé for the Pathé-Baby’s 25th anniversary in 1948. Archives de la Fondation Jerome Seydoux-Pathé PRO-P-171.

³⁷⁴ Guillaume-Michel Coissac. *Le cinématographe et l’enseignement*. (Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1926), 194-195.

when it traveled through the projector.³⁷⁵ As it provided a good combination of simplicity and ease-of-use, the Pathé-Baby became one of the pre-dominant small-format projector systems although it did have competition from many other manufacturers.

Gaumont stayed committed longer to 35mm standard projectors for its educational and home markets, banking on potential clients to remain committed to the larger format despite the costs. A 1929 publicity brochure for its Chrono XI projector emphasized the importance of government funding: “[Gaumont projectors]... will promote demands for subventions from one of the ministries as well as from départements and municipalities.”³⁷⁶ Both Pathé and Gaumont also produced literature that showed the extent of to which French school had acquired their respective machines. Gaumont, who introduced a small-gauge projector, the *Simpliciné*, even hinted at suggestion theory in its promotional materials: “The image that struck you during your childhood rests engraved on your spirit all of your life, because a child’s memory is above-all visual.”³⁷⁷

It was the new 17.5mm film gauge, however, that proved critical for Pathé. Primarily, it played to the company’s strengths: as France’s only major producer of commercial film stock, 17.5mm was created by simply halving pre-existing stocks of 35mm film.³⁷⁸ The new gauge was also an effort by the company to ward off the rival 16mm of the Eastman Kodak Company. Eastman had introduced the 16mm format with its new Cine-Kodak in 1923 for the amateur market but, by the end of the 1920s, was

³⁷⁵ Christel Taillibert. “Le Pathé-Rural ou les aleas du 17,5mm.” *1895* 21 (December 1996).

³⁷⁶ *Les Postes cinématographiques Gaumont*. 1929 brochure. Bibliothèque du Film [BIFI]/Fonds Léon Gaumont LG173-B21, 4/4.

³⁷⁷ *Simpliciné*. Gaumont advertising brochure. BIFI/Fonds Léon Gaumont LG174-B21.

³⁷⁸ *Le Film Vierge Pathé: Manuel de développement et de tirage*. (Paris, 1926).

actively seeking to expand into educational markets.³⁷⁹ In developing the Pathé-Rural and its associated 17.5mm film, Pathé was, in effect, providing a technological response to American dominance of the French domestic market.

Despite the growth of small-format film gauge, 28mm and 35mm projectors still widely commercially available and other manufacturers advertised even more competing formats. Coissac's 1926 manual presented a 22mm gauge projector, the *Cinébloc*, constructed by the firm of Rebillion and Adam.³⁸⁰ These multiple formats were supported by competing sets of film catalogs that challenged schools, libraries, and the regional offices that had initiated film collections with 35mm copies, but were looking for means to reduce expenses. The acrimony was, apparently, so great that *Cinéopse* published a defense of the multiple new formats. To the charge that multiple small film formats would hamper the efforts of the regional offices to build their collections, Adrien Collette, the journal's resident writer on educational cinema, responded rather meekly that these new cameras would "be available in milieu where film hasn't been able to penetrate; they will open new horizons and thus allow for the diffusion of cinematographic projections in small localities and in all France's schools."³⁸¹

The claims of Collette were not unfounded, despite the confusion that multiple formats risked posing for schools and regional offices. The National Archives has conserved applications submitted to the Agricultural Ministry for the period 1927-1928. These records underscore the nationwide extent of interest in educational cinema and the

³⁷⁹ C.E. Kenneth Mees. "History of Professional Black-and-White Motion Picture Film." In Raymond Fielding, ed. *A Technological History of Motion Pictures and Television*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1967) 133-136; Reese Jenkins. *Images and Enterprise: Technology and the American Photographic Industry*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

³⁸⁰ Coissac. *Le Cinématographe et l'enseignement*, 191-194.

³⁸¹ Adrien Collette. "Films de formats réduits." *Cinéopse* 9, no. 91 (1 March 1927), 754. The Pathé-Rural, had a delayed commercial roll-out and had few available films until the end of 1927. See Taillibert, "Le Pathé Rural."

effort of municipalities to demonstrate widespread in films within their communities. For example, the mayor of Montmédy (Meuse) asserted that a film projector was “asked for by the teaching staff themselves, inspectors, and directors of primary boys and girls schools” and he also provided a list of sixteen surrounding communes, along with their residents to demonstrate the potential audience for public *cinéma d'éducation* screenings.³⁸² Films would be shown not only in classes but “outside of class... especially in the evenings and during holidays: Thursdays, Sundays, and fêtes.”³⁸³ Another village, Chambon d'Ambert (Puy-de-Dôme), justified its application by claiming that “in an excessively mountainous region, educational cinema will render important services and will allow agriculturalists to be instructed and entertained during the long months of winter.”³⁸⁴ In justifying one application for the town of Wantzenau (Bas-Rhin), the local agricultural services bureau wrote to the prefect that “it is certain that the installation of a cinema will produce in this community the best effects and contribute to a high degree in elevating the cultural level of the population.”³⁸⁵ Even more, cinema could occasionally a justification for other modernizing ambitions. The municipal council of Tours-sur-Meyment (Puy-de-Dôme) insisted that funding was key for the purchase of equipment but also because “it was necessary to establish an aerial electrical line and to exchange a five-ampere meter in the boys' school for a nine-ampere one.”³⁸⁶ Application letters also gave some indication of how local leaders imagined its integration into both scholarly and community life. The Bas-Rhin agricultural services bureau, for example,

³⁸² Letter from the Mayor of Montmédy to the Ministre de l'Agriculture, dated 2 February 1928. Archives Nationales [AN] F10 2690 Ministre de l'Agriculture, Subventions des communes

³⁸³ Letter from the Mayor of Montmédy to the Ministre de l'Agriculture, dated 30 July 1927. AN F10 2690

³⁸⁴ Letter from the Prefet of the Puy-de-Dôme to the Ministre de l'Agriculture, dated 2 February 1928, AN F10 2690.

³⁸⁵ Letter from the Direction des Services Agricoles du Bas-Rhin to the Préfet du Bas-Rhin, dated 14 February 1928, AN F10 2690

³⁸⁶ Extrait du Registre des Deliberations de Conseil Municipal, Tours-sur-Meyment. AN F10 2690.

proposed purchasing a projector for the town of Dimbstahl in order to “bring together the population two or three times per month to show them agricultural films or those treating rural life.”³⁸⁷

Nevertheless, ministerial subventions were almost never adequate to cover the full costs of equipment and, therefore, communities subsequently had to cobble together multiple funding sources. The municipal council of Meyringac-L’Eglise (Corrèze) voted unanimously to provide 500 francs of funding for a Gaumont projector system whose cost totaled 4,457.30 francs for use in “agricultural teaching, adult education and social hygiene.” The Agricultural Ministry proffered only an additional 1,300 francs with the remainder covered by the agricultural syndicate, donations from a local church and apparently (its not clear) fundraising by the schools themselves.³⁸⁸ The commune of Châteaugay (Puy-de-Dôme), who sought funding for a small-format projector at the cost of 3,860 francs, mentioned in its application letter that it had already obtained 400 francs from the Municipal Council, 100 francs from the agricultural syndicate, and 300 francs “through a subscription in the commune.”³⁸⁹

These miniscule amounts, however, also reveal the vulnerability of maintaining functioning equipment and of supplying films, even if the state came through with the money for a projector. While the Third Republic provided some impetus to the creation of rural markets, these communal and municipal applications betray the half-hearted approach that the ministries took to financing, despite the nationwide level of interest.

³⁸⁷ Letter from the Services Agricole du Bas-Rhin to the Préfet du Bas-Rhin, dated 14 February 1928, AN F10 2690.

³⁸⁸ Letter from the Syndicat Agricole Cantonal de Corrèze to the Ministre de l’Agriculture, dated 28 February 1928, AN F10 2690

³⁸⁹ Letter from the Préfet du Puy-de-Dôme to the Ministre de l’Agriculture, dated 24 December 1927, AN F10 2690.

For budget year 1927-1928, the ministry spent a total 173,550 francs on a total of 134 communes or about 1,300 francs per commune, barely a third to a fourth of the cost of a standard 35mm projector with the necessary accessories.³⁹⁰ Even if the commune were able to cobble together enough funding sources for the actual purchase of a projector, they could expect no further assistance from Paris on replacements, repairs, training, or even the cost of renting films.

The government, moreover, seemed unwilling to intervene and mandate a single format for use in French schools. This lack of an approved standard film format for educational films would linger on as a continual problem well into the 1930s with the introduction of sound film only complicating the matter. A 1931 survey of participants at an educational cinema conference in Paris found that most of them continued to believe that 35mm was the ideal format for educational films. This preference was, however, “more costly, heavier, more encumbering. The regional offices can only purchase small quantities, the numbers are therefore strictly limited, and repairs due to projector malfunctions or transport are onerous.”³⁹¹ By 1933, the journal *Le Film Pédagogique* reported that the breakdown in projector formats among French schools was roughly even: 4,043 schools had 35mm projectors; 3,887 had the small format 9.5mm – most likely the Pathé-Baby projector; and only 369 had either 17.5mm or 16mm formats.³⁹² The issue over film formats would continue to be debated up until the middle of the 1930s when international pressure in favor of 16mm forced the Education Ministry to

³⁹⁰ Arrêté du Ministre de l’Agriculture. “Des subventions pour achat et fonctionnement de postes cinématographiques destinées à l’enseignement et à la propagande agricole.” [no date] AN F10 2690.

³⁹¹ Adrien Colette. “Le Congrès National du cinéma éducateur.” *Cinéopse* 152 (1 April 1932), 180..

³⁹² “Quelques chiffres à méditer.” *Le Film Pédagogique* 3 (October 1935), 1.

approve projectors and films in only two formats – 16mm and 35mm – as will be discussed in the fourth chapter.

By the end of the 1920s, municipalities, civic associations, and schoolteachers had become willing clients for film equipment, and they sought to integrate it into the classrooms and into the life of their communities. Furthermore, in their attempt to create small-gauge equipment and films, Pathé and other manufacturers risked sowing confusion in these emerging markets. Since there were no official decrees governing what equipment schools could purchase, each school or community had to decide for themselves – and hope that whosoever projector they purchased would be both durable and have a library of continually new and available titles from which to draw. Because market demands were controlled the development of film and equipment formats, government coordination was absent and funding inconsistent. In spite of the initiatives of individual ministers, potential clients were left with uncertainty over which gauge – and which company’s projectors and film catalogs – to adopt.

Resistance Among Teachers

Since the earliest days of the movement, one of the key concerns was encouraging “buy-in” from teachers skeptical of the notion that films could be anything more than a medium for entertainment. Although the participants at the 1922 CNAM conference framed cinema in terms of vocational and professional training, both advocates and film companies believed it could also be applied to almost all academic subjects. Yet, in their enthusiasm, they encountered resistance from teachers unconvinced by their arguments based on suggestion theory and other appeals to the primacy of vision over other faculties. Although my sources for such counter-arguments are the cinema journals

themselves, the extent to which they responded to critical attacks on their movement gives some sense of the level of resistance among many in France's educational establishment.

One of the earliest, and most articulated, concerns was the fear that films would replace teachers entirely. This issue was addressed as early as the 1920 Bessou report where the extra-parliamentary commission re-affirmed the authority of the teacher in stating that cinema was no more than an "auxiliary." "Cinematic projection, such as we conceive it," they asserted, "is not a simple entertainment: *it must coincide with the corresponding lesson of which it is the natural illustration.*"³⁹³ Although cineastes would continually reassert the irreplaceability of the instructor, their enthusiasm for visual pedagogy often belied these assurances. In an extend response to the movement's critics, one *Cinéopse* contributor argued that teachers' anxieties were unfounded and that showing films was simply one technique among many – like lectures, books, and drawings – to convey ideas. "Those who proscribe the cinema in their schools would not proscribe improvements in other methods!"³⁹⁴ Yet, he insisted on the superiority of a visually based pedagogy and asserted cinema's central role in fostering instruction that was "agreeable, attractive, easy to assimilate, to the extent that learning becomes a pleasure for the child."³⁹⁵

Instructors committed to more traditional pedagogical methods did not share such sentiments. In 1926, the official bulletin of the French national teachers' syndicate used the opening of a regional cinémathèque to express its reservations. They insisted that

³⁹³ August Bessou. *Rapport Général sur l'emploi du cinématographe dans les différentes branches de l'enseignement*. Ministère de l'Instruction Publique et des Beaux-Arts. (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1920), 7.

³⁹⁴ L. Rébillon. "Le Cinéma dans l'Enseignement et ses Ennemis." *Cinéopse* 4, no. 38 (October 1922), 805.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 804.

“...too many of the films currently in use are unsatisfactory. The so-called scientific films, such as Pathé’s *Les Ruminants*, contain plenty of errors... So-called geography films are not adapted to children or are composed of such disparate facts that they have no educative value.” They concluded by asserting that, “educational cinema must not be a field of exploitation for film producers whose sole point of view is dividends; an educational film must be conceived and realized in view of a lesson, and not a lesson subordinated to a film.”³⁹⁶ Two years later, they weren’t any more complimentary: describing methods to cultivate children’s aesthetic sensibilities, they endorsed visiting historical monuments as producing a more elevated reaction than those produced “by the movie houses or even less elevated spectacles.”³⁹⁷

The arguments of the skeptics were two-fold. First, they argued that films did not make learning more efficient and direct, but instead rendered students passive in front of flickering images.³⁹⁸ At the end of the decade, both *Cinéopse* and the bulletin for the Société de l’Art à l’École were responding to criticisms by teachers who claimed that films “disperse the attention of the child, over-extend the lesson, making him incapable of reflecting on what he sees or leaving any clear memory of what he has viewed.”³⁹⁹

³⁹⁶ Syndicat national des institutrices et instituteurs publics de France et des colonies. *Bulletin de la Section départementale de la Seine* 7 (April 1926), 18.

³⁹⁷ Syndicat national des institutrices et instituteurs publics de France et des colonies. *Bulletin de la Section départementale de la Seine* 7 (December 1928), 28.

³⁹⁸ The position of Catholic educators was more even more pronounced. The Catholic educational journal, *École et Famille*, linked educational cinema to such other perils as co-education and sex education, claiming that the “so-called educational cinema” will teach children how to use their sexual organs. *École et Famille*, 1st May 1926, 227. In 1928, Catholic educators would form a Comité Catholique du Cinéma that would ultimately become the Centrale catholique du Cinéma et Radio that sought to pressure film companies to make morally upstanding films and to guide parents’s choices of films for their children. In January 1932, they began to publish their own educational journal, *Choisir*. Nonetheless, Catholic efforts were comparatively miniscule to those of the laic organizations. In late 1931, a cinema education journal, *Cinéma Education*, estimated that there were 12,000 “laic screens,” while only 1,500 “patronages catholiques” used cinemas. See: Marcel Colin-Reval. “Il y a en France près de 20.000 écrans, dont 12.000 d’enseignement.” *Cinéma-Éducation* (November 1931), 6. UNESCO IICE CFCE Documentation C.3/1.

³⁹⁹ Adrien Collette. “L’écran à l’école.” *Cinéopse* 10, no. 110 (1 October 1928), 805.

Films should be limited to vocational training or advanced education where they “can unfurl long explanations to young people who know how to see, having already viewed a lot [of films].”⁴⁰⁰ Thus, the psychological arguments of the cineastes were ultimately unfounded: the rapidity of images confused, disoriented, or rendered passive the minds of the students, not excited them. Cinema, in their view, “combined the annoyance of a too quick unfurling of images, poorly adapted to the cognitive processes of children and the exigencies of the oral lesson, and the fault of a complex photographic image surpassed the perceptive capacities of the young.”⁴⁰¹ Second, some instructors contended that the very multiplicity of images made it impossible for instructors to focus students’ attention on specific aspects of technical or scientific demonstrations. If teachers could not easily stop the image in order to emphasize specific points or details, then the effectiveness of the lesson would be lost.⁴⁰² Moving images also competed with the instructor for the attention of the student. These skeptics argued, therefore, that only fixed images were appropriate for classroom teaching, so that the authority remained with the teacher rather than a machine.

Even supportive instructors voiced concerns about control over content, specifically by demanding greater input on the creation of films. As stated before, by the mid-1920s, both Pathé and Gaumont had created educational film series and publications. The *Encyclopédie Gaumont*, for example, debuted its first catalogue in 1921 featuring forty-six different subjects and running to thirty-five pages.⁴⁰³ That same year, Pathé-

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, 805. A summary of these criticisms can be found in Léon Riorot. “Le Cinéma à l’École.” *L’Art à l’École* 22, no. 120 (January 1920), 156.

⁴⁰¹ Annie Renonciat. “Vue fixe et/ou cinéma: naissance d’une polémique (1916-1922).” In *Cinéma pédagogique et scientifique. À la redécouverte des archives*. (Paris: ENS Éditions, 2004), 71.

⁴⁰² Collette. “Cinéma et Enseignement.” *Cinéopse* 7, no. 69 (May 1925), 337-338.

⁴⁰³ Frédéric Delmeulle. *Contribution à l’Histoire du Cinéma Documentaire en France. Le Cas de l’Encyclopédie Gaumont*. (Villeneuve d’Ascq: Septentrion, 2001), 85-86.

Consortium-Cinéma commenced publication of a monthly journal, *le Cinématographe dans l'enseignement*, featuring extensive descriptions on their new titles. Moreover, both companies had also formed partnerships with publishing houses. Pathé advertised four such partnerships: it made art history and agricultural films with Larousse, scientific and technical films with Gauthier-Villars, medical and scientific films with Gaston Dion, and geography and natural history with Delagrave.⁴⁰⁴ Indeed, Pathé's output was so vast that Collette wrote in February of 1923, that the company had produced 415 educational films, although it is likely that most of these were re-purposed documentary and travelogue titles.⁴⁰⁵ Gaumont's publicity brochure, *Cinéma Scolaire*, also listed films it produced co-jointly with the publishing house, Hachette, for "use in primary school courses."⁴⁰⁶

Cineastes and teachers wanted a more active collaboration between teachers and film producers. The Bessou report had included the recommendation that films "destined for educational establishments must be inspired by professors, filmed by professionals, and edited by the production houses."⁴⁰⁷ Ideally, wrote Collette, professors and teachers should serve as the writers and directors both to determine to what lessons films would address as well as deciding upon all the necessary elements – documents, maps, and photographs – that were to appear in the finished print.⁴⁰⁸ Yet, production costs made it prohibitively difficult to tailor films to the specific needs of instructors.⁴⁰⁹ Firms

⁴⁰⁴ Pathé-Consortium-Cinéma advertisement. *Cinéopse* 4, no. 32 (April 1922), back matter.

⁴⁰⁵ Adrien Collette. "Les films d'enseignement." *Cinéopse* 5, no. 42 (February 1923), 250-251.

⁴⁰⁶ *Cinéma Scolaire: Films d'enseignement à l'usage du cours moyen des écoles primaires, conformes aux programmes du 23 février 1923. Les matériaux de construction*. Paris: Gaumont-Hachette, October 1926.

⁴⁰⁷ Adrien Collette. "L'évolution du Film d'enseignement." *Cinéopse* 6, no. 55 (March 1924), 243.

⁴⁰⁸ Adrien Collette. "L'élaboration d'un film d'enseignement." *Cinéopse* 6, no. 56 (April 1924), 319

⁴⁰⁹ Although I did not find cost data on film production for Pathé and Gaumont, a reasonable extrapolation can be made by looking at reports from Marc Cantagrel, the director of the cinema service at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers. In November 1932, he submitted report on projected costs for shooting

preferred either to re-purpose documentary and travelogue “views” or to create a generalized film on a subject that could suit multiple audiences. Pathé’s descriptions of historical sites, for example, appear to be a travelogue – tours of the various buildings, etc. – than a film with a specific set of lessons in mind.⁴¹⁰ Gaumont claimed that its films conformed to educational decrees established by the Ministry of Public Instruction in 1923 for a more “child-centered” focus in primary instruction. Yet, a copy of their 1926 brochure on construction materials, intended for an elementary schools, does not appear to have been initially designed for that particular audience as shown by titles about the geological formation of sulphate, the methods of extracting rock, and the formation of bricks.⁴¹¹ The titles appear more appropriate for technical training or professional orientation audience than an elementary school. Only a perfunctory set of questions at the back of the brochure – e.g., “do you like brick houses? Explain your reasons” – serves as a fig leaf way of acknowledging the intended audience, yet nowhere are any instructional consultants listed in the brochure.

The sense that “educational film” was, in part, configured by a production company’s old stock was attested to by the daily, *Le Petit Parisien*, who reported in 1924 that “films can hardly be procured except through the willingness of the production houses to loan out old copies that they can no longer use.”⁴¹² Even as late as 1932, one teacher argued that “too many of the films presented as instructional film are only

industrial films. According to his estimates, producing two hours (4000m) – roughly six-to-eight films - worth of film would cost nearly 280,000 francs factoring in film stock, developing, labor fees, and graphic design. See his report dated 1 November 1932, “Devis de production des films,” 3. CNAM Archives, Service du Cinéma 3EE-12.

⁴¹⁰ Anon. “Une Ville Romaine: Pompéi.” *Le cinématographe dans l’enseignement*. 1, no. 1 (15 January 1921), 4.

⁴¹¹ *Cinéma Scolaire*, 1-3.

⁴¹² “Le Cinéma à Paris: Le films éducateurs, les nouveautés de la semaine.” *Le Petit Parisien* 49, no. 17,378, 27 September 1924, 6.

extracts or sections from documentaries that are often interesting but are not made for the children in [our schools].”⁴¹³

This mixture of new and re-purposed titles is also suggested by looking at the catalogs. A 1929 catalog for the Compagnie Universelle Cinématographique, who distributed independently-made films in conjunction with the Presses Universitaires de France, one of the nation’s largest academic publishers, comprised films classified according to six different categories: sciences, social life (a catch-all category that included literature, art, customs, sports, and politics), agriculture, industry, geography and “recreational films.”⁴¹⁴ Of these, geography films represented the majority, over half of the total catalog. These films presented a variety of different narrative approaches based upon a reading of their catalog descriptions. Certain films took a pedagogical air, especially films depicting French architecture and geography. Others took on more of a travelogue aspect like *Le Bois de Boulogne sous la neige* [The Boulogne woods under the snow] that was described as “a very pretty Parisian promenade seen under its most picturesque aspects.”⁴¹⁵ Films on non-European subjects incorporated both geographical and ethnographic codes, stressing not only the uniqueness of the terrain but also the exoticness of the people.⁴¹⁶ Films designated as educational thus assumed a variety of different narrative strategies from the rigidly pedantic to a more touristic and exotic approach. This instability in the category of “educational,” which had bedeviled

⁴¹³ R. Boyau. “Créons des filiales et prenons des films.” *L’Éducateur Proletarien* (November 1932), 93.

⁴¹⁴ Compagnie Universelle Cinématographie. *Films Documentaires et d’Enseignement des Presses Universitaires de France*. Dated 1 January 1929. The CUC was a small independent firm established in 1925. See Abel, *French Cinema: The First Wave*, 46.

⁴¹⁵ Compagnie Universelle Cinématographie, 23.

⁴¹⁶ Studies of ethnographic films have discussed their dual role in promoting France’s civilizing mission as a humanitarian endeavor and in constructing French national identity. See David Henry Slavin. *Colonial Cinema and Imperial France 1919-1939: White Blind Spots, Male Fantasies, Settler Myths*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001; Bloom. *French Colonial Documentary*; and Levine. *Framing the Nation*, 56-88, 115-159.

instructors since Dr. Doyen in 1906, produced conflicting responses. On the one hand, those committed to a ‘pure’ instructional film distinct from any “spectacle” qualities insisted on a clear demarcation between the two. Yet, the evidence suggests that audiences preferred the “educational spectacle” to the classroom film. The shifting boundaries of the category of “educational” were, during the 1920s and 1930s, the saving graces of the entire movement.

Striving For Pedagogical Purity – The Decline of Instructional Film

The amorphous quality of “educational film” only reinforced the efforts of some cineastes to demarcate a boundary between an instructional film (*film d’enseignement*) and an educational film (*film d’éducation*). Many teachers insisted, like Léon Riator, that classroom films be shorn of any sort of spectacle aspect. One teacher argued that “a *film d’enseignement* must be short and...must only represent reality, without any trickery in the image or in the speed.”⁴¹⁷ At heart, they feared the charges made by their critics that educational film was simply another sort of spectacle with little pedagogical value.⁴¹⁸ Concerned that companies were ignoring the need for instructional films, Collette lamented in a 1924 *Cinéopse* article that “the time has come to undertake films made especially for teaching, different than those that are composed as documentaries. Teaching films are *descriptive* and *demonstrative*; the quality of the picturesque and

⁴¹⁷ *Bulletin de la Société de l’Art à l’école*. (May-June 1922), 38. John Grierson was concurrently making the same argument in Britain for a sort of “Platonic ideal” of the classroom film – one that avoided excessively formal techniques for what was to be a neutral presentation of some objective reality. See Timothy Boon. *Films of Fact: A History of Science in Documentary Films and Television*. (London: Wallflower Press, 2008), 36-38.

⁴¹⁸ Christophe Gauthier. “Au risqué du spectacle. Les projections cinématographique en milieu scolaire dans les années 1920.” In de Pastre, et al, 73-98.

stylistic tracks count for little or nothing.”⁴¹⁹ And he admonished teachers to “abandon the huge séances that brought hundreds of children together and to organize, in each school, a screening room where students will participate in regular lessons illustrated by films.”⁴²⁰

Collette’s concern with the lack of what he saw as authentic instructional films was echoed by the chemist Marc Cantagrel, head of the Service du Cinéma (Film Office) of the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers in the 1930s, who insisted that such films possess clear titles, simple and schematic illustrations, and that “real views be limited to organisms in movement.”⁴²¹ He linked the austerity of the *film d’enseignement* with the professional competency of the instructor. “The realization of a film...” he asserted, “is inseparable from its conception.... This is why the creation of a film can only be placed in the hands of a professor who knows how to express only the essential idea, but also some cinema technique and its resources.”⁴²² As Josette Ueberschlag has shown in her fine study of the teacher-filmmaker Jean Brérault (1898-1973), practitioners like Collette, Cantagrel, and Brérault defended the pedagogical superiority of the instructional film over what they saw as containing “burlesques, often full-length adaptations of popular fiction, everything that was the exact opposite of films used in class.”⁴²³ Rather than promote moral or civic instruction, the *cinéma d’éducation* appeared to them as another form of spectacle that had been given a pedagogical fig leaf. As the regional office in

⁴¹⁹ Adrien Collette. “Le cinématographe scolaire.” *Cinéopse* 6, no. 53, (January 1924), 67.

⁴²⁰ Collette, 68.

⁴²¹ Marc Cantagrel. “Rapport.” Congrès National du Cinéma Éducateur, 28-30 September 1931, 2. UNESCO IICE CFCE Documentation C.3/2.

⁴²² Cantagrel, 2.

⁴²³ Josette Ueberschlag. *Jean Brérault: Instituteur Cinéaste (1898-1973)*. (Saint-Étienne: Presses Universitaires de Saint-Étienne, 2007), 107.

Lille sadly reported, despite their impressive increases in their collections and “many members of the teaching establishment know nothing of our activities.”⁴²⁴

Despite their anecdotal testimony in favor of the pure instructional film technique, there is some indication that such a rigorous approach turned students off rather than stimulating their minds. A mid-1931 study into agricultural films reveals the difficulties some instructors felt in trying to maintain such strict standards. The author, one C. Gilbert, offers the usual prescriptive advice: agricultural films should be “precise, well-ordered... and above all committed to teaching young people the spirit of observation.”⁴²⁵ Yet, he mentions that many correspondents want “to give more life, more attraction in an [agricultural film] by introducing an amusing or sentimental, or even comic, plotline so that the aridity and the monotony will be excluded.”⁴²⁶ A survey of teachers conducted at a September 1931 conference on *cinéma éducateur* reinforced the perception that instructional films were not succeeding. Asked what mental faculties educational films best addressed, most teachers who responded reported *observation, memory, visual memory* while higher-order skills like *intelligence, association of ideas*, and ability to *generalize* ranked near the bottom of the poll.⁴²⁷ They also complained that films were frequently difficult to obtain, still did not constitute an appropriate lesson, and that projectors quickly broke down.⁴²⁸

Accounts from classrooms were also discouraging. One school inspector recounted how he felt “...a disillusion that pessimistic spirits qualify as a failure... a

⁴²⁴ A. Lecomte. “Assemblée générale de l’Office de Lille.” *Cinédocument* (May 1932), 237.

⁴²⁵ C. Gilbert. “Une grande enquête sur le cinéma agricole.” *Cinéopse* 13, no. 142 (1 June 1931), 281.

⁴²⁶ *Ibid*, 282.

⁴²⁷ Adrien Colette. “Le Congrès National du Cinéma éducateur.” *Cinéopse* 14, no. 151 (1 March 1932), 133.

⁴²⁸ Colette. *Ibid*, 133.

definitive and unredeemable condemnation of an instrument that, at its origin, was born with such marvelous hopes.”⁴²⁹ The Société des professeurs d’histoire et de géographie de l’enseignement public [Society of Public History and Geography Teachers] commended the creation of colonial documentaries by France’s economic agencies but “due to the continuing weakness of educational cinema, we hope that they don’t neglect their collections of simple pictures, which besides also have their merits.”⁴³⁰

Summarizing these results, Colette struck a despairing note. “Reading the responses to these questions caused us real disillusionment...” he wrote. “Ten years ago, the pedagogical doctrine of projected images was clearer and more precise than it is today. It is a bitter observation.”⁴³¹

Finally, film production companies appear to have scaled back what had been their limited production of instructional films. *L’Éducateur Proletarien*, the journal of the progressive “child-centered” school movement under Celestin Freinet (see chapter five), noted in December 1932 that “if you compare the 1928 and 1932 catalogue from the principal producers: [CUC], Pathé-Enseignement, Gaumont it is apparent that production over the past three or four years has been insignificant.”⁴³² According to the author, Pathé had produced only 27 new educational films during that time, of which 14 were for the Ministry of Agriculture. The reason was clear – companies could only sell such films to the official cinémathèques and regional offices whose resources were limited. Since such films could not be re-purposed for other markets, companies could not recuperate their production costs and were thus disinclined to invest money into them.

⁴²⁹ A. Lomont. “Plaidoyer en faveur du cinéma scolaire.” *Cinéopse* 10, no. 111 (1 November 1928), 869.

⁴³⁰ *Bulletin de la Société des professeurs d’histoire et de géographie de l’enseignement public* 19, no. 57 (November 1928), 83.

⁴³¹ Adrien Colette. “Le Congrès National du cinéma éducateur.” *Cinéopse* 14, no. 102 (1 April 1932), 181.

⁴³² Vovelle. “Le Film Standard.” *L’Éducateur Proletarien* (December 1932), 154.

Thus, filmmakers, civic associations, and teachers recognized the value of making and projecting films that contained some aesthetic or entertainment value. Yet, this carried the risk of blurring the distinction between the educational and the spectacular. Jean Benoît-Lévy (1888-1959), the nephew of Edmond, created his own company for the production of both instructional and educational films, making titles in many subjects including professional orientation, medicine, and agriculture.⁴³³ His most well known film, *La Maternelle* (1933), however, showed how pedagogical functions could overlap with dramatic narratives and emotional cues. The film is a sentimental drama about a bourgeois woman, Rose (Madeleine Renaud), who, after losing her fiancé, begins to work as an assistant at a primary school caring for the children. The narrative is used almost as a thread to show both the healthy and dangerous environments in which the students live – one girl’s father is a brutal alcoholic – as a means providing a form of moral and civic education.⁴³⁴ Although the film “presents itself as authentic as possible,” the film nevertheless employs narrative devices to insure that Rose always retains the sympathy of the audience and is always constructed as the literal embodiment of maternal virtues. At the end, she chooses to marry the schoolmaster and, upon his urging, leave the school to become a housewife.

If filmmakers like Benoît-Lévy blurred the distinction between educational and commercial fiction film, the Ligue de l’Enseignement’s regional offices developed *cinéma d’éducation* screenings whose programs featured multiple genres of fiction and non-fiction films. The Lyons office described its typical cinema program as “four or five

⁴³³ Valérie Vignaux. *Jean Benoît-Lévy*.

⁴³⁴ Vignaux, 105-110.

documentaries, a comedy film, [and] a four-, five-, or six-part comedy or drama film.”⁴³⁵ Because their programs were not tied to specific classes, the general intention of *cinéma d'éducation* was to extend its appeal to the entire community as form of recreation for children and for “the working public.”⁴³⁶ These screenings aimed both to provide entertainment and to promote “social education” (hygiene, savings, anti-alcoholism) by attracting mixed audiences of adults and children. Unlike those who asserted the documentary purity of the instructional film, promoters of the *cinéma d'éducation* insisted upon the need for “beautiful” aesthetic and attention-grabbing films that could hold audiences. Joseph Brenier, a senator from Isère, published a report where he exhorted his colleagues to advocate for educational films that possessed the fine qualities characteristic of French national production. “If we don’t succeed in forming French taste,” he wrote, “if we aren’t committed in favor of the well-made film, in its qualities of finesse and good observation that are the general mark of our national production... we will come to renounce our honorable place.”⁴³⁷

How popular were such screenings? Testimonies from different regions show that many communities were highly receptive. In the 1920s and early 1930s, when the regional offices were first opening, they were remarkably popular. In St. Étienne, they reported organizing morning screenings for public school students as early as 1924 of up to 3,000 at a time.⁴³⁸ The journal of the Orléans’ branch of the Ligue de l’Enseignement, *Action Laïque* noted that in 1928-1929 the community of Montargis held

⁴³⁵ Gustave Cauvin. “Office régional du cinéma éducateur.” *Cinéopse* 8, no. 86 (October 1926), 772.

⁴³⁶ *Ibid.*, 771.

⁴³⁷ Joseph Brenier. “Rapport sur le Cinéma Éducateur.” 42 Congrès National à Saint-Étienne, 21-23 May 1926. Ligue Française de l’Enseignement. UNESCO IICE-CFCE Documentation. C.3 [1].

⁴³⁸ Eugène Reboul. “L’Office du Saint-Étienne: Extraits du rapport annuel 1932.” *Cinédocument*, November 1932, 360-361.

regular screenings using a Pathé-Baby that “were a great success that often were held in conjunction with a discussion of the film when possible.”⁴³⁹

The Paris branch also held extensive screening programs: twenty-four successive screenings at their headquarters for students in each of the city’s twenty *arrondissements* during that same year, 1928-1929. Two years later, they had expanded to include students from Paris’s immediate suburbs. These screenings focused on *orientation professionnelle*: introducing their viewers to specific trades.⁴⁴⁰ Boys were shown films on foundry work, woodworking, bookbinding, and plumbing while girls were shown films on such “métiers féminins” as lace- and hat-making. Each program concluded with a short comic film.⁴⁴¹ Similarly, the Orléans’ branch’s journal, *Action Laïque* reported that their screenings took had a similar character: some educational, particularly geographic and occupation-related films followed by one or two short comic features. Moreover, the journal recorded increasing numbers of rentals. In the academic year 1927-1928, 227 rentals were recorded, in 1928-1929, 397.⁴⁴² This jumped to 845 for the 1929-1930 academic year.⁴⁴³

Yet, as much as limited government subventions hindered equipment purchases, such parsimony also frustrated exhibition practices as well. The Parisian branch of the League noted, in an April 1930 meeting, that while “cinema screenings are always followed with great interest by school children,” the costs “were not completely covered...and we regret that the Paris Municipal Council has only accorded 2,000 francs”

⁴³⁹ “Le Cinéma dans les Sociétés.” *Action Laïque* 2 (January 1929), 12.

⁴⁴⁰ “Programme des séances cinématographiques d’orientation professionnelle organisées par le cercle Parisien.” *Cercle Parisien de la Ligue Française de l’Enseignement* nouvelle série, no. 8 (January-March 1931), 57-60. Archives de la Ligue de l’Enseignement.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴⁴² “Dépot départemental de Films.” *Action Laïque* 4 (October 1929), 17-18.

⁴⁴³ “Dépot départemental de Films.” *Action Laïque* 8 (October 1930), 22.

out of the 12,000 necessary to cover that year's outlay.⁴⁴⁴ A similar case was made at a December 1930 conference of educators and League members held in Pithiviers. Decrying that the regional offices lack the resources to procure new films, the conference asserted that while the French state "accorded large subventions to facilitate the installation of cinematographic equipment," there was often no assistance to help purchase film or to rent them at the cost of 160 francs per showing.⁴⁴⁵ Moreover, regional offices could also become victims of their own success. In Lille, the rapid growth of film rentals meant that by 1931, they were experiencing "growing difficulties all the time in satisfying the needs of users. As in the case with instructional films, our recreation films have witnessed a considerable reduction in stock."⁴⁴⁶

A Contradictory Achievement

In the early 1930s, the educational cinema movement found itself in a state of contradiction between its institutional and infrastructural development and the solidity of its financial and material base. On the one hand, educational films and organizations had reached a peak of visibility and activity. Coissac, in a review article from *Le Tout Cinéma*, claimed that between 16- and 18,000 film projectors were currently employed in a range of educational and post-educational spheres.⁴⁴⁷ He also reported that in Lyon and

⁴⁴⁴ Réunion du Cercle Parisien. Date: 10 April 1930. Cercle Parisien Procès Verbaux. Archives de la Ligue de l'Enseignement.

⁴⁴⁵ "Congrès de la Fédération départementale des Oeuvres laïques scolaires et post-scolaires du Loiret." *Action Laïque* 9 (January 1931), 7-8.

⁴⁴⁶ A. Lecomte. "Activité de l'Office régional du Cinéma éducateur de Lille." *Cinédocument* (June 1933), 588.

⁴⁴⁷ Coissac, "Le Cinéma dans l'enseignement et l'éducation en France." *Le Tout-Cinéma* (1930), 17. UNESCO IICE CFCE Documentation C.3/1. This figure has to be treated with some caution: it was disputed a year later in a report that claimed 12,000 projectors dedicated to educational purposes were disseminated throughout France; and, in 1935, the journal *Le Film Pédagogique* claimed that by 1933, there were 8,300 projectors in use among France's 65,530 schools. See Marcel Colin-Reval. "Il y a en France près de 20.000 écrans, dont 12.000 d'enseignement." *Cinéma-Education* (November 1931), 6.

its surrounding départements, “6,000 educational and recreational screenings and offered 300 programs per week representing over 20 million meters for film for the school year.”⁴⁴⁸ Moreover, institutions and networks continued to develop and expand the range of their activities. The *Association des Amis du Cinéma Éducatif* [the Association of Friends of Educational Cinema], was organized, whose membership included Louis Lumière, André Honnorat, former education minister and founder of Paris’s Cité Universitaire, as well as the usual suspects (Coissac, Bruneau, Riotor).⁴⁴⁹ The Association sponsored a national conference on educational cinema in 1931 and published its own journal, *Cinédocument* specifically devoted to educational cinema. Other new educational cinema journals included *Ciné-Education*, *La Revue du Cinéma Éducateur*, the house organ for the Ligue de l’Enseignement, *Le Film Pédagogique*, and *Le Cinéma Privé*, a journal for amateurs that also featured a regular section educational cinema. Crowning all these initiatives was the recognition accorded educational cinema by the League of Nations who established an International Institute for Educational Cinema in Rome in 1928 and had began, in 1929, to publish its own journal, *The International Review of Educational Cinematography*.

Nonetheless, educational cinéastes were beginning to recognize limits to the extent of their influence. While Adrien Colette applauded the efflorescence of regional offices, he also noted that “their activity is almost completely limited to *cinéma d’éducation* showings, and they neglect instructional films,” and he wished that more

UNESCO IICE CFCE Documentation C.3/1; “Quelques chiffres à méditer.” *Le Film Pédagogique* 3 (October 1935).

⁴⁴⁸ Coissac, 11.

⁴⁴⁹ “Ciné-Document: Association des Amis du Cinéma éducatif.” *Cinéopse* 12, no. 125 (January 1, 1930), 28.

screenings “would be applied to school lessons.”⁴⁵⁰ The novelist, Émile Roux-Parassac, long an enthusiastic advocate of educational cinema, lamented the lack of sustained financial involvement by the ministries. “Educational film,” he complained, “must and should be developed in France and received official and obligatory recognition by the State. If the government is occupied too much on commercial cinema... it totally ignores the [educational] genre which requires its moral and material participation.”⁴⁵¹

The lack of state funding was repeatedly invoked as a reason by the regional offices for struggling to provide services. In Lille, the secretary general of the Ligue de l’Enseignement’s regional office complained in 1931 that “we have contested the absence of subventions from the State...it seems like the ministers are losing interest in the question of cinema.”⁴⁵² Educational cinema “has received recognition neither in the Senate nor in the Chamber of Deputies. In fact, still no official consecration, and not even the least contribution to the budget.”⁴⁵³ They also complained about the impossibility of getting copies from the Musée Pédagogique, whose collection was seen as deteriorating and insufficient to meet their needs.⁴⁵⁴ A Vichy-era ministerial report notes the Third Republic’s subventions for the Musée dramatically decreased during the 1930s: from 103,115 francs for 1930 to only 11,500 francs in 1939, and 6,000 francs for 1940.⁴⁵⁵ As

⁴⁵⁰ Adrien Colette. “Le cinéma scolaire en 1930.” *Cinéopse* 13, no. 137 (1 January 1931), 37.

⁴⁵¹ Émile Roux-Parassac. “Etat actuel de l’organisation du film instructif et éducatif en France.” *La Cinématographie française*, 21 December 1929.

⁴⁵² M. Merchier. “Activité de l’Office régional du Cinéma éducateur de Lille.” *Cinédocument* (May 1932), 236.

⁴⁵³ Jehan de Vimbelles. “Chronique du Cinéma Éducateur.” *Cinéopse* 14, no. 153 (1 May 1932), 210.

⁴⁵⁴ “Le Cinéma à l’École.” *L’Éducateur Proletarien* (February 1933), 269-270.

⁴⁵⁵ “Etat des sommes affectées au cinéma d’enseignement sur les Crédits du Musée Pédagogique.” AN F17 13378/Papiers Maurice Roy.

one frustrated advocate lamented against “the absence of state subventions that seems to indicate a declining interest in the utilization of [films] in instruction.”⁴⁵⁶

What this meant, in practice, was that, until the end of the Third Republic, educational cinema was largely an affair of individual ministers, teachers, and organizations. These thrived or contracted depending their ability to raise monies from municipalities, from admissions to screenings, or, in the case of the regional offices, from individual subscriptions. The director of the Musée Pédagogique, Charles Lebrun, addressing an audience at the 1931 educational cinema conference, emphasized how the lack of central coordination and sufficient funding meant that the aggregate of individual initiatives was creating redundancies and waste. “Currently, there are numerous initiatives. Between them: little, very little coordination.”⁴⁵⁷ Each ministry commissioned films according to their own specific dictates, and there was no national plan for the creation of films for primary and secondary school instruction. Given that such films were and would be non-commercial, the lack of coordination stunted the production of films. The growth of new offices, and also of individual users, meant that film distribution was increasingly wearing out prints: “...currently, in many numerous cases, it is materially impossible to fulfill, in our distribution, the principal element: the real needs of our users.”⁴⁵⁸

By the mid-1930s, some of those users were witnessing a decline in the quantity of material and in the degree of public interest. In its 1936 summary of activity, the Montpellier regional office explained that it had undergone “difficulties that had

⁴⁵⁶ Le Cinéma à l'École.” *L'Éducateur Proletarien* (February 1933), 269.

⁴⁵⁷ Charles Lebrun. “Conférence de M. Lebrun: L'Organisation des Cinémathèques et la Diffusion des Films d'Enseignement.” *Cinédocument* (February 1932), 133.

⁴⁵⁸ Lebrun, 135.

accumulated over the past three or four years” and that the number of users had dropped from 295 to 270. While they had managed to increase their collections slightly, they were unable to organize as many screenings as they had hoped, because they “could no longer support the operating costs (deliveries, personnel, material, etc.) that we can neither reduce nor stabilize.”⁴⁵⁹

In his *Cinéopse* column from July 1935, Collette also admitted that educational cinema was facing a crisis. “Male and female teachers,” he claimed, “accord us less of the cordial support that sustains our effort than in the past.”⁴⁶⁰ He attributed the diminishing support to a new technological feature – sound film technology. After its first appearance in France in 1929, sound films challenged the activities of the educational cinema movement in three ways: first, because sound images challenged the authority of instructors even more than did silent ones; second, they required converting the collections of the cinémathèques and regional offices; and finally, they would lead to a disenchantment for silent films among students.⁴⁶¹ In the early part of the decade, before studios and theaters had fully converted to sound, silent educational cinema had persisted. By the mid-1930s, however, French film companies had adapted their facilities and equipment to produce sound films, and they were eager to exploit this new market.⁴⁶² Yet, the diminishing amount of funding from the state, and the overall economic contraction of the Depression, meant that many regional offices simply could not afford

⁴⁵⁹ A. Gautier. “Rapport sur l’activité et le fonctionnement de l’Office durant l’année 1936.” *Documents Scolaires et Post-Scolaires* 3, no. 12 (May 1937), 3.

⁴⁶⁰ Adrien Collette. “La Crise du Cinéma Éducateur.” *Cinéopse* 17, no. 191 (1 July 1935), 153.

⁴⁶¹ Ueberschlag, *Jean Brérault*, 182.

⁴⁶² The conversion to sound was a slower process in France than in the United States or Germany, with some theaters still showing silent until 1934. French companies failed to establish their own sound technologies before they lost to foreign competition – specifically RCA and Western-Electric in the United States and Tobis Klangfilm in Germany. See Colin Crisp. *The Classic French Cinema 1930-1960* (London/Indianapolis: I.B. Tauris & Indiana University Press, 1993), 94-104.

neither the equipment nor the films.⁴⁶³ Consequently, regional offices and the Musée Pédagogique found themselves stuck with collections of aging silent films that neither students nor their parents cared to see.

The experience of the Montpellier educational cinema office indicates the extent to which the lack of sufficient funding to convert to sound diminished their activity and their enthusiasm. Many schools, they claimed, “after several tentative efforts, gave up the fight [to keep silent film]: they abandoned cinema séances.” They were unable to meet public demand for sound films because of the cost to purchase new (and expensive) sound equipment as well as new prints.⁴⁶⁴ With the switch over into sound production, however, regional offices had little choice if they wanted to maintain their collections. As a result, the Montpellier office claimed to be down to “2 or 3 clients... for 10, 15, 20 screenings.”⁴⁶⁵ For Collette, it appeared that, with some exceptions, many of the regional offices had become somnolent by mid-decade. Screenings were less attended and “the young were manifesting a sort of indifference.”⁴⁶⁶ Students, he claimed, were growing familiar with the sound films shown in their public theaters and apparently were not so keen to watch antiquated, silent images.

Conclusion

In the years between the CNAM conference of 1922 and the mid-1930s, the educational cinema movement reached a crescendo of institutional development and

⁴⁶³ The Depression hit France later than did it did in the United States, Great Britain, and Germany. It was not until the autumn of 1931 that the delayed effects provoked a prolonged economic downturn. See Julian Jackson. *The Politics of Depression in France, 1932-1936*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985.

⁴⁶⁴ Trial. “Rapport sur l’activité de la Commission Post-Scolaire de l’Office du Cinéma Éducateur pendant l’année 1935-1936.” *Documents Scolaires et Post-Scolaires* 2, no. 7 (May 1936), 3.

⁴⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 3.

⁴⁶⁶ Collette. “La Crise du Cinéma Éducateur,” 153.

activity. With the League de l'Enseignement's creation of regional offices, cineastes had a viable network of information and film distribution centers that enabled them to bring films to schools and communities. Especially through the public screenings of *cinéma éducatif*, educational cinema integrated itself into communal life. Moreover, government ministries both established their own collections and, in the case of the Public Instruction and Agriculture Ministry, provided municipalities with subventions to assist them in the purchase of equipment.

Nevertheless, the movement was also beset by limitations and contradictions that hindered many of its initiatives. Many teachers never became convinced that films could do anything more than render students passive. Government funding was never enough to offset neither the costs of equipment maintenance nor the price of rentals. Furthermore, as the government's interest began to wane, regional offices and their networks found themselves in a crisis of disorganization, worn materials and equipment and, ultimately, a concern for their own continuation with the advent of sound. Those who wanted a pure instructional cinema were distressed to find that popular education showings, which blurred the line between pedagogical and spectacle, had proven to be more popular.

Chapter 4: The Perils of Internationalism: French Educational Film and The League of Nations in the 1930s

By 1930, the educational cinema in France movement had developed into a nation-wide network of practitioners, civic associations, and support structures (regional offices, archives) that had brought films both into classrooms as instructional tools and into the public sphere as agents of “moral and civic education” through popular screenings. Despite the attendant frustrations involved with inconsistent funding and a lack of government oversight, educational cineastes were confident in the social objectives of their movement. Coissac underscored this confidence in a mid-1925 *Cinéopse* article where he proclaimed: “...we give primary place to the cinema, whose social mission affirms itself in a noble cause: the regeneration of humanity.”⁴⁶⁷

His confidence was shared not only among his French colleagues, but across other national educational movements as well. France was one of a number of countries where teachers, filmmakers, and industry figures had come together to develop networks and programs to create films for visual education.⁴⁶⁸ Extensive visual education initiatives developed especially in the United States where filmmakers worked closely with film companies, philanthropic societies, market research firms and museums to create a

⁴⁶⁷ G.M. Coissac. “La Mission Sociale du Cinéma.” *Cinéopse* 7, no. 68 (April 1925), 262.

⁴⁶⁸ See the special issue in *Film History* on non-theatrical film and especially Martina Roepke. “Tracing 17.5mm Practices in Germany (1902-1908),” Jiří Horinček. “The Institutional of Classroom Films in Czechoslovakia Between the Wars;” and, at a somewhat later period, “Celluoid Teaching Tools: Classroom Films in the Netherlands (1941-1953).” *Film History* 19, no. 4 (2007), 344-352, 384-391, and 392-400.

powerful network of financial and institutional support.⁴⁶⁹ In Germany, as Susanne Unger has shown, active debates and activity around educational cinema emerged in the pre-First World War era where pedagogues were also concerned about the potentially negative consequence of cinema, and sought to appropriate it to promote popular loyalty to the Wilhelmine state.⁴⁷⁰ These international endeavors encouraged a French professor Julien Luchaire and director of the Institut International de la Coopération Intellectuelle (IICI) [International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation], the cultural arm of the League of Nations, to advocate that the League become involved with educational film. He suggested using the French experience as a model from which to base the League's objectives and activities: building networks of repositories, creating catalogues, and encouraging the national production and international dissemination of films.

When, after bowing to Italian pressure, the League created its own Institut International du Cinématographe éducatif (IICE) [the International Institute for Educational Cinematography] in Rome, which opened in 1928, there were two discernable shifts: a gradual loss of French influence over decisions regarding educational film and the growing power of Germany and, by extension, the United States to exert their influence over technical and economic measures. Secondly, the IICE made a more concerted effort to coordinate educational cinema within the League's larger

⁴⁶⁹ See Devin Orgeron, Marsha Orgeron, and Dan Streible. "A History of Learning with the Lights Off;" Alison Griffiths. "Film Education in the Natural History Museum: Cinema Lights Up the Gallery in the 1920s;" Jennifer Peterson. "Glimpses of Animal Life: Nature Films and the Emergence of Classroom Cinema;" Heide Solbrig. "Dr. ERPI Finds His Voice: Electrical Research Products Inc. and the Educational Film Market, 1927-1937;" and Victoria Cain. "An Indirect Influence upon Industry: Rockefeller Philanthropies and the Development of Educational Film in the United States, 1935-1953." In *Learning With the Lights Off: Educational Film in the United States*. D. Orgeron, M. Orgeron, and D. Streible, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 15-66; 124-144; 145-168; 193-214; and 230-248. Geoff Alexander provides an abbreviated history of pre-Second World War educational film in *Academic Films for the Classroom: A History* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., 2010),

⁴⁷⁰ Susanne Unger. "Cultivating Audiences: Filmbildung, Moral Education, and the Public Sphere in Germany." (Ph.D. diss.: University of Michigan), 38-47.

pacifist mission. “Moral disarmament” became a corollary to the military disarmament – and educational cinema was configured within the League’s broader political objective of promoting international peace and understanding. Furthermore, the internationalist aspirations of the League were belied, at least for the French, by nationalist controversies within it.

This chapter argues that the experience of the French representatives in the League of Nations’ educational cinema bodies provoked disenchantment among themselves and their supporters for its political goals. Drawing from an extensive collection of documents and correspondence preserved at the archives of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Paris, I seek to show that as the IICE shaped educational cinema’s role to serve its mission, the French representatives, who were organized from July 1930 into one of the IICE’s national commissions, were increasingly placed in a defensive position vis-à-vis the other member states.

Paradoxically, the very “internationalizing” of the educational cinema movement made members of the French movement more aware of their *national* commercial interests. This was especially the case in two commercially critical areas: in the international adoption of a small-format film standard and in the creation of a tariff convention that would eliminate all customs duties for the international circulation of films. In both of these controversies, the French were disabused of any presumptions of preponderant influence stemming from their initial advocacy and were brought to understand that their national industry’s weakness in commercial film production vis-à-vis the United States and Germany was paralleled in the international domain as well. In

terms of film formats, they fought vigorously to defend Pathé's 17.5mm gauge film and cameras against more powerful German and American interests. Furthermore, the controversy over the creation of an international tariff convention brought up an issue that had vexed cineastes before – what constituted an educational film? What films could be classified as such? By insisting on a broad definition, the French delegation perceived their German and American counterparts as attempting to flood their already weak materials with features that were reclassified as “having an educational character.” As much as “educational film” could comprise multiple genres in public screenings, they could also serve as a Trojan horse to further weaken France's already perilous internal market.

Looking at the IICE through the lens of the French movement, then, allows us to understand how the “internationalizing” of educational cinema changed the character of the national movement. This provides a different view than those offered by the few historians who have studied most thoroughly at the League's two institutes most involved with the cinema: the IICI (from 1925 to 1929, and 1938-1940) and the IICE (1929-1937). The only scholarly monograph on the IICI, Jean-Jacques Renoliet's *L'UNESCO Oubliée* [*Forgotten UNESCO*] (1999) is a rigorous but exclusively administrative history of the organization but it does not consider the role of cinema at all. Christel Taillibert's excellent history of the IICE, *L'Institut International du cinématographe éducatif* (1999) shows how the IICE's policies and activities were influenced by the political requirements of the Fascist regime, although it has comparatively little to say about the relations that the IICE maintained among its respective national commissions.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁷¹ Jean-Jacques Renoliet. *UNESCO Oubliée: La Société des Nations et la coopération intellectuelle (1919-1946)*. Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 1999; and Christel Taillibert. *L'Institut International du*

Both books provide invaluable surveys of the broader institutional development within the League's organization without focusing on specific controversies between different national legations and their influence in their home countries. Rather, this chapter argues the League of Nations played a significant role among French cineastes in the perceptions about the meaning of educational film within an international political context. The League's efforts to construct an international network for the dissemination of films prompted two intertwined sets of responses – first, it heightened the sense of national industrial vulnerability among the French delegation and, second, it provided a larger, more propagandistic form of legitimation through cinema's integration within the League's pacifist mission. Educational cinema not only represented a new way of teaching and a new way of thinking about cognition, but now it also could serve to propagandize peace. However, the conflicts between the French and other legations reinforced their sense of vulnerability and led to disenchantment with the League's goals.

The League of Nations – Instituting an International Movement

The League's involvement with educational cinema stems from efforts among French politicians and officials to advance France's national interest through the deployment of cultural politics. As early as January 1920, Julien Luchaire (1876-1962), the *chef de cabinet* in André Honnorat's Public Instruction ministry and a former professor and school instructor, proposed that the League establish "a permanent organism for international collaboration and agreement in questions of teaching and in

cinématographe éducatif: regards sur le rôle du cinéma éducatif dans la politique internationale du fascisme italien. Paris: Harmattan, 1999. See also Zoë Druick. "The International Educational Cinematograph Institute, Reactionary Modernism, and the Formation of Film Studies." *Canadian Journal of Film Studies* 16, no. 1 (Spring 2007), 80-97.

the sciences, letters, and the arts.”⁴⁷² For Luchaire, Honnorat, and the latter’s successor, Léon Bérard, such an organization would advance French national interests by capitalizing on the nation’s profound intellectual heritage while serving to fulfill the League’s institutional mission of international understanding and “moral disarmament.” In part, Luchaire’s proposal reflected a growing belief in pacifism that emerged among French educators in the decade of the First World War.⁴⁷³ It also embodied French anxieties over France’s status within the League itself and especially over fears that Britain and a (feared) resurgent Germany would seek to marginalize French concerns over issues such as reparations. An organization devoted to cultural exchange, intellectual endeavors and educational outreach would allow France to play to its strengths and to subtly shape dialogue within the League in favor of French interests.

The ongoing reparations and Ruhr crises, British mistrust of French initiatives, and the indifference of the right-wing governing Bloc National, put such an initiative on the backburner. Neither President Poincaré nor Léon Bourgeois, president of the League’s executive council, actively pursued it. Instead, the League created an exploratory committee in January 1922, the Commission Internationale de Coopération Intellectuelle [The International Commission for Intellectual Cooperation, or CICI] to consider how the League’s cultural affairs and policies should be organized. By underfunding this committee for over two years, the League, and especially its wary

⁴⁷² Quoted in Renoliet, 14. Luchaire was the father of Jean Luchaire (1901-1946), who founded the collaboration newspaper, *Les Nouveaux Temps* and minister of the interior in Vichy’s Sigmaringen government in 1944-1945. For a brief biography of Luchaire that focuses on his work within the League, see: Laurent Broche. ”Julien Luchaire, itinéraire d’un Français faussement ‘moyen’ pendant la tourmente” *Déplacements, dérangements, bouleversement : Artistes et intellectuels déplacés en zone sud (1940-1944)*, Bibliothèque de l’Alcazar, Marseille, 3-4 juin 2005 organisé par l’Université de Provence, l’Université de Sheffield, la bibliothèque de l’Alcazar (Marseille). Pascal Mercier and Claude Pérez, eds. <http://revues.univ-provence.fr/lodel/ddb/document.php?id=83>.

⁴⁷³ Mona L. Siegel. *The Moral Disarmament of France: Education, Pacifism, and Patriotism, 1914-1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, esp. 92-122.

British contingent, successfully marginalized cultural politics. With the Bloc's fall in the May 1924 elections, however, a new radical-socialist government called the *cartel des gauches* offered to create and to help support such an organization while insuring its cosmopolitan orientation. This represented, in the view of the historian Jean-Jacques Renoliet, a tactical shift in French diplomacy away from the hardline stance which had led France into international disrepute over its handling of the Ruhr crisis toward a greater commitment to international cooperation. According to Luchaire: "in these conditions...the French government, who knows that France needs to have a strong moral influence in the world and who seeks legitimacy to strengthen its influence...believes that it can procure it much easier by loyally collaborating in the collaborating in the establishment of a solid entente between peoples..."⁴⁷⁴

Despite continued skepticism by the British and their Commonwealth representatives, the League authorized the creation of the Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle [International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation, or IICI] in September 1924, the French parliament authorizing the credits the following July. With Luchaire at its head, and an initial membership of 20 representatives (17 from European nations, plus one each from America, Chile, and Japan), the IICI set up shop near the Palais-Royal before its inauguration in January of 1926.⁴⁷⁵ If Luchaire had been the most active in promoting an office for international cultural exchange, he was no less so in his efforts to promote educational cinema to serve the office's aims. At a July 1924 CICI committee session, he presented a long report on "The Cinema in its Relation with

⁴⁷⁴ Luchaire quoted in Renoliet, 45.

⁴⁷⁵ Both the IICI and the CICI, along with different national representations, were integrated within an umbrella unit called the OCI (Organisation de Coopération Intellectuelle) in September 1931.

Intellectual Life.”⁴⁷⁶ In it, he invoked many of the same arguments used by the cinema educationalists, stressing both the astonishing growth of the industry and its uncertain social legitimacy. “Is the cinema,” his report asked rhetorically, “by its nature and by its destiny, condemned to popularization, without any scientific and social uses?”⁴⁷⁷ He then referred to the progress of the French educational cinema movement as well as the Third Republic’s involvement, signaling out Jean Comandon’s pioneering work in scientific cinema and the extra-parliamentary commission formed in 1916 under the Ministry for Public Instruction.

In so doing, Luchaire’s report sought to extend French influence by proposing that the League involve itself with the educational cinema along the same lines that the Third Republic had done previously. Educational cinema, in other words, would become a way for France to perform its self-identified cultural and moral stature within the institutions of the League. Luchaire proposed the creation of an international office of university instruction by cinema, the development of an international catalog of scientific films, the publication of its own house journal, and, like the Musée Pédagogique, the organization of an international repository of films for rental and of associated literature within a general informative services office.⁴⁷⁸ He also proposed that the League sponsor an international conference on cinema to establish international conventions on intellectual property rights, formulate a policy on taxation of educational films, and address issues of censorship.

⁴⁷⁶ Julien Luchaire. “Le Cinématographe dans ses rapports avec la vie intellectuelle.” *Procès-Verbal de la Quatrième Session*. Société des Nations: Commission de Coopération Intellectuelle, 25-29 July 1925. A. 20. 1924. XIII. UNESCO Archives.

⁴⁷⁷ Luchaire, 54.

⁴⁷⁸ Luchaire, 57-58.

The CICI exploratory commission acceded to two of Luchaire's requests. Early in 1926, it established a "service d'études cinématographiques" [Office of Cinema Studies, or SEC] under the International Institute for Intellectual Cooperation that would do the initial preparatory work for creating an international catalog of films, and they agreed to organize an international conference. These two initiatives were the first coordinated efforts directed toward building linkages between pedagogues from different member states. The SEC was tasked with developing surveys that were sent to League member states, as well as international organizations such as the Red Cross, inquiring as to the number and names of educational films.⁴⁷⁹ The Conference, held in Paris from 27 September to 3 October 1926, brought together government and cinema delegates from thirty-two nations to discuss a broad range of cinema issues, of which educational films formed a major – but not the only – part. In so doing, it encouraged international reciprocity *and* underscored France's central role if only by the numerical dominance of the French delegation. Figures like Léon Ritor reminded the participants of France's trailblazing efforts in this domain, while Édouard Herriot, the Minister for Public Instruction, invoked Louis Lumière and France's patrimony over the very creation and development of the medium.

The participants devoted themselves to expounding on the social uses of cinema and to organizational matters including establishing a common policy that called for the lifting of customs duties on educational films, developing ways to help industries finance and producing films of an educational and moral character among them. Connecting the

⁴⁷⁹ These surveys can be found in the UNESCO archives: IICI SEC B.IX.9. My research was unable to turn up an official announcement of the SEC or its mandate; information on its scope was based on an official correspondence to the head of the Deutscher Bildspeilbund, dated 2 October 1928: UNESCO IICI SEC B.IX.21.

Leagues' institution mission of international cooperation was broadly inferred without much specificity. Louis Gallié, a Parisian lawyer who also served a secretary for International Confederation of Intellectual Workers, argued that cinema "is all of humanity, who can be touched, who can be educated, with a minimum of time and effort. The small sum of human knowledge... could be diffused to all people in equal quantities; thus establishing the basis of a new equality."⁴⁸⁰ Luchaire himself asked rather dramatically, "who could measure the extent and depth of the action exercised by a film that, in a few weeks, can go around the world and that one hundred million brains regard passionately with their two hundred million eyes?"⁴⁸¹

The conference featured a commission devoted to educational film that was divided into two sub-commissions: one on instructional film (*cinema d'enseignement*), chaired by Dr. Gottlieb Imhof, a German-Swiss teacher who, as head of public instruction in Basel, had already attempted to organize an inter-European conference on the subject, the other on *cinéma d'éducation* (public educational screenings) chaired by Joseph Brenier, a French senator and member of the Ligue de l'Enseignement.⁴⁸² Together, the two sub-commissions developed over thirty resolutions between them, many of which centered on the international diffusion and exchange of educational films, creating an international center for educational films, and reducing customs duties for films classified as "educational."

They also proposed that national commissions for each participating state be formed to collect films and associated literature, that an international catalogue be

⁴⁸⁰ "Discours de M. Louis Gallié." *Compte Rendu Officiel du Congrès International du Cinématographe, Paris 27 September-3 October 1926*. (Paris: Launay et Fils, 1926), 52.

⁴⁸¹ "Discours de M. Luchaire," *Compte Rendu*, 55.

⁴⁸² On Imhof, see his letter to Coissac, dated 19 March 1926. UNESCO IICI-SEC B.IX.13.

created, and “that all the facilities of circulation, as much within national boundaries as between nations, be accorded to *cinéma d’éducation* as much as *cinéma enseignement*,”⁴⁸³ The activities the Office of Cinema Studies and the 1926 Paris conference created the framework for making educational films a medium for international dialogue and exchange. By the end of 1926, the League established an international commission to realize these different resolutions and to prepare a permanent international educational cinema office. Imhof, writing just a few months later in preparation for a follow-up meeting, underscored this point: “The problem of the *film d’enseignement* is not a local affair, nor even a national one. Only the different states coming together and working collectively will lead to a satisfying result.”⁴⁸⁴

The Challenge to French Interests: The Basel Chamber, the IICE, and Small Film Formats

The enthusiasm generated at the Paris conference left open larger questions: what was the appropriate scope of the League’s involvement in educational film? To what extent should films serve the League’s larger mission of promoting international cooperation and “moral disarmament?” Or was the League’s function mainly to coordinate information worldwide about educational cinema and facilitate their distribution? One risk that internationalization posed was to complicate an already complex series of national and regional initiatives with another layer of objectives and aspirations. An early history of the IICI criticized the Paris conference for getting bogged down in “a large confrontation of interests implicated in the development of cinema, multiple and diverse interests, who naturally often opposed each other considering their

⁴⁸³ *Compte rendu*, 166.

⁴⁸⁴ G. Imhof. “Orientation au sujet de la Conférence Européenne du Film d’Enseignement à Bâle: 2-12 Avril 1927.” UNESCO IICI SEC B.IX.13.

different economic, industrial, artistic, cultural, moral or social aspects.”⁴⁸⁵ This confusion, according to Jean-Jacques Renoliet, stemmed from Luchaire’s excessive eagerness in developing the IICI’s activities. By 1927-1928, he argues that Luchaire was being admonished by the League to “limit his activities... to avoid [public] criticism for undertaking too many things, too many different and too vast plans, at the same time.”⁴⁸⁶

This verdict would also seem to validate the concerns that Imhof had about leaving the international development of educational cinema under the purview of Luchaire, and to the League more generally. In part, this reflected ongoing German frustrations with the League. In a March 1926 letter to Coissac, written two days after the League had failed to uphold the Locarno Accords and authorize Germany’s entry, Imhof informed Coissac of his intentions not to come to Paris that autumn in part due “to the profound deception caused by the debacle at Geneva...”⁴⁸⁷ He went on to charge that the “scope was too vast, the agenda too politically charged and too vague,” and that “a truly international conference could only be realized after the entry of Germany into the League which would only happen in the autumn at the earliest.”⁴⁸⁸ In Imhof’s view, a Basel-centered conference would be preferable in that “only the question of educational film would be treated,” whereas the League’s planned conference would “certainly have two or three weeks to discuss other questions.”⁴⁸⁹

Following Germany’s admittance into the League of Nations on 8 September 1926, Imhof agreed to chair the sub-commission on instructional film. He still resisted the League’s efforts to orchestrate all international activity and organized a follow-up

⁴⁸⁵ *L’Institut International de Coopération Intellectuelle, 1925-1946* (Paris: IICI, 1947), 374.

⁴⁸⁶ Renoliet, 79.

⁴⁸⁷ Imhof to Coissac, 19 March 1926, UNESCO IICI-SEC B.IX.13

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.x

conference in Basel in April 1927 to follow up on the League's proposals to establish a workable mechanism for the international exchange of films. Instead, Imhof appears to have used the conference as a means to challenge what he saw as Luchaire's overreaching. Based on a follow-up report, Imhof claimed that he informed Luchaire that the IICI's International Commission "did not correspond in the least with the [Paris] Conference's resolutions, nor with the wishes of the different governments, or the national organizations of the different states."⁴⁹⁰ Moreover, he claimed to have told Luchaire that he not see any "possibility for establishing a European center within the confines of the [IICI]."⁴⁹¹

Rather, Imhof and other German-speaking pedagogues established a rival group, the *Chambre Européenne du Film Éducatif* [the European House for Educational Film, hereafter called the Basel group], whose statutes, compared to the perceived unwieldiness of the IICI, remained strictly focused on "the perfecting and the use of educational film, the study and the development of educational, scientific, scholarly, and social films under the different forms in which it is presented."⁴⁹² No political or religious discussions were to be permitted. As Imhof and other German-Swiss educationalists argued, the collective effort to define and advance the uses of educational cinema should be parceled out among a number of the signatory nations. In a letter to Luciano de Feo, an Italian educator and head of the Italian state film company, LUCE, Walter Gunther, Imhof's colleague and president of the Basel group, argued that his group did not want to sow confusion, but rather that they wanted to "distribute to each of the countries one part of the entire

⁴⁹⁰ G. Imhof. Report on the *Conférence européenne des films enseignement*. Basel, 2 May 1927. UNESCO IICI-SEC B.IX.13

⁴⁹¹ Imhof, *ibid.*

⁴⁹² "Statutes provisoires de la *Chambre Européenne du Film Éducatif*," [undated], 1.

domain of educational film which would be unique to them.”⁴⁹³ He then arrogated to his group the responsibility for addressing technical issues regarding film and cameras – a move that would soon have serious consequences for French interests.

Nonetheless, the French saw the formation of the Basel group as a move to marginalize Luchaire’s – and thus, French – influence over the direction of the League’s involvement in educational cinema. Although it was a private group and not affiliated with the League, its membership consisted of important figures in the German, Swiss and Austrian educational establishment to whose concerns the IICE would have to pay attention.⁴⁹⁴ French commentators were clearly concerned about the Germanophile bias of the leadership of the Basel group. A 1931 report lamented “the directorship of the Basel group is currently composed of a dozen Germans and Austrians, one Swiss-German, and one French person. It follows then that the French would continue to be represented by a small minority.”⁴⁹⁵ French influence was also challenged by the Italians, who took advantage of Luchaire’s weakening influence within the League to propose their country for the location of an entire League institute devote to educational cinema. In September 1927, following the suggestion of Alfredo Rocco, an Italian delegate to the League, Italy offered to fund and to house a separate institute on educational cinema. Supported by the Basel group, Mussolini’s government took this initiative as part of its ongoing effort to establish its international legitimacy.⁴⁹⁶ Following a year of debate and discussion, the League inaugurated its new institute – the Institut International du

⁴⁹³ Gunther to de Feo, 11 January 1928, UNESCO IICI-SEC B.IX.13.. Taillibert provides a biographical sketch of de Feo, 102-110.

⁴⁹⁴ *Cinéopse* later worried that the Chamber was acting as a front for Austrian and German interests. See “Le 3ème conference internationale du film d’enseignement.” *Cinéopse* 13, no. 140. April 1931.

⁴⁹⁵ “Note au sujet de la Chamber de Bâle.” [Dated April 1931]. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) – A.7.6.

⁴⁹⁶ See Taillibert, 68-75.

Cinématographe Éducatif [The International Institute of International Cinema] (IICE) in Rome on 5 November 1928. Luciano De Feo, the head of LUCE, became the new institute's director and the Italian government contributed an initial 600,000 liras with a commitment to provide a yearly stipend of 200,000 lire.⁴⁹⁷

Situated in a medieval Roman villa, the new institute succeeded and expanded upon the role initially assumed by the IICI's Office of Cinema Studies: it undertook to compile a worldwide catalog of educational films and to draft and to promote an international tariff convention for their free circulation. The institute's objectives, as indicated by its name, were to "to favor the production, the diffusion, and the exchange of educational films through many countries" in order to "elevate the intellectual and moral level of individuals [and]...create a solidarity of sentiments between diverse peoples."⁴⁹⁸

It also began publishing its own review in five languages in the fall 1929, *The International Review of Educational Cinematography*. The IICI's cinema office (SEC) was ultimately shuttered, and not to be revived until just before the outbreak of the Second World War. Instead, at de Feo's instigation, France, as well as other member states, formed a national committee to represent it in Rome and to effectuate IICE policy in Paris. This *Comité Français du Cinéma Éducatif* [French Committee of Educational Cinema] (CFCE) was established in May of 1930. Its membership included most of the main figures active in educational cinema. At its head was Charles Delac, the President of the *Chambre Syndicale Française de la Cinématographie*, [the industry's trade association], while Coissac and Jean Benoît-Lévy were named as associate members.

⁴⁹⁷ Taillibert, 93-95.

⁴⁹⁸ Roland Guerard. "L'institut international du Cinéma éducatif." *Cinéma*, January 1931. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) – A.3

In effect, the French had been reduced in four years from the central arbiters in developing an international cinema movement to one among many national committees-cum-interest groups. As scholars like Christel Taillibert and Zoe Druick have shown, this relative marginalization of the French committee reflected how the prerogatives of the Mussolini government ultimately shaped IICE policy. For Delac and the French delegation, the quarrels between other powers like Germany and the United States centered more on technical and economic issues rather than fascist ideology. Nevertheless, the defensive position that they increasingly found themselves in caused them to question the internationalist aspirations with which they had, under Luchaire, initially advocated for educational cinema.

One key area of contention was the ongoing controversy over film formats. The French delegation was committed to defending a particular small-gauge format for projectors and cameras: Pathé's 17.5mm that the firm had introduced in 1926 with its Pathé-Baby system. This was critical issue for the industry because, as film historians have pointed out, the entire French film industry was under financial strain by the end of the 1920s. After a failed attempt to impose stringent import quotas on American films, Herriot concluded a trade agreement with William Hays to admit seven American films for every one French production.⁴⁹⁹ Hollywood re-asserted its decade-long hegemony over French cinema screens at the very moment that, as Dimitri Vezyroglou has shown, very successful French films like Abel Gance's *Napoléon* and René Clair's *Un chapeau de paille d'Italie* were just starting to bolster the national industry out of its doldrums.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁹ Jens Ulf-Møller. *Hollywood's Film Wars with France: Film-Trade Diplomacy and the Emergence of the French Film Quota Policy*. (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2001), 100-115.

⁵⁰⁰ Dimitri Vezyroglou. *Le cinéma en France à la veille du parlant*. (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2007), esp. 99-135.

Also, the introduction of sound film forced both French film producers and exhibitors to convert their respective sectors.⁵⁰¹ No French firm, including Pathé, managed to develop a sound system that could compete with rival American and German systems, and the costs to purchase new camera and synchronization equipment and re-outfit theaters were prohibitive.

The French were, consequently, not in an advantageous position when the IICE took up the question of adopting an international standardized format for educational films and equipment. One of the main objectives formulated by the IICE in its initial years was to reduce tariff and trade barriers and standardize equipment features in order to facilitate the flow of educational films across international borders. The leading candidate was 16mm, introduced by the Eastman Company (US) and adopted by most major European nations, especially Great Britain and France.⁵⁰² The threat to France's educational markets paralleled all too well its technological disadvantages in sound technology; under the guise of international coordination and standardization, French representatives saw another effort to assert American/German technological dominance. In other words, the efforts undertaken by the League for standardizing small formats were, from the French perspective, a technopolitical effort by German and American film companies to impose their formats on France (and the world).

⁵⁰¹ Richard Abel. *French Cinema: The First Wave, 1915-1929*, 59-65; Colin Crisp. "Anarchy and Order in the Classic Cinema Industry" and Charles O'Brien. "Imported Film Technologies in French Film Making." In *The French Cinema Book*. M. Temple and M. Witt, eds. (London: BFI Publishing, 2004), 118-127, 128-136; Jacques Choukroun. *Comment le parlant a sauvé le cinéma français*. (Paris: Paris: Association française de recherche sur l'histoire du cinéma, 2007), 77-85.

⁵⁰² "L'intérêt français dans la question du cinéma éducateur." *Le Cinéma Partout et Pour Tous*, January 1932, 3. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) A.5

Small-film formats were on the agenda for the Basel group next inter-European conference at the Hague in May 1928 but the issue was not resolved.⁵⁰³ For their part, the French hosted their own “international” conference to mark the 100th anniversary of the Algerian conquest in Algiers, in April 1930, but the subject is not mentioned in its published accounts.⁵⁰⁴ It finally emerged as a point of contention at the Basel group’s international educational conference held in Vienna in May 1931. If the account in *Cinéopse* is an indication, the French were perturbed at their lack of representation: “three Frenchman, lost among three-hundred participants, mainly Germans and Austrians,” as Coissac put it.⁵⁰⁵ The Vienna conference had three main objectives: to produce an accord between Basel and the IICE, to accord official recognition to the Basel group, and to achieve recognition that the German-Swiss group held the authority over the resolution of inter-state technical disputes.⁵⁰⁶ By positioning themselves as possessing the requisite technical mastery to arbitrate controversies, the group was attempting to conceal its own technopolitical goals behind a mask of neutrality. The other, more serious, concern was formats. The French cinema press reported that most of the participants intended not to leave “without definitively fixing the international standard

⁵⁰³ Letter sent from M. Geoffray, of the Syndicat de l’Enseignement du Rhône, to Luchaire, dated 25 March 1928, provides a summary of the conference’s agenda. IICI SEC B.IX.16.

⁵⁰⁴ The conference was not sponsored by the CFCE, but by a “Commission du cinématographe scolaire” that was largely composed of municipal councilors and school officials including, inevitably, Léon Riator. His *Rapport* indicates that the participants were mainly concerned about increasing funding to France’s central educational film repository, the Musée Pédagogique, and the functioning and extension of regional depots – hardly matters of international concern. See Riator, *Rapport sur le Congrès de l’activité internationale du cinématographe éducateur*. Conseil Municipal de Paris, no. 41, 1930. UNESCO IICE CFCE A.8., box 3. For summaries, see “Le Congrès International du Cinéma éducateur d’Alger.” *Cinéopse*, May 1930, 245; and Émile Roux-Parassac. “Le Congrès d’Alger/L’Office Cinématographique d’Enseignement et d’Éducation de Paris.” *Ciné-Magazine*, June 1930, 63.

⁵⁰⁵ G.-Michel Coissac. “La Troisième Conférence Internationale du Film d’Enseignement.” *Cinéopse*, July 1931, 324.

⁵⁰⁶ “Le Troisième Congrès International du Film d’Enseignement à Vienne.” *La Cinématographie Française*, 6 June 1931, 12.; “3e Congrès International à Vienne.” *Cinéma-Éducation*, no. 1, 15 September 1931, 3. The text of the agreement can be found in UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) A.8.8.

for small-film formats,” and, more dauntingly, that “Germans, Swiss, Austrians, Americans, Danes, and Dutch would opt for 16mm.”⁵⁰⁷ Against this, the small French contingent argued vociferously that adopting any one particular standard would unduly favor specific national interests and advocated for allowing a variety of film formats. Following what was apparently a heated debate, the participants decided to table the matter until Easter, 1932, and the conference issued a statement declaring that the participants were “firmly persuaded that it is absolutely necessary to adopt a standard format that corresponds to the technical, methodical, and hygienic needs of educational cinema.”⁵⁰⁸ This was, at the very least, a French concession to the German argument for an international standard.

As a result of the Vienna conference, the 17.5mm gauge and the Pathé-Rural camera-film-projector technical system that supported it was reframed as a matter of national economic defense against an opposing combination of powerful foreign interests. With the IICE’s recognition of the Basel group and its agreement to defer to its technical questions, and with the clear alignment of countries in favor of 16mm, the Vienna Conference only furthered weakened France’s already defensive position. Even the amiable Coissac sounded a bitter note: “The Rome Institute officially declared that it will call on cinema technicians to treat technical issues. One should not conclude that the Basel group should completely annex this for itself.”⁵⁰⁹ Ongoing French complaints produced a testy reply from de Feo. “It is extremely regrettable,” he wrote to Jean Benoît-Lévy, “that an erroneous and non-existent interpretation of the IICE’s actions in its

⁵⁰⁷ “Le Troisième Congrès International du Film d’Enseignement à Vienne,” 12.

⁵⁰⁸ “3e Congrès International à Vienne.” *Cinéma-Éducation*, no. 1, 15 September 1931, 3

⁵⁰⁹ G.-Michel Coissac. “La Troisième Conférence Internationale du Film d’Enseignement.” *Cinéopse*, July 1931, 325.

exchanges with the Basel group had been able to give birth to the idea that the Vienna accords and successive agreements had meant that Basel was consider the or only committee of experts.”⁵¹⁰

The agreement merely indicated, in de Feo’s interpretation, that members of the Basel group’s technical commission could serve on the corresponding bodies in the IICE. The intention was to give the IICE accessibility to the broader array of technical experts, and not to give Basel any undue influence over technical matters, especially given that “the IICE knows and has known perfectly well that a number of countries are not represented at the [Basel].”⁵¹¹ *Cinéma-Éducation* faulted the French state for its weak promotion and defense of Pathé’s 17.5mm system. First, the state had provided insufficient subventions to allow educators to adopt the system nationwide and second, it had not created an approved list of small-gauge formats, allowing too many to confuse the educational market.⁵¹² “In no other country but France,” the author rather melodramatically put it, “have manufacturers made such a consideration and intelligent effort in educational and rural cinema. And in no other great country has the government demonstrated such ingratitude and disinterest to this group of interests.”⁵¹³

An early 1932 editorial in *Le Cinéma Partout et Pour Tous* cast the format issue in terms of anxieties over Germany: “the Rome Institute [IICE] has reserved for the Basel group – a *private* organization with Germanophile tendencies – the exclusive right to

⁵¹⁰ Letter from de Feo to Benoît-Lévy, dated 3 December 1931. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.8.8.

⁵¹¹ De Feo to Benoît-Lévy, 1.

⁵¹² Marcel Colin-Reval. “La Question du Format: Où en sommes-nous?” *Cinéma-Education*, no. 2, November 1931, 1. Not everyone thought the proliferation of formats a terrible thing. Writing in *Cinéopse*, Emile Roux-Parassac, one of the original “apostles” for educational cinema, argued that certain formats worked better in specific contexts than others, and that the commercial rivalry helped in small-format’s technological development. See Roux-Parassac. “La Guerre des Formats.” *Cinéopse*, February 1932, 93.

⁵¹³ Colin-Reval, 1.

issue directives on technical matters in international educational cinema.”⁵¹⁴ And, they claimed that Basel wanted to make 16mm the international small-format standard not only because German camera manufacturers had adopted it, but also because the large film stock producer, AGFA, was a major German commercial interest. Imhof responded to these insinuations of German favoritism by pointing out that all major nations including the United States used 16mm and would have been able to vote on the issue had one been called for. In that case, “the Pathé-Rural would have stood no chance if it had come to a vote.”⁵¹⁵ Somewhat disingenuously, Imhof also claimed that Basel had no specific stake in any particular format and had no interest in dictating to commercial markets. Thus, Imhof and the Basel group managed to pose as neutral technical arbiters resisting the particularistic interests of French manufacturers. Moreover, Imhof claimed that the largely Germanic composition of the Basel group was due to a lack of interest among French pedagogues in their work: “rather than stupid reproaches about ‘Germanophilic tendencies, your compatriots would do better to increase your numbers in our organization.”⁵¹⁶

As it turned out, no agreement on an international small-format standard occurred during the Easter of 1932, and the issue was completely resolved for another four years.⁵¹⁷ Although what happened in early 1932 remains obscure, it is certain that French

⁵¹⁴ L’intérêt français dans la question du cinéma éducateur,” *Le Cinéma Partout et Pour Tous*, January 1932, 1. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) A.5

⁵¹⁵ “La Chambre de Bâle définit son but et regrette l’abstention des Pédagogues français.” *Cinéma-Education*, 15 May 1932, 1.

⁵¹⁶ *Ibid*, 1.

⁵¹⁷ An unwillingness to confront this issue marked French cineastes even after Vienna. In September, 1931, the Cinémathèque de la Ville de Paris and Joseph Brenier, who as undersecretary for Technical Education established the first regulations for employing cinema in classrooms in 1923, sponsored a national conference in Paris. In neither the program nor the extant summaries is the issue of small format film even mentioned. See the program for the *Congrès National du Cinéma Éducatif, Paris: 28-29-30 September 1931*, and post-conference summaries in UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.7.7.

industrial interests were firmly opposed to any solution that settled on a single format. “Keeping the question open” was a way for French manufacturers and their national legation at the IICE to postpone the inevitable. In November, 1932, Émile Roux-Parassac published a technical comparison between 16mm and 17.5mm in which he said of the latter that “it was born in France and is claimed by our country like a national front.”⁵¹⁸ If so, it was a national front versus an international consortia unified around the Eastman format. Increasingly, French manufacturers were increasingly forced to accept this hard truth. At a November 1932, meeting of French industry’s trade group, its president admitted, before tabling the issue, that “Kodak has the 16mm format that it isn’t going to abandon, Pathé the 17.5 mm, and I am not even speaking of the Pathé-Baby, which has 9 mm which they’re going to give up either. I feel we’re in for a lot of problems.” After Jean Benoît-Lévy admitted that there was not anything they could do about the situation, another participant responded that if the situation wasn’t resolved soon “there will no longer be any instructional films.”⁵¹⁹

At the very moment that the industry was lamenting France’s weak position vis-à-vis small format *silent* films, American firms were moving swiftly to impose a 16mm sound film as the international standard that would allow them to consolidate control of the small-format market. In this, they had an even stronger hand to play than against rival silent formats: American sound film and technology had quickly imposed themselves as the predominant technical systems in Western Europe. In 1931-1932, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and the Society for Motion Picture Engineers (SMPE) developed normalized dimensions for 16mm sound film. These were published in the

⁵¹⁸ Émile Roux-Parassac. “Le Film de Format Réduit.” *Cinéopse*. September 1932, 336.

⁵¹⁹ *Chambre Syndicale du Cinématographie: Réunion du 26 Nov. 1932* (mimeographed meeting notes). UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.7.5.

SMPE's journal in November 1932 and were adopted by the SMPE's Normalization Committee the following spring.⁵²⁰ Despite some differences with the SMPE, the German technical journal *Die Kinotechnik* published their own 16mm sound film specifications in March, 1933, which were similar enough to permit the Americans to claim their norms as the international standard.

In a series of IICE-sponsored conferences and meetings in 1934, the French were forcefully disabused of any lingering hope of defending 17.5mm against the more powerful technical systems of American and German corporations. Each conference demonstrated a further erosion of the French position. The first was held in Rome, in April 1934, and was the IICE's largest, and ultimately last, conference on international educational cinema.⁵²¹ While the Rome Conference covered an extensive range of issues, its technical commission was charged with formulating IICE policy on small-format film. The commission reaffirmed the desire of the institute that "the unification of small formats would be one of the most effective means of promoting education by cinema more generally and the diffusion of educational film," and mentioned that no accord had yet been reached despite several years' effort.⁵²² The commission called for a resolution to this problem by August. A follow-up meeting was held in Baden-Baden that May, presided by the President of the Reichsfilmkammer, that brought together representatives from the U.S., Great Britain, Germany, France, and Italy. The participants agreed to

⁵²⁰ Alfred N. Goldsmith. "Normalisation de films parlants 16mm." In *IX Congrès International de Photographie: Scientifique et Appliquée. Paris – Juillet 1935*. L.P. Clerc, ed. (Paris: Éditions de la Revue d'Optique théorique et instrumentale, 1936), 655-666. For the way in which synchronized sound technologies abetted the corporate consolidation of media markets, see Steve J. Wurtzler. *Electric Sounds: Technological Change and the Rise of Corporate Mass Media*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007.

⁵²¹ See Taillibert, 289-302. A brief summary of these conferences can be found in an internal CFCE reported dated December 1934 in UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) A.3.

⁵²² *Le Congrès International du Cinéma d'Éducation et d'Enseignement – Rome 1934*. (Rome: IICE, 1934), 34-35. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) A.8, folder 1.

adopt 16mm as a single international format despite French opposition and scheduled a meeting of the IICE's Technical and Consultative Committee the following month in Stresa to work out the technical details.⁵²³

At Stresa, technical experts from the four European countries elaborated a more complete accord on 16mm. They recommended that the IICE adapt most of the SMPE standards for 16mm sound film, except for the placement of the sound band on the right side of the film image, which would mimic 35mm, instead of following the SMPE's 16mm standard of placing the sound band on the left side.⁵²⁴ This decision led to some rancor between the Germans and the Americans that Delac tried to leverage into keeping the issue of small-format films open. With the American victory at Stresa, Delac pressed de Feo to keep the issue open as a means of defending European interests against American high-handedness. "I perfectly understand your situation," de Feo told him at the beginning of July. "However, it would be worth our while to know if it's even worth to take whatever action is possible to attain one goal..."⁵²⁵ This "one goal" appeared to be getting the Americans to take a second-look at their 16mm system and either make the modifications in the sound band or to examine yet again the comparative value of each film format. While De Feo duly sent letters to the U.S. Embassy, Bernard Natan, head of Pathé-Natan, went to the United States to attempt to achieve "clarity" with his American compeers.⁵²⁶

⁵²³ For the Baden-Baden meeting, see Goldsmith, 658, and DeFeo's letter to M.C. Lebrun, head of the Musée Pédagogique, 1 June 1934. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.13.29. Bernard Natan, head of Pathé-Natan (the new conglomerate name since 1929), was apparently expected but conspicuously absent from the Baden-Baden meeting. See letter from De Feo to Delac, 1 June 1934. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.13.29.

⁵²⁴ "Resolution des Quatres Experts." [undated]. IICE CFCE (Cor) A.13.29.

⁵²⁵ De Feo to Delac, 10 July 1934. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) – A.13.29.

⁵²⁶ De Feo to Delac, 10 July 1934. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) – A.13.29.

In October, de Feo received the American response in the form of a letter from the Society of Motion Picture Engineers. The Americans were adamant that they were not going to adapt their 16mm sound films to match the Stresa recommendations, let alone re-open the issue over an international standard. Given the already high quantity of equipment and film produced by American manufacturers, “nothing justifies the demand that our industries scrap useful and satisfactory standards, at considerable and inconvenient cost.”⁵²⁷ As for the IICE’s notion that it should set standards for American manufacturers, the SMPE declared that “we do not agree with your procedures, and it is rather by an amicable gesture that we have participated – through the intermediary of our national representative – in the Institute’s discussions rather than by any conviction that the process was desirable or practicable.”⁵²⁸

Delac empathized with de Feo after his rough treatment by Hollywood, and the Italian responded with an assertive defense of an “European [i.e., Stresa] standard” sound 16mm technology and by emphasizing European concessions to American concerns at both Baden-Baden and Stresa in the name of unity. Yet, he could give little comfort to French concerns: “...the three most important countries, that is England, Germany, and Italy have adopted the 16mm format while another great nation, France, has adopted another – 17.5mm – but not in an integral fashion; is it possible to do anything?”⁵²⁹ Here again, the failure of the French government to standardize 17.5mm within their own national markets gave de Feo the excuse he needed to deflect the pressure exercised on him by Delac. The IICE would champion a “European standard” 16mm over the SMPE’s, but would not re-open the question of film formats.

⁵²⁷ Goldsmith to De Feo, 5 October 1934, UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) – A.13.29

⁵²⁸ Goldsmith to De Feo, 5 October 1934, UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) – A.13.29

⁵²⁹ De Feo to Delac, 30 October 1934, UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) – A.13.29.

Frustration over the ongoing marginalization of 17.5mm produced a reaction in the French cinema press in late 1934. The ongoing economic depression, the rise of Hitler, and the growth of right-wing political agitation at home had soured many on the internationalist mission of the League.⁵³⁰ An upsurge in nationalistic rhetoric infused discourse in the cinema journals as well, and increasingly articles increasingly questioned the desirability of international efforts. Internationalizing education was an illusion, according to one writer from *Ciné-Comoedia*, because “education begins for the individual within the family, and within scholarly collectivities for the nation.”⁵³¹ Other articles reminded readers that there was still confusion among small-formats within their own national market and that the Ministry of Education itself had not adopted a single small-format standard.⁵³² An editorial in *Filma* argued that it would be more worthwhile to create exchanges between “the Pas-de-Calais and the Dordogne, between the Finistère and the Var” than it would be to facilitate international flows.⁵³³ Charles Lebrun, head of the Musée Pédagogique, sponsored a meeting in early December where the accords – or *désaccords* – of Baden-Baden and Stresa were publicly discussed with Lebrun himself taking a publicly neutral position on the controversy.⁵³⁴

Although the press campaign didn’t alter the League’s decision, it did have the effect of attenuating de Feo’s sympathies. In a tense letter to Delac, the IICE director remarked that while he recognized British, German and American frustration with the

⁵³⁰ On the political right in France, see Robert Soucy. *French Fascism: The Second Wave 1933-1939*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

⁵³¹ Anon. “Unification des formats réduits?” *Ciné-Comoedia*, 17 November 1934. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) – C.10.

⁵³² “La Bataille des formats.” [source illegible]. 21 December 1934. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) – C.10.

⁵³³ Anon. “A propos des formats réduits.” *Filma*, January 1935, 3. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) – C. 10.

⁵³⁴ Jean Valmont. “La Bataille des formats.” *Ciné-Comoedia*, 8 December 1934. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) – C.10. A circular from the meeting exists in the UNESCO archives: UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) – C.10. For Lebrun’s position, see his “Cinéma éducateur et format réduit.” *Manuel Général de l’Instruction Primaire*, 29 December 1934, 290.

Institute for acting on France's behalf after the conferences had apparently settled the issue, he could no longer understand "France, and certain French elements who have known well how things have transpired to the contrary and still accuse the IICE of pushing this issue to the side."⁵³⁵ He reminded Delac that the French had agreed to the principle of unanimity, that Natan had declared himself willing to convert to 16mm "in exchange for compensation from German and American companies," and that he would completely refuse "a new convocation of the responsible IICE organs in order to remake a decision, and that we all know what that decision would be."⁵³⁶

Two weeks later, De Feo angrily responded to another series of press attacks that he characterized as "insinuations, well or poorly disguised...that are susceptible to provoking the thought that the IICE has taken a position contrary to the interests of France, while the most honest reader would be obliged to recognize that the IICE has compelled itself to deal with purely particular French interests."⁵³⁷ Now, De Feo accused Delac, as head of the IICE's French delegation, of failing to produce a clear communiqué of France's support of 16mm at the Rome Conference and this time spelled out in no uncertain terms that "I receive almost everyday, from different countries, letters emanating from official milieus whose message is that their competent authorities have chosen 16mm UNANIMOUSLY. And note well that, for the most part, these countries are importers of machines and films."⁵³⁸

The efforts of Delac and the French cinema press to defend Pathé's 17.5mm system ended up isolating France within the IICE. As late as the spring 1935, the IICE's

⁵³⁵ De Feo to Delac, 27 November 1934. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) – A.13.29.

⁵³⁶ De Feo to Delac, 27 November 1934. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) – A.13.29.

⁵³⁷ De Feo to Delac, 10 December 1934, UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) – A.13.29.

⁵³⁸ De Feo to Delac, 10 December 1934, UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) – A.13.29.

Executive Committee noted that negotiations to resolve the dispute had failed.⁵³⁹ By then the press was beginning to recognize and accept the inevitable. *Ciné-Journal* published an editorial that argued in favor of 16mm as a commercial standard, and the following month, Jean Brérault, the educational filmmaker, argued that a standardized format would save the regional offices the necessity of possessing multiple copies of the same film and called on the French government to officially adopt one.⁵⁴⁰ French officials were gradually forced to admit defeat. In June 1935, the French delegation under Delac finally endorsed 16mm.⁵⁴¹ Following their capitulation, other French associations and organizations fell into line. The French national federation of amateur cineastes also adopted 16mm exclusively.⁵⁴² That October, the Ministry of Education published a circular stating that it would only subsidize the purchase of 35mm and 16mm equipment and films, and was to produce a list of approved equipment for the summer of 1936.⁵⁴³ Finally, in September, 1936, an international conference was sponsored jointly by the IICE and the American Standards Association in Budapest to reconcile the controversy between IICE-backed “European” 16mm format and the one demanded by the

⁵³⁹ “Au Comité Exécutif de Rome.” *Cinéma-Éducation*, March 1935, 9.

⁵⁴⁰ Anon. “Le 16m/m: Un Peu de Logique, S.V.P.” *Ciné-Journal* 29.1244. 25 March 1935, 1; Jean Brérault. “A Propos des Formats Réduits.” *Cinéma-Éducation*, April 1935, 8-9.

⁵⁴¹ Edmond Epardaud. “La Victoire du 16 m/m.” *Revue du Cinéma Éducateur*, July-September 1935. [Clipping – UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) – C.10]. A detailed report on the Cinema Educational Offices plans to produce and distribute films in 16mm can be found in: “Rapport sur la réalisation d’un programme de productions pédagogiques et éducatives en format intermédiaire réparti entre les grandes régions.” *Revue du Cinéma Éducateur*, July-September 1935. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) – C.10.

⁵⁴² “M. Raymond Bricon: Président de la Fédération des Cinéastes Amateurs se prononce pour le 16 m/m.” *Revue du Cinéma Éducateur*, May-July 1936, 10.

⁵⁴³ M.-C. Lebrun. “La crise du cinéma-éducateur.” *Manuel Général de l’Instruction Primaire*, 4 April 1936, 524.

Americans.⁵⁴⁴ The American standard prevailed: the sound band would be placed on the left side of the frame – and there would be no European 16mm sound format.⁵⁴⁵

The controversy between the French 17.5mm system and the American 16mm system both isolated France vis-à-vis its rivals in the IICE, and served to remind them that educational film was victim to the same commercial pressures as other forms of technology like sound systems. If anything, their experiences taught them that the French position in educational film paralleled their nation's weakened commercial viability – that American and German interests were not only pushing back, they were also demonstrating their superior technological competence. As their trade press response over the 16mm controversy made clear, the internationalist mission of the League was recast in *national* terms, primarily as a front in the defense of the beleaguered industry. Moreover, as Lebrun soberly noted, the long-delayed decision by the state to adopt 16mm meant that libraries and cinémathèques would have to wait to purchase replacement copies and equipment since the manufacturers needed time to convert.⁵⁴⁶ Ultimately the Musée Pédagogique would publish a booklet with the approved manufacturers and models – the only two approved formats were 16mm and 35mm and, perhaps in a bit of pique, only French projectors were listed.⁵⁴⁷

If the format controversy represented a technopolitical conflict, a second, nearly concurrent one, centered on the very definition of an “educational film.” Once the IICE formulated its mission to use educational films as a form of “moral disarmament” and to

⁵⁴⁴ A summary of the Budapest conference can be found in the Director's report to the IICE's Administration Council, dated December 1937, 5-7. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) A.3.

⁵⁴⁵ “L'Adoption du Standard américain pour Films sonores 16 m/m.” [Journal name illegible]. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) – C.10.

⁵⁴⁶ Lebrun. “La crise du cinéma éducateur,” 524.

⁵⁴⁷ Musée Pédagogique. *Les appareils de projection pour l'usage scolaire et post-scolaire*. No. 24. Paris Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale. 1938. AN F60/301.

promote an international tariff convention for their free circulation, French officials and educators became both increasingly uneasy about allowing “foreign” films into their classrooms and, paradoxically, became more nationalistic about the representation of France abroad. If the 16mm controversy reminded them of their unfavorable international position, the League’s political ambition for educational film encouraged a broader conceptualization of “education.”

Moral Disarmament and The French Fight Over Tariffs

The conflict between France and other member states over film formats was not the only way in which internationalization transformed educational cinema in the 1930s. Another was in the way that the IICE gradually redefined the use of educational cinema through the League of Nations’ large institutional mission of disarmament. As one of its central objectives since its inception in 1920, disarmament had – during the League’s first decade – had specifically meant encouraging nations to reduce or at least scale back their arsenals following the carnage of the First World War.⁵⁴⁸ During the course of that decade, however, ‘disarmament’ also acquired another sense: a commitment to mutual international understanding through intellectual and cultural exchange. Moral disarmament as it was then called formed, as Mona Siegel has shown, a new ideological consensus among the ranks of the French educational establishment, and became a key tenet in Socialist and pacifist movements in the 1920s.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁸ F.S. Northedge. *The League of Nations: Its Life and Times, 1920-1946*. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986), esp. 113-136.

⁵⁴⁹ Mona Siegel. *The Moral Disarmament of France: Education, Pacifism, and Patriotism, 1914-1940*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 92-122.

The belief that intellectuals, savants, and cultural producers could promote international understanding had a pre-war trajectory, dating to the “international education” councils established in various European states from the 1880s.⁵⁵⁰ These councils emerged at the same time as the category of “intellectual” was initially established, especially in France, as individuals who possessed the educational and cultural authority to engage in public discourse on political matters.⁵⁵¹ As Martha Hanna has shown, during the Great War many of these intellectuals submerged their cosmopolitan sympathies in support of the French national war effort.⁵⁵² At this same moment, the cinema was demonstrating for the first time its potential and effectiveness as a instrument for mass persuasion and public mobilization.⁵⁵³ Following the war, those who supported educational film focused on immediate concerns – training, job placement – and as an aide to instruction and popular “cultivation” rather than patriotic films about national sacrifice or heroism. Overt film propaganda, such as had occurred during the First World War, was associated afterwards by cineastes with social hygiene films, specifically those involved in anti-tuberculosis and anti-venereal campaigns.⁵⁵⁴

In the initial formation of the IICI in 1920-1921, the proposals first introduced by Julien Luchaire sought to create a supranational organization for intellectual exchanges. Cinema was not considered as a means for actively promoting peace and disarmament. Instead, the new organization would appeal to a shared sense of cosmopolitanism to re-forging links severed during the war. It was not, therefore, until Luchaire presented his July

⁵⁵⁰ Renoliet, 12.

⁵⁵¹ Christophe Charle. *Naissance des 'intellectuelles': 1880-1900*. Paris: Éditions du Minuit, 1990.

⁵⁵² Martha Hanna. *The Mobilization of Intellect: French scholars and writers during the Great War*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996.

⁵⁵³ Laurent Véra. *La Grande Guerre au Cinéma de la gloire à la mémoire*. (Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 2008), 11-85.

⁵⁵⁴ Virginie De Luca Barrusse. “Pro-Natalism and Hygienism in France, 1900-1940. The Example of the Fight Against Venereal Disease.” *Population* 64.3 (July-September 2009), 477-506.

1924 memorandum for an international bureau for educational cinema that the League even took notice. Yet, the particular *role* cinema was to fulfill within the larger mission of the League took time to articulate. There was a general sense that circulating films internationally would promote cosmopolitanism, but it remained a rather generalized idea. Neither in the Luchaire 1924 report nor in the speeches of the 1926 Paris conference was a specific argument made that connected cinema to “moral disarmament.”

At the 1926 conference, Luchaire described the suggestive power of mass persuasion and reminded his auditors of the significant French efforts to integrate into the educational system. Other speakers made references to international understanding, although these sentiments were expressed in fairly general terms without referencing “moral disarmament.” Even Luchaire did little, in his conference address, than repeat his 1924 report and declare rather vaguely that the medium “merits all the attention of those who are preoccupied with the intellectual destiny of humanity.”⁵⁵⁵ The statutes of the Rome Institute, moreover, declared that its mission was “to favor the production, the diffusion, and the exchange of educational films across different countries...” but made no mention of any purpose *beyond* these instrumental goals.⁵⁵⁶

Thus, the explicit connection of educational cinema to “moral disarmament” only occurred in the post-1928 (and post-Kellogg-Briand pact) era following the creation of the IICE. By the time the first issue of the *International Review of Educational Cinematography* appeared, in July 1929, its introductory article drew explicit connections between the psychological influence of cinema and the League’s institutional aims. A

⁵⁵⁵ “Discours de M. Luchaire.” *Compte Rendu Officiel du Congrès International du Cinématographe: Paris, 27 September-3 October 1926*. (Paris: Launay & Fils, 1926), 54.

⁵⁵⁶ See Article 2 of the Statut Organique. *Institut International du Cinématographe Éducatif*. (Rome: L’Universale Tipografia Foliglotta, 1928), 8.

French author, Louis-Dop, asserted that “all pictures possess an instructive force... if the films produced and presented to the public have for their object the elevation of the intellectual and moral level of the individual, it follows that the film exerts in this way its educational mission and contributes largely to create a solidarity of sentiment amongst the different peoples.”⁵⁵⁷ Without directly stating it, the article invoked the notion of *éducation* – moral and cultural instruction – and joins it to the cause of international understanding. Too often, Louis-Dop claimed, crowds go to movies that “deviate from the path leading to the general education of peoples.” It was therefore incumbent upon national states to recognize “the high educational and moral power possessed by the new organization [IICE] to develop sentiments of international solidarity and pacification amongst the peoples by means of a deeper reciprocal knowledge of their customs, traditions, and their way of thought and of living.”⁵⁵⁸

After stepping down as head of the IICI in July 1930, Luchaire wrote a book-length defense of *Le Désarmement Moral*, published in 1932. In this treatise, he argued that, in the age of democracy, public opinion had become dangerous because “is it always so exaggerated, and creates a false appreciation of events...”⁵⁵⁹ In the never-ending “war of opinion,” one had to have recourse to techniques of hidden persuasion in order to cool the dangerous fires of nationalism that, in the midst of the Depression, were again flaring up. “*Only the psychological conditions of the masses* [his italics],” he continued, “*allow the best chance for any invitation to hostility to be followed.*”⁵⁶⁰ Consequently, it was up to governments and the producers of mass culture to create an intellectual climate where

⁵⁵⁷ Louis-Dop. “The Role and The Purpose of the International Educational Cinematographic Institute.” *International Review of the Educational Cinematography* 1:1 (July 1929), 20-21.

⁵⁵⁸ Louis-Dop, 22.

⁵⁵⁹ Julien Luchaire. *Le Désarmement Moral*. (Paris: Librairie Valois, 1932), 27.

⁵⁶⁰ Luchaire, 28.

cosmopolitanism and pacifism were even thinkable. In a sense, Luchaire argued for forging an international form of *cinéma d'éducation* (although extended to other mass cultural forms), through which cinematic cultivation would produce these hoped-for greater affinities between peoples. "In truth," he asserts, "*we have to take up every element through diverse educational subject toward a new conception of social life, and insure that they are presented in a fashion that humanity learns clearly that it is an organism in formation, not a multiplicity of contesting organisms.*"⁵⁶¹ He defined this plan as a concerted propaganda effort and argued that the League should commit all its resources to it.

As early as 1929, the IICE also began to investigate the influence that films had over children. In one of its first tasks was to distribute an international survey to educational officials to assess the effects that films had on children viewers.⁵⁶² As some of the respondents noted, the survey asked an absurd number of questions that were nearly impossible to answer, including whether pregnant women who being "seized in the cinema by fright, by any kind of crisis, or by morbid hilarity" produced children who were 'marked by bodily or psychic defects.'⁵⁶³ Others asked whether children experienced nervous reflectiveness or visual resistance, and asked respondents to estimate how long the "distinct consciousness of effective attention to the stimulation of the cinematographic image last uninterruptedly" in young viewers.⁵⁶⁴ Respondents reported that cinema had an influence on children's' behavior at home and at school and

⁵⁶¹ Luchaire, 132.

⁵⁶² *The Social Aspects of Cinema*. Rome: IICE, 1930.

⁵⁶³ Maurice Rouvroy. "Draft Questionnaire." In *The Social Aspects of Cinema*. (Rome: IICE, 1930), 8.

⁵⁶⁴ Rouvroy, 9.

that children displayed a “motor suggestivity” in response to particular scenes.⁵⁶⁵ In another study, the IICE examined the effect of war films on Italian children. The report noted that over 86% of the children favored war following the screenings. The researcher concluded that this was due to children’s inability to reason, their “innate” disposition to heroism and altruistic action, and lack of knowledge about actual conflict.⁵⁶⁶

The presumed influence that war films had in spurring nationalist sentiment gave the IICE a moral impetus for promoting their own propaganda in favor of peace. For example, when the IICE prepared a long report for the League in advance of the 1932 Disarmament Conference, they argued that cinema could serve as a vehicle for cosmopolitanism because it was “a really expressive and synthetic thought form” that was capable of “appealing to different peoples in every clime and of creating in them an identical conception of life by arousing in one and all the same sentimental, moral, and political reactions, implying identical influences on their code of morality, habits, and general attitude towards life.”⁵⁶⁷ The IICE recommended that the League frame their educational cinema agenda in terms of five items that would reconcile and overcome nationalist sentiments: mutual comprehension, objective and accurate knowledge of peoples through “authentic” documents, respect for each nation’s politics, respect for their “natural” history, and the distribution of films “showing objectively... in a documentary or dramatic form, the general or special lines for the actual establishment of

⁵⁶⁵ Sante de Sanctis. “An Answer to Maurice Rouvroy’s Questionnaire.” In *Social Aspects*, 13-16.

⁵⁶⁶ G. de Feo. *Les Impressions des Jeunes sur les films de guerre*. Rome: IICE (no date).

⁵⁶⁷ IICE. “The Cinematograph and Moral Disarmament,” dated April 15, 1932. UNESCO IICI CICI Conf. D/C.D.M./6.. For a discussion on the role of the Disarmament Conference on articulating the League’s media initiatives, see Kaarle Nordenstreng & Tarja Seppä. “The League of Nations and the Mass Media: The Rediscovery of a Forgotten Story.” Unpublished manuscript, 1986: http://www.uta.fi/laitokset/tiedotus/laitos/The_League_of_Nations_and_the_Mass_Media.pdf

peace.”⁵⁶⁸ Nevertheless, their report also stressed cultural specificities, emphasizing the ethnographic value of documentary over dramatic films in the representation of non-Europeans. The authors asserted that the representation of these peoples and their cultures would engender a feeling of mutual sympathy, even though most such films provided only a partial and slanted account. “The ideal,” it went on, “would be wholly international cinema news, giving representations of the life and activities of the different countries...if such filmed material can be collected and placed at the disposal of all selectors of filmed news... a very big step forward would be taken along the road of mutual understanding.”⁵⁶⁹

These existent preparatory papers show how the IICE and, ultimately, the League used the argument of “moral disarmament” both to secure their role as the international arbiter for the production and circulation of educational films, *and* to re-shape it within its own institutional objectives. In essence, the IICE internationalized the crime film/educational film dichotomy that had been used as a legitimation argument in post-war France. War films were the new crime films. They were defined as those that produced a negative suggestivity in young viewers. Consequently, censorship and control of such films would correspond with the production of “good” films stressing cosmopolitanism and mutual understanding across cultures. After the IICE submitted their report, the League’s Committee for Moral Disarmament developed their position on educational films in their meeting outlines. They defined one their main goals as the “prevention of the exhibition of films liable to create reactions contrary to the spirit of

⁵⁶⁸ Ibid, 8.

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid, 22.

international understanding, or to inspire contempt for foreigners...”⁵⁷⁰ The commission also agreed with its preparatory committee over the desirability to production educational films, and, in the draft resolution that the committee finally prepared, they sought enjoin the member states to take up the issue of the lowering the tariffs as “the means of facilitating the circulation of educational films between countries, in particular by the abolition of custom barriers.”⁵⁷¹ “Moral disarmament,” thus, provided both a rationale and legitimation for the ambitions of the League to regulate and coordinate what was, after all, the commercial activity of private industries, *and* to re-frame educational cinema with the more avowedly political purpose.

Although the Disarmament Conference famously ended in failure, the League held another more cinema-specific conference on the international circulation of educational films in October 1933, which produced a draft of a convention that would provide exemptions from tariffs for “films of an international educational character produced by concerns or institutions established in the territory of one of the High Contracting Parties.”⁵⁷² Although the French delegate, René Massigli, signed the convention, supporters of the convention faced a protracted struggle for its approval by the French government. This is especially interesting since much of the French press supported the idea of moral disarmament and advocated for the free circulation of

⁵⁷⁰ League of Nations. Committee for Moral Disarmament. “Aspects of the activity of the intellectual co-operation organisation considered from the point of view of Moral Disarmament.” Meeting notes, dated April 22, 1932. UNESCO IICI CICI Conf. D/C.D.N./9a.

⁵⁷¹ League of Nations. Committee for Moral Disarmament. “Preliminary Draft Text Regarding Moral Disarmament.” UNESCO IICI CICI Conf. D/C.D.N./15.

⁵⁷² League of Nations. *Convention for Facilitating the International Circulation of Films of an Educational Character*. (Geneva, 12 April 1934). C.588(1), M.274(10), 1933, XII. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) C.11.

films.⁵⁷³ As in the case of 16mm, however, the IICE's French committee and the national industry resisted the tariff convention and set itself apart from its League partners. Why?

Consider the language used to demarcate appropriate films: not "educational films" but "films of an international educational character." This language was adopted as early as the initial 1929 meetings of the technical experts, where they struggled to define what precisely constituted an educational film for international circulation. In the convention's first draft of 1930, they defined four characteristics of "international educational" films: those that propagandized the League's work, those that were instructional films for all educational levels, those that offered professional orientation, and those that presented scientific research. Any member state that sought to have the League classify its film as educational could present it to the IICE's committee of experts for evaluation.⁵⁷⁴ As an internal account of these preparations makes clear, however, after the drafts were sent to the national committees, there emerged real dissatisfaction over the IICE's arrogating to itself the power to determine which films of a member-state could be so designated.⁵⁷⁵ While the source of these complaints is not immediately apparent in the available documents, they did compel the IICE to change the manner in which "films of an educational character" were defined. Instead of the IICE's experts, the committees of the individual member states would "establish lists of films produced in their territory, acknowledge the educational character of these films, and provide [the

⁵⁷³ For example: Fernard Morel. "Le cinéma doit préparer la paix: on doit détaxer les films de ce genre." *La Cinématographie Française*, 25 August 1930; Hélène Vacaresco. "Le cinéma au service de la paix." *Ciné-Cinoedia*, 6 January 1931, 5; L. Landau. "Quand la S.D.N. adoptera-t-elle le cinéma comme principal moyen de propagande en faveur de la paix et du rapprochement des peuples?" *Le Film Sonore*, 18 July 1931, 1; Henry de Force. "Le Cinéma, admirable facteur de rapprochement entre les peuples." *L'Indépendant des Basses-Pyrénées*, 1 September 1931.

⁵⁷⁴ League of Nations. "Un Projet de Convention Internationale pour l'abolition des droits de douane sur les films de caractère éducatif." 1930. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.7.1.

⁵⁷⁵ Unnamed report, dated July 1932, 110. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.13.6.

League] with certificates.”⁵⁷⁶ These films would then be published in the League’s proposed catalog of international educational films and presumably be permitted to circulate in all the participating member-states free of import duties.

The IICE acceded, in essence, to becoming a rubber stamp for the member states’ national committees. *Any* film that received that designation would, in effect, receive *de facto* certification by the IICE. But where did the pressure come from? Surviving documents reveal misgivings with the French cinema industry even before the IICE foreswore its presumed role. In November, 1930, a representative from Pathé-Enseignement, the company’s educational film division, sent a letter to the industry’s trade association expressing its anxiety over the tariff convention. “In effect,” he writes, “custom exemptions for films of an educational characters are not new... They have been applied, notably, in Italy and in Germany.”⁵⁷⁷ These two countries had important competitive advantages over French film producers because, while their industries received state support, “the French Government accords only minute subventions to the educational film producers and only possess a small number of official cinémathèques.”⁵⁷⁸ By contrast, German firms, which had in 1925 only produced 150,000 meters - enough to produce about 100 films - of educational subjects had increased their output to 780,000 meters by 1929. Consequently, free circulation risked flooding France with German and Italian products at the same time that French producers were barely making a dent in their competitors’ markets. “In the past three years,” furthermore, “the

⁵⁷⁶ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁷⁷ Anon to Chambre Syndicale, letter on Pathé-Enseignement letterhead, dated 10 November 1930. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.7.1.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid, 2.

exploitation of French films in Italy has been non-existent...and is equally barren in Germany.”⁵⁷⁹

Allowing German or Italian national committees to determine the “educational character” of their films posed a serious risk both to the French educational film market, but to the mainstream one as well. The French feared that commercial narrative films could be so designated and then be forced upon their domestic market without the brake that high tariffs permitted. Thus, when the change was made in favor of national committees in 1932, Delac was once again pitted against two powerful member states, and had to defend French interests, and most especially Pathé, in the opposition to De Feo and the IICE.⁵⁸⁰ And again he encountered stiff resistance from the IICE director over the issue of national organisms of allowing the IICE’s national committee to make their own designations. In July 1932, the IICE director sent a sternly worded letter to Delac in which he stated his position unambiguously. “All that you’ve told me is perfectly true,” he told Delac, “but I hold at the very least to one thing: giving the greatest importance to the national organisms, that I would like to consider [them] as corresponding organisms of the Institute and as such they are able truly to constitute the network of national organs for which we have aspired.”⁵⁸¹ The French committee responded by clarifying their position in three points: films of an “international educational character” should not be determined by national bodies, that the 1930 convention standard be restored, and that recreational and “spectacle” (mainstream) films

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid, 1.

⁵⁸⁰ According to one undated report, most of the major educational film producers – Gaumont-Franco-Film-Aubert, Ciné-Lux, and Compagnie Universelle Cinématographique generally agreed with the 1932 draft, only Pathé-Enseignement provided a list of objections that included concerns of foreign domination in French domestic markets. See “Annex 1 – Projet de Convention Internationale pour l’abolition des Droits de Douane.” UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.13.6.

⁵⁸¹ De Feo to Delac, letter dated 29 July 1932. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.13.6.

could not be so designated as “educational” simply on the basis of a single public presentation in a non-commercial venue.⁵⁸²

The concern over national markets not only pitted French interests against IICE policy, it also eroded confidence among the cinema community for the cause of international understanding. The members of the November 1932, meeting of the industry’s trade association expressed skepticism over the very premise that foreign documentaries could lead to a mutually beneficial cosmopolitanism. One industry representative repeated the argument that free circulation only benefitted Germany and Italy where film production received significant government support. Once the tariff convention passes, he lamented that “...it is going to inundate us with films, and we’re going to come to see that education in our country is made up of German ideas and Italian ideas.”⁵⁸³ And not only foreign ideas: German geometry films would utilize German characters and “I give it less than 10 years before our schoolchildren are using German lettering.”⁵⁸⁴ Rather than moral disarmament, French cinema representatives saw the convention as a means to instill German and Italian propaganda into impressionable young minds as much as their films would dominate French markets.

Seeing that de Feo was unwilling to budge on the issue of the national committees, the French delegation attempted to re-frame their position. They believed that German tariff law favored the production of long-format “cultural” films over classroom and course-specific films.⁵⁸⁵ Consequently, they submitted a revision in

⁵⁸² Jean Benoît-Lévy to Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, letter dated 15 September 1932. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.13.6.

⁵⁸³ Chambre Syndicale du Cinématographe. *Réunion du 26 Nov. 1932*, meeting notes, 6. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.7.5.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 6-7.

⁵⁸⁵ A report to this effect, dated 14 December 1932, was sent from Berlin and is found in UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.7.5.

September, 1932, that would only accord free circulation to classroom and training instructional films while restricting those of a recreational, cultural, or “general” educational nature. That is, *cinéma d’enseignement* films would be permitted free circulation while the more loosely defined *cinéma d’éducation* films would fall outside the purview of the tariff convention. Not surprisingly, this produced “an active opposition on the part of the German and Italian delegates...”⁵⁸⁶ Unlike the controversy over small format films, however, the French forced the League’s tariff commission to come to a compromise resolution. To accommodate German and Italian interests, the criteria for films of an international educational character was expanded from four to five genres: the fifth being hygiene, physical education, and films encouraging savings and social assistance. Yet, the French succeeded in restoring the authority of the IICE experts to classify films as “educational” to make them eligible for lower tariffs. Moreover, if an importing country challenged the IICE’s decision, the committee created a mechanism by which one representative from the importing and the exporting nation and the IICE would meet to resolve the dispute.

Nevertheless, it seems that Delac and the French representatives felt that there was still too much ambiguity in the compromise and they again pressed for specific language restricting free circulation to instructional films – in effect, to remove the fifth category from the approved list. De Feo wrote to Delac in August, 1933, to express his exasperation.⁵⁸⁷ “I will tell you in total frankness,” he stated, “that I am really angered by everything concerning the question of the French amendment that would limit the value

⁵⁸⁶ Letter from the Services Français de la Société des Nations, to the Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, dated 21 October 1931, 2-3. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.7.5.

⁵⁸⁷ League of Nations. *Projet de convention pour faciliter la circulation internationale des films ayant un caractère éducatif*. (Geneva: League of Nations), dated 11 October 1932, 2-3. A. 62. 1932.II.B. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.7.5.

of the Convention to the sole domain of the *scolaire* [instructional film], to the exclusion of the *éducatif* [general educational film].”⁵⁸⁸ Not only were safeguards already in place, de Feo asserted that “limiting the Convention to scholarly goals would take away 80% of its value.”⁵⁸⁹ When Delac re-asserted that the French committee interpreted the draft Convention as restricting all forms of general educational films, de Feo said (forgetting for the moment the 16mm controversy) ,“I regret that, for the first time, we have come to a decisive disagreement: and if I should see a mutilated convention passed, I assure you that I will have no interest in whatever it becomes.”⁵⁹⁰ He immediately sent a follow-up letter, however, in an attempt to mollify Delac. Although he invoked their personal friendship, he stated that only by placing a wider variety of films under its domain would the tariff convention have any effect. “I think,” he said, “that we could not, without losing the fundamental bases of the Convention, withdraw the vast and complex domain as worker leisure films, hygiene, agriculture, work-place accident films... that are developed outside the milieu of the school.”⁵⁹¹ In any event, the French failed in their bid to restrict all films that were not strictly for instructional purposes. The final, October, 1933 tariff convention text (which was signed by the different national representatives the following March) retains all five criteria, the IICE’s central role as designator, and the arbitration mechanism proposed in late 1932.⁵⁹²

Delac and the CFCE thus found themselves in opposition to the IICE leadership on a second issue with potentially serious commercial consequences. As a result, the Chamber of Deputies delayed taking up the ratification of the tariff until its 1935

⁵⁸⁸ De Feo to Delac, 18 August 1933, 1. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.7.5.

⁵⁸⁹ Ibid, 1.

⁵⁹⁰ De Feo to Delac, 24 August 1933, 1. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.7.5.

⁵⁹¹ De Feo to Delac, 25 August 1933, 1. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.7.5.

⁵⁹² *Convention*. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) C.11.

session.⁵⁹³ In February, it passed only a single resolution: they authorized the President of the Republic to decide on the convention.⁵⁹⁴ That this seems to have been a delaying tactic is indicated through a letter sent from Rome in October, 1935, mentioned that in France, “the ratification is still under study.”⁵⁹⁵ And, as late as April 1937, eight months before the closing of the IICE that December, de Feo was still pressuring the French committee: “when will there be RATIFICATION by your Government? Can you not even consider the possibility of intervening to hasten this along?”⁵⁹⁶ Rather, the French government had initiated a policy bi-lateral trade agreements with specific countries – specifically, Hungary, Switzerland, and Belgium – and only on instructional films, not on those that could be consider *films d’éducation*.⁵⁹⁷ The foot dragging continued, even after the League assigned the CICI, the executive branch of the IICI, to take up the now-shuttered Rome Institute’s responsibilities.⁵⁹⁸ When the Third Republic finally ratified the tariff convention, it was too late to have any effect on the French cinema industry to say nothing of “moral disarmament.” It was signed in Paris on August 31, 1939.⁵⁹⁹

Waning Internationalism

⁵⁹³ Much to de Feo’s frustration, as a testy letter to Delac imploring him to intervene with the French government reveals. See De Feo to Delac, 17 November 1934. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.13.6.

⁵⁹⁴ France. Chambre of Deputies. *Projet de Loi portant approbation de la Convention pour faciliter la circulation internationale de sfilms ayant un caractère éducatif*. No. 3751. “Libre Circulation internationale des Films de Caractère éducatif.” *Cinéma-Éducation*, March 1935. Both UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) C.11

⁵⁹⁵ Michetti to Liard, 30 October 1935. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.13.6.

⁵⁹⁶ Extract from a letter from Deo, dated 13 April 1937. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.13.6. In the IICE Director’s December 1937 report to the IICE executive committee, France is listed as a country had not ratified the convention but had “adhered to it.” See UNESCO IICE CFCE A.3.

⁵⁹⁷ “Note: Admission temporaire de films documentaires ou éducatifs.” Undated, but after March 1937. UNESCO IICI SEC B.IX.30.

⁵⁹⁸ A summary text of the two late-1938 League conferences intended to re-start the tariff convention process can be found in an undated report, *Convention pour faciliter la circulation internationale des films ayant un caractere educative: Approbation du reglement d’execution*. UNESCO IICI SEC B.IX.30

⁵⁹⁹ Clipping from the *Journal Officiel* in AN F60/301.

The resentment among French cineastes over their marginalization produced disenchantment with the League's internationalism and stoked a defensive nationalistic response. Roux-Parassac contrasted the comparatively weak French governmental intervention with the highly structured and sustained organization provided by the Italian Fascist Instituto LUCE (*L'Unione Cinematografica Educativa*), founded by Mussolini to coordinate and manage Italian film production.⁶⁰⁰ Roux-Parassac questioned the possibility of international initiatives given the intense nationalistic rivalries displayed at the League and, increasingly, between the European powers themselves. The notion of an "international educational film" was impossible because "there does not exist an international or even universal pedagogy – neither is there a correlation between the programs among multiple grade levels... Each country prescribes its own schools and its own methods."⁶⁰¹ Even should the French state decided to provide greater intervention and subsidies, the notion of a standard international film format, let alone the propagation of a cosmopolitan understanding, was quixotic at best. "Can the [instructional and educational] exempt themselves from the national order? No, not without first abolishing frontiers, pedagogies, and the entire *raison d'être* of the state."⁶⁰²

Roux-Parassac's essay betrayed the dashed hopes expressed by Julien Luchaire and other cineastes in the 1920s. Cosmopolitan fraternity was not possible given the strong-armed tactics of German and American commercial interests and the willingness of the League to accede to them. It also reflected the industry's protectionist rhetoric, given the effects of sound technology and the Depression in contributing to its weakness

⁶⁰⁰ For the role of LUCE and the film policies of Mussolinian Italy, see Ruth Ben-Ghiat. *Fascist Modernities: Italy, 1922-1945*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

⁶⁰¹ Émile Roux-Parassac. "Parlons des formats réduits et des films d'enseignement." *Ciné-Comoedia*, 5 November 1935. UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) C.10.

⁶⁰² *Ibid*, 1.

and instability.⁶⁰³ Certainly, the interest in and avocation of “moral disarmament” had completely subsided within the trade press by the end of 1933.⁶⁰⁴ Even when gestures toward the social mission of cinema were made, such as Coissac’s June 1934 editorial on “The Cinema Must Be Ennobled,” invidious comparisons were made between Third Republic’s meager interest and the state support that fascist Italy and Nazi Germany provided their industries. “In Germany, in Italy, in the Soviet Union,” Coissac asserted, “the cinema is an institution of the state... [In France,] it seems that the public powers refuse to understand the veritable social and intellectual mission of French film, today, no more than before, they neither encourage nor protect it effectively...”⁶⁰⁵ In the following issue he pushed the argument even harder. “All our leaders,” he asserted, “have not, alas, like Benito Mussolini, recognized that the cinema represents not only the most agreeable and sought after genre of spectacle but also a power means of moral and intellectual elevation... the Duce has, for a long time, shown the utility of the cinema as a means of general propaganda and as an instrument of social education; that is why he gave Italy the first national institute for the production of cultural, documentary, and scientific films and favored the creation of the [IICE].”⁶⁰⁶

If the Duce wasn’t enough of a justification for state support, Coissac provided another. “In Germany, Dr. Goebbels, minister for propaganda,” he wrote, “has from the

⁶⁰³ Coissac had, as early as late 1932, penned such editorials as “Il Faut Defendre le cinéma français” (“French Cinema Must Be Defended”) and “Organisons notre propagande” (“Let’s Organize Our Propaganda”) with regard to bolster the industry’s mainstream films. See *Cinéopse* 14: nos. 159 and 160 (November and December 1932), respectively. Colin Crisp has argued, however, that the early 1930s were not as dire as contemporaries suggested.

⁶⁰⁴ The archive holdings at UNESCO do not reveal any articles preserved on the subject after 1933. *Cinéopse* would continue to report on the IICE, but not within the framework of its ideological mission.

⁶⁰⁵ G.M. Coissac. “Il Faut Enoblir le Cinéma.” *Cinéopse* 16: no. 178, 1 June 1934, 138.

⁶⁰⁶ G.M. Coissac. “Intensifions notre propagande.” *Cinéopse* 16: no. 179, 1 July 1934, 158.

first considered the screen as his best auxiliary both inside and outside his nation.”⁶⁰⁷

While Coissac insisted that he was not advocating for a Fascist French cinema, he did *cast* an admiring eye over the fascist states’ financial support and called for a similar form of state direction – not for “moral disarmament’ but to promote the nation:

...our propaganda services should ably act in the double sense of protecting, with our national industry, our ancient reputation and to maintain our prestige...it is important to employ the cinema for the education of our citizens. *Les actualités* document them in the manner of an attractive pictorial journal. We must instruct them chapter-by-chapter like a beautiful illustrated book.⁶⁰⁸

Coissac was insistent: three months later, he called on the *Chambre Syndicale* to create a permanent committee for propaganda.⁶⁰⁹ Along with Charles Delac and other industry representatives, he attended the Nazi government’s international film congress held in Berlin in April 1935. His experiences there reaffirmed his conviction that the French industry needed significant state support to give it direction and to enable it to provide the best means of creating Francophile propaganda.⁶¹⁰ Moreover, by mid-1935, Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*) had been released to widespread critical and public acclaim, demonstrating to many that the aestheticization of political practices on the screen produced a powerful means of mass persuasion.⁶¹¹

⁶⁰⁷ Coissac, 158.

⁶⁰⁸ Coissac, 159. Others had a different view. Adrien Colette wrote in his July 1934 *Cinéopse* column of the importance of state assistance, but also worried that the State “would only use the *cinéma d’enseignement* as one of its principal instruments for its politics and its opinions.” Not only does this seem to be exactly what Coissac was advocating, but Colette is unable to reconcile his demand for greater state intervention with his concerns about ideological overreach. See “Le rôle d’état dans l’organisation du film d’enseignement.” *Cinéopse* 16: no. 179, 1 July 1934, 167.

⁶⁰⁹ G.M. Coissac. “Le cinéma doit intensifier sa propagande.” *Cinéopse* 16: no. 182, 1 October 1934, 215-217.

⁶¹⁰ G.M. Coissac. “Les Leçons du Congrès de Berlin.” *Cinéopse* 17, no. 190. 1 June 1935, 119-121.

⁶¹¹ Walter Benjamin famously defined fascism as the aestheticization of politics. See his “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility.” In *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility and Other Writings on Media*. Michael W. Jennings, Brigid Doherty, and Thomas Y. Levin, eds. (Cambridge: Harvard Belknap, 2008), 17-55, and “Theories of German Fascism.” In *The*

The waning of internationalist sentiments among the French cineastes mirrored the declining credibility of the League more generally. Although Coissac, Delac, and other cineastes did not hew to a fascist line, they did admire the way their governments coordinated the production of propaganda films. As a result, they ultimately reimagined educational cinema as a form of public political propaganda that would see its fullest expression in Vichy.

Conclusion and The Closing of the IICE

The resistance by both the industry and the government to adopt the tariff convention underscored the extent to which national commercial considerations were overriding internationalist aspirations by the mid-1930s. The activities of the IICE still retained a high degree of visibility – indeed, its April 1934 conference held in Rome was the largest single gathering of educational cineastes ever, but it was the last international educational cinema conference of the interwar period.⁶¹² Soon afterward, the IICE was already showing signs of decline. It rechristened its journal, *International Review of Educational Cinematography*, with the new title *Interciné* in 1935, but was discontinued even so at the end of that year. According to an internal report, by 1935 the IICE's French committee was reporting "rather agonizing financial difficulties," partially because the publishing costs their massive *French Catalog of Educational Films* were

Weimar Republic Sourcebook. A. Kaes, M. Jay, and E. Dimendberg, eds. (Berkeley: University of California, 1994), 159-164. Among the large literature on fascist spectacle, see Emilio Gentile. *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*. K. Bostford, trans. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996, and Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi. *Fascist Spectacle: The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997. The best recent biography of Riefenstahl in English is Steven Bach. *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl*. New York: Knopf, 2007.

⁶¹² See *La Participation française au Congrès International du Cinéma d'Enseignement et d'Education* (Paris: Chambre Syndicale Française, 1934) for the complete collection of presentations given by the French legation (mostly members of the CFCE). The French legation also produced a massive compilation, the *Catalogue français des films éducatifs* (Paris: CFCE, 1934) for the occasion. UNESCO has preserved some of the CFCE's planning for this conference in IICE CFCE (Doc) A.8.

just barely offset by the increases in their funding from Rome or the meager amounts they received from different French ministries and private associations.⁶¹³ The CFCE's activities increasingly attenuated – according to one January 1938 report, the commission met six times in 1936, and only once in 1937.⁶¹⁴

Indeed, the closing of the Rome Institute itself must be considered another factor in the overall waning enthusiasm for educational film initiatives. Relations between the Mussolini government and the League of Nations had fractured over the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935 and with the signing of the Rome-Berlin Axis the following year.⁶¹⁵ On 11 December 1937, Mussolini announced Italy's departure from the League and the closing of the IICE at the end of the month. This sudden shuttering also dissolved all the national committees and set off press speculation as to who would take over the Institute's responsibilities.⁶¹⁶ The French committee turned over its work to the long moribund Office of Cinema Studies, who functioned largely as a caretaker. Neither of the IICE's two major initiatives – creating a worldwide tariff-free zone and a complete international catalog of educational films – ever came to fruition. The SEC made attempts to restart the process of securing the international tariff convention, yet this too was curtailed with the advent of the war.

With the creation of the IICE, the visibility and interest in educational cinema reached its apotheosis. The League transformed the scope of the movement from the

⁶¹³ See the CFCE's internal report dated 30 November 1936 for a general summary of the committee's situation. UNESCO IICE CFCE A.3

⁶¹⁴ In UNESCO IICE CFCE (Cor) A.3.1.

⁶¹⁵ Taillibert, 355-356.

⁶¹⁶ M.C. Lebrun "Que va devenir l'Institut International du Cinéma Éducatif?" *La Revue du Cinéma Éducateur*, March 1938, 1-2; J.M. "Qui reprendra la tâche de l'Institut International du Cinéma?" *Choisir*, 10 April 1938; Jean Rognac. "Où en est l'Institut international du Cinéma Educatif?" *La Griffes Cinématographique*, 22 April 1938, 12; J.M. "L'Institut International du Cinéma verra-t-il bientôt fixer son destin?" *Choisir*, 8 May 1938, 36. All UNESCO IICE CFCE (Doc) A.3.

particular concerns of individual nations, and it ascended up to an international level. It doing so, it also transformed the objectives and goals of the movement – toward a vision of using educational films to promote international peace. Yet, paradoxically for French cineastes, their experiences within the IICE served to reinforce their defensiveness due to American and German resistance, both technologically, with the fight over formats, and in terms of imports and tariffs. The League’s cinema institute, which was first conceived by a French professor as an extension of the IICI (which was itself an expression of the French belief in the power of their “intellectual capital”), ultimately underscored French commercial weakness. Consequently, their experiences disabused them of any notion of having a preeminent role in a worldwide educational cinema movement.

This had its parallels with the situation within France itself. As we have seen, the consistent lack of state funding led to restrictions in the activities of regional offices and teachers when the economy soured after 1934. Although educational films would continue to be screened, and the regional offices remained open until the war, the belief in cinema as a tool for mass education appears to have been waning in France. Yet, the activities of the League of Nations and the production of cinematic propaganda in Germany encouraged the cineastes and the French state to consider educational cinema in a more overtly political frame. With the election of the Popular Front and Vichy, the state took a more active interest in educational film and, in the case of the latter, commissioned educational documentaries for students and the general population that embodied the regime’s authoritarian philosophy. Instead of succeeding as a technology for the transmission of republican social values, educational cinema would become the instrument for authoritarian propaganda.

Chapter 5: From Education to Propaganda: Educational Film in the Popular Front and Vichy, 1936-1944

As educational cinema moved from theory into practice during the 1920s, an ongoing concern among some teacher-practitioners was in establishing a clear distinction between instructional (*enseignement*) and more general educational (*éducation*) films. They were concerned that public screenings sponsored by groups like the Ligue de l'Enseignement – those which mixed instructional films with travelogues and comic features – would prove their critics right: that film was a spectacle for mass consumption and was not appropriate as an instructional device. This anxiety underscored the extent to which “educational film” was an unstable category in interwar France. The French committee of the League of Nations’ international educational institute also saw, in their contest over tariffs, the way in which the boundaries of “educational” were subject to contestation between different national groups.

During the period of the Popular Front (1936-1937) and the Vichy government of Occupied France (1940-1944), the category of “educational film” was further destabilized. The Popular Front and Vichy were the first two French governments to take a deeper interest in the film industry as a whole and particularly in educational cinema. In part, this was due to the dawning recognition on the part of the French state that the industry needed to be put on a more secure financial basis if it were to survive, and partly because officials in these governments were starting to recognize the value of film as a

form of mass political persuasion. Indeed the blurring of education and propaganda had its antecedents in the “general education” public screenings of social hygiene, professional orientation and vocational training that constituted the Third Republic’s middle-class reformist ideas as well as in colonial cinema. Moreover, the deteriorating international climate, expressed as frustrations over French weakness as described in the last chapter, combined with the rise of Hitler, made even educational cineastes interested in a more overt approach to political messaging.

While the Popular Front did not last long enough to have an immediate influence on educational cinema beyond tentative efforts to create a central governing body, it did encourage its adherents to promote educational cinema as part of the Front’s political agenda. In Vichy, the involvement of the French state was more concerted and thorough. They surveyed the state of educational film equipment, formed commissions, and made a long-term commitment to the production and purchase of films.⁶¹⁷ Although the cinema activities of the Vichy regime also ended before they could develop significantly, they left more enduring effect in the reorganization of the film industry itself and in the end of the widespread and shared interest among cineastes for the pedagogical use of film. While educational film did not disappear – and certain organizations like the Ligue de l’Enseignement resumed their activity after the war – it was never again as prominent in French society or cineaste circles as it had been during the 1920s and 1930s.

⁶¹⁷ For the Popular Front, see Jessica Wardhaugh. *The Pursuit of the People: Political Culture in France* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 151-182; and Simon Dell. *The Image of the Popular Front: The Masses and the Media in Interwar France*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. For Vichy: see Annick Lantenois. “La propagande sous Vichy 1940-1994.” *Vingtième Siècle* 28 (Oct-Dec. 1990), 115-118; Denis Peschanski. “Contrôler ou encadrer? Information et propagande sous Vichy.” *Vingtième Siècle* 28 (Oct-Dec. 1990), 65-75; and Rémi Dalisson. “La Propagande Festive de Vichy: Mythes fondateurs, relecture nationaliste et contestation en France de 1940 à 1944.” *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains* 207 (July-September 2002), 5-35.

By connecting the Popular Front and Vichy together as two administrations that envisioned a more propagandistic approach to education, this chapter argues that there were continuities between the policies of the Third Republic and Vichy rather than the bracketing-off of the later as a distinct and unique interruption within the larger narrative of French republicanism.⁶¹⁸ Both governments intended to have a more active role in the organizing and financing of the cinema industry and both saw educational cinema as part of that broader effort. Indeed, Vichy marked the ironic culmination of two decades' worth of efforts among middle-class cineastes to use films as a tool for social reform. It was only in the service of a reactionary regime dedicated to the destruction of republicanism where educational cinema was finally accorded significant state assistance.

Through an examination of the shifting boundaries between educational cinema and propaganda, this chapter also seeks to expand the traditional spheres in which the science of mass persuasion has been traditionally seen to develop. Taking their cues from such early twentieth-century writers like Walter Lippmann and Edward Bernays, historians of propaganda initially connected it to the creation of public relation firms and mass advertising.⁶¹⁹ In the post-war period, media studies in the United States and France criticized the “the society of the spectacle” for producing mass conformity to the dictates

⁶¹⁸ Gérard Noiriel. *Les origines républicaines de Vichy*. Paris: Hachette, 1999.

⁶¹⁹ Walter Lippmann. *Public Opinion*. New York: The Free Press, 1965 [orig. 1922]; Edward Bernays. *Propaganda*. New York: Ig Publishing, 2004 [orig. 1928]. Recent studies of corporate media imagery include: Roland Marchand. *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business*. Berkeley: University of California, 1998; For France: Stephen L. Harp. *Marketing Michelin: Advertising & Cultural Identity in Twentieth-Century France*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001; Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel. *La publicité: naissance d'un profession, 1900-1940*. Paris: CNRS Editions, 1998.

of capitalism.⁶²⁰ More recent work in visual studies has looked at the production of national and imperial imagery in everything from product advertisements to movies.⁶²¹

Works on the history of cinematic propaganda have focused on the role of newsreels and war films to generate and maintain mass consensus during the First World War.⁶²² The French army, for example, organized a Section cinématographique de l'armée [Cinema Section of the Army] with the intent of producing newsreel footage for propagandistic purposes.⁶²³ For the interwar period, however, these historians tend to shift to Soviet or Nazi propaganda techniques, generally leaving the British, French, and American contexts unexplored.⁶²⁴ Historians of documentary film have filled in some of the gaps concerning the role of the state in sponsoring (and controlling) non-fiction film production, as can be seen in studies of John Grierson's General Post Office film unit in interwar Britain or the creation of scientific films within government research

⁶²⁰ Marshall McLuhan. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994; and Guy Debord. *Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books, 1995.

⁶²¹ See Harp. *Marketing Michelin* and David Ciarlo. *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

⁶²² See, for example, Nicholas Reeves. *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth of Reality?* London: Cassell, 1999, esp. 14-42; Thomas F. Schneider and Hans Wegener, eds. "Huns" vs. "Corned Beef": *Representations of the Other in American and German Literature and Film on World War I*. Osnabrück : Universitätsverlag, 2007.

⁶²³ The work of Laurent Veray has been crucial in showing how "images of the real" were translated into propaganda for the French war effort. See his *La Grande Guerre au cinéma: de la gloire à la mémoire*. Paris: Éditions Ramsay, 2008; "La propagande par les actualités cinématographiques pendant la guerre." *Guerre mondiales et conflits contemporains* 173 (January 1994), 19-33; and "Montrer la guerre: la photographie et le cinéma." *Guerre mondiales et conflits contemporains* 171 (July 1993), 111-121.

⁶²⁴ Hilmar Hoffman. *The Triumph of Propaganda: Film and National Socialism, 1933-1945*. Providence, R.I.: Berghahn, 1996, and Robert Jackall, ed. *Propaganda*. New York: New York University Press, 1995.

institutes.⁶²⁵ Social historians, in their turn, have taken an interest in the role of cinema in pro-natalist propaganda and “social hygiene” in this period.⁶²⁶

This chapter argues that it is essential to understand how the boundaries between “educational film” and “propaganda” were shifting and unstable during the 1930s and that the engagement of the Vichy regime in educational cinema represented a nearly complete dissolution of them. Scholars in French educational cinema have, to this point, looked at the individual careers of filmmakers, the way in which they constructed a sense of national identity, and their use of films in their classrooms.⁶²⁷ Yet, by treating “educational film” as a consistently unstable category, we can see how political actors shift the boundaries between instruction and political inculcation.

An Example: The Freinet School – Cinema, Progressive Pedagogy and Politics

Chapter two traced how many early cineastes were influenced by the child-centered pedagogy of Rousseau and Pestalozzi and, in their advocacy, they claimed that cinema would produce a more natural means of learning. One teacher who implemented these ideas in practice was Celestin Freinet (1896-1966). Hailing from a secluded village in the Var, Freinet began his career in 1920 teaching in a primary school in another small agricultural town called Bar-sur-Loup in the Alpes-Maritimes.⁶²⁸ Freinet wanted to avoid what he perceived as the traditional teaching methods and instead to engage his students

⁶²⁵ See Jack C. Ellis. *John Grierson: Life, Contributions, Influence*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000; and Timothy Boon. *Films of Fact: A History of Science in Documentary Films and Television*. London: Wallflower Press, 2008.

⁶²⁶ Barrusse. “Pro-Natalism and Hygienism in France,” and Thierry Lefebvre. “Deux montages des films hygiénistes: *Comments on contacte les maladies contagieuses et l’Hygiène en images.*” 1895 18 (Summer 1995), 297-302.

⁶²⁷ Vignaux. *Jean Benoît-Lévy*; de Pastre. “Cinéma éducateur et propagande colonial à Paris au début des années 30; Levine. *Framing the Nation*; Bloom. *French Colonial Documentary*.

⁶²⁸ Biographical information from William B. Lee and John Sivell. *French Elementary Education and the Ecole Moderne*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Beta Kappa Educational Foundation, 2000.

as active learners. Early in his career he purchased a printing press for his classroom and taught his students to produce and edit a journal as a form of cooperative learning. Eventually he developed his own pedagogic philosophy based on children's natural interests "to facilitate [their] gradual approximation toward mastery through curiosity-arousing, appropriately placed exploration."⁶²⁹

By the early 1930s, Freinet had built up a following, organized a teacher's cooperative – Coopération de l'Enseignement Laïc [Public School Teachers Cooperative] – and had also founded a cinema cooperative.⁶³⁰ Films were incorporated as part of the Freinet curriculum and were seen as another means to teach students the importance of direct observation. Along with showing them, they also made films with small-format equipment. One Freinet teacher encouraged others by saying "let's film, let's film without pretention and with children at the center... Film will be another mode of communication and expression that will be included with printing."⁶³¹ For the Freinet school, having students make their own films using small-format 9.5mm Pathé-Baby cameras was another way to develop their creativity through collaborative endeavors. While some may object that such films were not truly instructional, a Freinet pedagogue argued that because of "the interests that they awaken at the moment they are filmed and projected, they are not any less scholarly than instructional films..."⁶³²

The cooperative also made public education films for adults, however, that had a definite leftist political slant. In December 1932, *L'Éducateur Proletarien* announced the

⁶²⁹ Lee and Shivell, 44.

⁶³⁰ R. Boyau. "Rapport Annuel sur le Fonctionnement de la Cinémathèque Coopérative." *L'Éducateur Proletarien* (June 1933), 496.

⁶³¹ R. Boyau. "Créons des filiales et prenons des films." *L'Éducateur Proletarien* (November 1932), 93.

⁶³² F. Magnenot. "Pour l'édition de nouveaux films scolaires." *L'Éducateur Proletarien* (February 1933), 270.

debut of their first *film d'éducation* called *Prix et Profits* [Price and Profits] designed for public screenings in worker cooperatives.⁶³³ The film concerned the life cycle of potato cultivation and depicted the different stages from harvest to marketplace, much as an agricultural or commercial might have. Yet, *Prix et Profits* carried a much more explicit message about the miseries of the poor at the hands of capitalism. The profiteer “makes an appearance. Automobile, comfortable allure, satisfied air, big car, and nice mansion...”⁶³⁴ This is contrasted to the squalid lives of the farmers and transport workers where, one character, voicing the film’s point of view, said “the parasites who fatten themselves on those who slave away!”⁶³⁵

Prix et Profits shows how the Freinet cooperative blurred the lines between a strict “educational” film (potato cultivation) and a political message (capitalist exploitation) that anticipated such Popular Front films as *La Vie est à nous* [*Life Belongs to Us*, 1936]. The politics of the Freinet cooperative were made more apparent when, after the formation of the Popular Front coalition in 1935, they called for a “Popular Front for Children” to defend secular education, and especially the reforms made since the First World War, against what they deemed as the rising tide of fascism and clericalism.⁶³⁶ While additional research will be needed to determine the exact nature of the Freinet cooperative’s activities during the Popular Front, it is clear that they reframed educational cinema both in terms of their own pedagogical and political conceptions. This instability between ‘education’ and ‘propaganda’ would also characterize the activity of Popular Front filmmakers as well.

⁶³³ R. Boyau. “Le Cinéma Éducateur.” *L'Éducateur Proletarien* (December 1932), 39-42.

⁶³⁴ Boyau, 41.

⁶³⁵ Boyau, 41. Ó

⁶³⁶ Celestin Freinet. “Charte constitutive du Front Populaire de l’Enfance.” *L'Éducateur Prolétarien* (25 November 1935), 73-78.

The Popular Front, Educational Films, and “La Vie est à nous”

The crisis of the Third Republic became evident with the right-wing riots of 6 February 1934, the growth of fascist leagues such as the Croix de Feu, and led the French Communist (PCF), Socialist (SFIO), and Radical parties to rally their forces together to save democracy in an arrangement called “the Popular Front.”⁶³⁷ The socialist and republican values of the Front were disseminated throughout popular culture, including mass festivals and films like Jean Renoir’s *Le Crime de Monsieur Lange* (1935) and Julien Duvivier’s *La Belle Équipe* (1936) that promoted a communitarian ethos among the popular classes. As Dudley Andrew and Steven Ungar note, the Popular Front produced “a vision of an authentic culture ‘of and for the people’ that retains a strong affective charge of nostalgia even seventy years later.”⁶³⁸

The electoral victory of the Front under Léon Blum in May 1936 was administered by the new government and reflected its political aspirations.⁶³⁹ Along with government officials like Jean Zay, the Minister of Education, political parties, especially the PCF, and private associations like Mai 36 and Ciné-Liberté promoted the employment of cinema for socialist causes.⁶⁴⁰ Blum’s government was the first to take steps toward creating a state policy for cinema, although the reports upon which these were based had been instigated during the earlier Radical government of Gaston Doumerge. Yet the Front’s ultimate brevity – Blum fell in thirteen months – meant that

⁶³⁷ Julian Jackson. *The Popular Front in France: Defending Democracy, 1934-1938*. Cambridge University Press: 1990. Bernard and Dubief. *The Decline of the Third Republic 1914-1938*, 285-298.

⁶³⁸ Dudley Andrew and Steven Ungar. *Popular Front Paris and the Poetics of Culture*. (Cambridge: Harvard/Belknap, 2005), 1.

⁶³⁹ See Pascal Ory. *La Belle Illusion: Culture et politique sous le signe du Front populaire, 1935-1938*. Paris: Plon, 1994, and Wardhaugh. *In Pursuit of the People*.

⁶⁴⁰ Jonathan Buchsbaum. *Cinema Engagé: Film in the Popular Front*. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1988.

the government's initiatives were abandoned before they could develop beyond an incipient stage.

The fall of the Blum government in the summer of 1937 led to a period of political stagnation and cultural despair that was expressed, most famously, through the great "Poetic Realist" films of Jean Renoir (a former member of Ciné-Liberté), Jacques Feyder, and Marcel Carné.⁶⁴¹ With the defeat of France by Germany in May-June 1940, the new reactionary regime under Philippe Pétain also took an active interest in cultivating film to promote its ideological agenda which included the elimination of Republican institutions and the imposition of traditionalist and Catholic culture under the slogan "Work, Family, Homeland." [*Travail, Famille, Patrie*]⁶⁴² Unlike its predecessor and ideological opponent, the Vichy regime took extensive measures both to coordinate and support the industry and had an active involvement in funding educational film projects and developing the requisite administrative bodies.

Admiration for Hitler's and Mussolini's centralized propaganda systems which extended from republicans like Coissac to Vichyite ministers also underscored increasing French anxieties over the weakness of the cinema industry itself and the lack of government assistance under the Republic. In 1934, the second largest production firm, Gaumont-Franco-Film-Aubert (G.F.F.A.), filed for bankruptcy and the consequent crisis in financial confidence led to severe undercapitalization of the entire industry.⁶⁴³ Unlike the American and German studio systems, French film production by the mid-1930s was

⁶⁴¹ Dudley Andrew. *Mists of Regret: Culture and Sensibility in Classic French Film*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

⁶⁴² Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit. *Le cinéma sous l'occupation. Le monde du cinéma français de 1940 à 1946*. (Paris: Olivier Orban, 1989), 90-119.

⁶⁴³ Colin Crisp. "Anarchy and Order in the Classic Cinema Industry." In M. Temple and M. Witt, eds. *The French Cinema Book*. (London: BFI, 2004), 118-119. A longer discussion of the state of the industry can be found in his *The Classic French Cinema 1930-1960*, esp. 33-38)

characterized by “a large number of small and under-capitalized production companies each involved in producing relatively few films.”⁶⁴⁴ Gaumont’s bankruptcy finally compelled the state to establish a commission under Maurice Petsche, a left-wing deputy from the Hautes-Alpes, to investigate the state of the industry.⁶⁴⁵ His reports, presented in March 1935, recommended that the Republic organize the necessary financial credit on a national level and form an executive technical committee to determine appropriate allocations. The following year, France’s National Economic Council sponsored a more detailed assessment by Guy de Carmoy, the inspector of state finances. This report also provided a comparative survey of industrial practices in Italy, Germany, Britain and the United States. Carmoy also supported Petsche’s argument for a national credit scheme and advocated the creation of a federation of cinema professional associations to determine the distribution of state subventions.⁶⁴⁶

Although presented to the Popular Front government in July 1936, the Carmoy report reflected the conventional Radical-conservative position of limited direct state intervention except through a much higher level of state funding than before. Yet, because the report focused on evaluating the organization and finances of the commercial industry, it did not concern itself with educational cinema: a slight that provoked outrage among many in the movement. Gustave Cauvin, head of the Lyon regional office, wrote a letter to his senator reminding him of the scope of their activities and of the “untiring perseverance of several high functionaries who have faith in educational cinema, the

⁶⁴⁴ Crisp (2004), 119.

⁶⁴⁵ See Crisp (1993), 34-35.

⁶⁴⁶ Guy de Carmoy. “L’Industrie Cinématographique.” *Journal Officiel*, 18 August 1936, 635-658. Copies preserved in AN F60 303.

devotion of thousands of militant laics who belong to the teaching personnel, the tenacity of offices such as ours, and the efficacious support of the League... »⁶⁴⁷

The election of the Popular Front in May 1936 signaled an encouraging shift in favor of increasing state support for the industry. The government of Leon Blum, which took office at the beginning of June, believed that the Republic needed to play an important role in the administration of culture. In part, this belief derived from both the precariousness of the cinema industry and the use to which the Front had made with visual and popular culture to propagate its values. Since its formation in late 1934, when the French Communist Party (PCF) formed an alliance with the SFIO and the Radicals, supporters of the Popular Front produced a rich visual repertoire asserting its basis in worker solidarity and popular action. As the art historian Simon Dell has shown, supporters, especially those within the PCF, created images highlighting the political power of the masses in collages of popular rallies overlaid with political messages.

These photojournalistic images functioned as a form of commemoration and served as a reenactment of “the acclamation of the people” for the Front and its values.⁶⁴⁸ Through them, the members of the Front, especially among the PCF, sought to construct and to propagate a “founding myth” about the Front that defined it as the unity of all the supporters of the Republic in defense of fascism. An organizing committee composed of PCF members and other Front supporters created a propaganda sub-commission whose leadership included the filmmaker and theorist Jean Epstein. They created both a brochure and film (*Le Défilé de 14 Juillet*) of the events of 14 July 1935, when the three political parties first came together to defend the Republic against republic, that sought to

⁶⁴⁷ Cauvin to Senator of l’Ain department, dated 15 December 1936. AN F60/303.

⁶⁴⁸ Dell, 64.

“furnish an image of the ‘the people’ of France... to show ‘the people’ discovering a common cause.”⁶⁴⁹

As scholars like Dell, Jessica Wardhaugh and Jonathan Buschbaum have shown, films facilitated the PCF’s effort to broaden its political outreach and to propagate the notion that the united left was the true defenders of the Republic. “Education” in this way became politicized and in the period just before the Front’s assumption of power, filmmakers created associations to foster pro-Popular Front productions. One of the most prominent was the Alliance Cinéma Indépendent (ACI) that had been part of a larger intellectual grouping brought together by the PCF. During the production its first film – *La Vie est à nous* (1936) – the group changed its name to Ciné-Liberté. The group’s primary objectives were to bring together film workers to produce an independent left documentary cinema that would educate the masses in the values of socialism and communism.⁶⁵⁰ Germaine Dulac, a pioneering woman filmmaker and head of Gaumont’s Actualités (newsreels) division, was a member of Ciné-Liberté who preserved some of the group’s documentations in her archives. While the group’s objectives focused on the eliminating government censorship of films, the securing of financial credits and drafting screenplays, the group also sought to “favor the production and exploitation of 16mm films...of a cultural or artistic interest and ensure their diffusion in schools.... [and] create a pedagogical commission that would decide which films would be best suited for showing to children under 16.”⁶⁵¹ By the time Ciné-Liberté started to issue its own

⁶⁴⁹ Dell, 67.

⁶⁵⁰ Buschbaum. *Cinema Engagé*.

⁶⁵¹ “Propositions de Ciné-Liberté pour l’assainissement et le développement de l’industrie cinématographique en France.” [no date] BIFI DULAC 291-B19, 6. Dulac was also a highly active spokesperson for educational cinema, both through presenting public speeches and on her work with the International Woman’s Council. For an example of one such speech, see BIFI DULAC329-B23 and extracts from IWC meetings and reports in BIFI DULAC300 and 301-B20 For Dulac’s activities in this

newspaper in May 1936, its interest in educational applications even more apparent. The short-lived paper featured prominent articles on educational cinema, mostly written by Léone Bourdel. In one such article, the group announced that they had created their own Commission de l'Enfance with the intention to “choose, study, and create films instructional, educational, and spectacle films, specially created not by merchants...but by technicians, specialists who will be dedicate themselves to knowing children and who will bring all their competence, all their care and disinterestedness...”⁶⁵²

Their film *La Vie est à nous* reveals how the tropes and techniques of educational cinema overlapped with the propagandistic message of the PCF.⁶⁵³ Although the film was made as a collaborative effort, Jean Renoir has been generally acknowledged to be its principal director. A hybrid film that mixes newsreel footage, narrative sequences, and political speeches, *La Vie est à nous* was shot in early 1936 at the behest of the PCF in order to influence the May elections.⁶⁵⁴ The introductory sequence is constructed like an educational film. After footage of wheat fields, mountains, and rivers, a voice-over narrates France's geographical and agricultural diversity, showing a series of images of wheat, grains, and wine. Although this sequence was designed to introduce urban

period, see Maryann de Julio. “Germaine Dulac et le public.” *1895*, no. hors série: *Germaine Dulac au-delà des impressions*. (June 2006), 193-203.

⁶⁵² Léone Bourdel. “Le Cinema au Service de l'Enfance.” *Ciné-Liberté* 4: 1 October 1936, 2. Bourdel had written extensively about the visual power of cinema over children in issue 3, July-August 1936; see also Hélène Gosset. “L'enfance et le cinéma.” *Ciné-Liberté* 2: 20 June 1936, and Jean Painlevé. “Le Cinéma scientifique et d'enseignement.” *Ciné-Liberté* 5: 1 November 1936, 2. Dulac assisted in the formation of the cinema section of an SFIO-affiliated association – Mai 36 – whose objective was to “create a popular movement permitting the masses access freely and largely to culture” with a sub-section on Educational and Documentary cinema headed by the filmmaker Jean Brérault. Although more ephemeral than even *Ciné-Liberté*, she was still producing informal bulletins featuring notices on “a cinema for youth” as late as May 1938. [BIFI DULAC 525-B56] Based on the scant documentation, Mai 36 appears to have focused more upon offering courses on cinematic technique to working-class attendees (entry was 3 francs per session, for the nineteen-session 1938-1939 term). See BIFI DULAC 359-24.

⁶⁵³ See also Buschbaum's long discussion of this film in *Cinéma Engagé*, 83-184. The film is also available, as of June 2012, on a DVD (PAL only; no English subtitles) from Doriane Films.

⁶⁵⁴ As it turned out, it was submitted for visa approval only after the installation of Blum's government in June. See Buschbaum, 87.

workers to France's rural areas (and to show farmers that the PCF was more than just a party for factory laborers), the sequence also replicates the genre of the geographical educational film. The opening sequences provide an impartial, seemingly neutral recitation of basic facts. In a meta-reference to the genre, *La Vie* cuts from this opening sequence to a teacher (Jean Dasté), who is revealed to have been the source of the voice-over - a literal embodiment of the narrative function within educational cinema. He then explains to his elementary-school students the strength of France's industrial sector, and then *La Vie* provides a sequence of shots that recall industrial and vocational films.⁶⁵⁵

Finally, the teacher's lesson switches to France's great architectural achievements, and the sequence of shots (Chartres, Rouen, Reims, Versailles, Paris) recalls the "cultural enrichment" films made for public *cinéma d'éducation* screenings. By beginning *La Vie est à nous* as a series of educational sequences, Renoir and his crew adopt a pedagogical voice – in effect, establishing the film's didactic intent. While the film never returns to the specifically "educational" mode after this opening, subsequent documentary footage is of the actuality genre – of 6 February 1934, 14 July 1935, and images of the fascist leagues – each sequence is structured to instruct the viewer on a variety of subjects: the iniquities of capitalism, threat of the fascist leagues, and the salvation and fraternity to be found within the PCF.

If *La vie est à nous* inserts the putative neutral techniques of educational film genres like travelogues and commercial film, within a left-wing political discourse, it also subverts the subtexts of those films as well. Not only does Renoir shows the "teacher" providing the narration. The film, however, also cuts to an after-school sequence showing

⁶⁵⁵ Buschbaum (p. 91) argues that this sequence is "modeled on industrial sequences in Vertov films," but the lack of avant-garde techniques (and Renoir's own predisposition to naturalism) make it doubtful that Vertov was an influence.

the students discussing his lesson. The students contrast the lesson of France's material and cultural bounty with their own impoverished circumstances. The sequence, shot in a poor working-class street, undercuts the teacher's lesson by showing that the students have little connection with the France described by the teacher.

This challenge to the "neutrality" of educational film represents another didactic strategy, as the film segues into a criticism of the owners of France's wealth, specifically the top two hundred families. *La Vie*, then, uses a pedagogical structure only to undermine its presumptions to neutrality. By beginning with a purely "educational" film, the film compels the viewer to look behind its neutral recitation of facts to the underlying structures of power and oppression. This produces a dual effect: the "neutral" educational film is revealed as a mask for exploitation and the sequence functions as a tool within the PCF's overall propagandistic scheme. The sequence functions both a subversion of traditional pedagogy and an assertion of a more radical form of instruction. At the film's end, after the film's longest narrative sequence showing an unemployed man rescued by the PCF, the agricultural and industrial images are superimposed upon those of the faces and bodies of the workers. As Buschbaum argues, this ending sequence transforms the meaning of the opening, implying now that the "wealth now belongs to the people, for they have finally achieved unity in the Popular Front."⁶⁵⁶ By incorporating specific features of educational film, such as the travelogue and the industrial film, within a broader narrative scheme supporting the political positions of the PCF, *La Vie est à nous* shows how the boundaries between pedagogy and propaganda were more fluid than in the pre-Front era.

⁶⁵⁶ Buschbaum, 141.

The Decline of Frontist Cinema

Although Ciné-Liberté and other associations like Mai 36 sought a role for cinema as a propaganda tool, we must ask what the effect did the Popular Front have within the educational cinema movement itself. In *Cinéopse*, Coissac held a guarded optimism that the new government would finally provide significant material support for the industry and for educational films. “The current Chamber,” his June 1936 editorial states, “is going to contain new members of whom 76 are professors and teachers; they seem to possess a generous passion, and not a small amount of good will and a new era of progress will open if we ourselves focus on the declarations in our journals.”⁶⁵⁷ The following month, Adrien Collette predictably bemoaned the ongoing lack of government support but permitted himself to indulge his hopes. “Let us wish,” he writes, “that the spirit of initiative which they [the new government] have seemed to have inspired, manifests itself quickly in favor of French youth. Let us hope in particular that our Minister of Education be informed of the educative and instructive importance of the *cinéma d’enseignement*... Will he consider it an essential need to give to the educators of our youth the means to render their schooling more lively, interesting and fruitful?”⁶⁵⁸

Although the initial signs were encouraging, they were ultimately short-lived. The new government took a different line on the relation of the state to the cinema industry than previous administrations. Jean Zay, the Front’s Minister of Education, oversaw the effort to develop new statutes that would permit greater state involvement and financial assistance to the beleaguered industry. In September, 1936, the deputy Jean-Marie Rénaitour formed an inter-parliamentary commission whose task was, according to

⁶⁵⁷ G.M. Coissac. “Le cinéma et le nouveau gouvernement.” *Cinéopse* 18, no. 202 (1 June 1936), 117.

⁶⁵⁸ Adrien Collette. “Cinéma scolaire et Pouvoirs Publics.” *Cinéopse* 18, no. 203 (1 July 1936), 136.

Pascal Ory, to build upon the Carmoy report by conducting meetings with figures from all major branches of the industry as a further step toward developing a coherent government policy.⁶⁵⁹

In February 1937, the commission heard from representatives of the different branches of the industry. Joseph Brenier, a former senator and head of the *Ligue de l'Enseignement*, spoke on behalf of educational film and stressed its worsening situation. He lamented that "...it is clearly regressing. This is due not only to the insufficiency of equipment that we've been given, but in fact the success of sound cinema has turned the masses away from silent films."⁶⁶⁰ He proposed that the government initiate a nationwide subvention to provide repositories with 16mm sound films and place new 16mm equipment in all of France's classrooms, concluding that the cost would be 600 million francs, of which the State itself would need only put up 200 million francs. The source for the remainder is left unspecified but Brenier suggested that municipalities would contribute at least some portion of the remainder.⁶⁶¹ Based on the published account of the hearings, the commission did not seriously take up the proposal of a massive nationwide subvention and shifted their focus onto censorship and control of content. The funding was never discussed, let alone acted upon.

The Popular Front did, however, attempt to bring educational cinema under its administrative authority. The Beaux-Arts Ministry made a tentative step in this direction when it formed a Commission des Films Documentaires in November 1936. In this Ministry's view, the commission would bring together "all those interested in

⁶⁵⁹ See Ory. *La Belle Illusion*, 417-428.

⁶⁶⁰ Jean-Marie Renaitour. *Où va le Cinéma Français?* (Paris: Éditions Baudinière, 1937), 191.

⁶⁶¹ Brenier had floated this figure to Zay as early as November 1936. See Zay, letter dated 3 November 1936. Zay noted that his Ministry had only had 356,000 francs for purchases of equipment for all of 1936. AN FN F60 301.

documentary film and its attachment to classroom teaching as much as in general acculturation.”⁶⁶² The Commission sought on the national level what the IICE was concurrently promoting on the international: de-taxation of documentary films (and, in addition, requiring theater owners to show documentary films “relative to France and its culture.”)⁶⁶³ In August, 1937, the Education Ministry proposed to create a “Central Bureau for Cinema d’Education, d’Enseignement, et General Documentation.”⁶⁶⁴ [Central Bureau for Instructional, Educational, and General Documentary Cinema.] This bureau would have coordinated the acquisition of films and equipment across the different government ministries that maintained collections for their own uses; and would enable the government to better coordinate the distribution of French educational films in foreign countries. In effect, the new bureau would function as a sort of national equivalent to the League’s IICE. It would rationalize the government’s use of such films through organizing the purchasing of films and equipment, by guiding the production of new films, and produce and by maintaining documentation for users. By providing fiscal guarantees to companies, it would assure the stable production of both films and standardized equipment.

Through centralization of efforts, the new bureau would also facilitate the political use of educational cinema. As the proposal noted, “the exact knowledge of the needs of each administration,” was “indispensable for conducting a thoughtful politics of

⁶⁶² Commission des films documentaires. “Séance du 5 Novembre 1936.” AN F60 300. I was not able to discover any other source material on this commission.

⁶⁶³ Ministère des Beaux-Arts to the Président du Conseil, latter dated 20 November 1936. AN F60 300.

⁶⁶⁴ “Projet de loi portant creation d’un Bureau Central du Cinématographe d’Education, d’Enseignement et de Documentation Générale.” AN FN 60 301. The idea had been publicly discussed since at least the spring of 1937. The Montpellier Office of Educational Cinema voted a resolution that April to request the creation of such an office. See “L’Assemblée Générale du l’Office Régional du Cinéma Éducateur.” *Documents Scolaires et Post-Scolaires* 3, no. 12 (May 1937), 2.

educational cinema and propaganda.”⁶⁶⁵ While the scope was ambitious, it was out of tune with the more austere post-Blum environment of late 1937. The organ that finally emerged, in September, 1938, was named the Coordination Commission on Cinematographic Questions and its mission was as vague as its name: “to coordinate the activity of different ministerial departments interested in problems related to cinema.”⁶⁶⁶ Neither educational film nor the coordination with private industry appeared in the commission’s description. Zay’s reforms ultimately produced little tangible benefits either for the industry or for teachers-practitioners. As both Ory and Colin Crisp point out, the political environment had changed by the time Zay produced his industry-wide reform statutes and that they were effectively put into abeyance as soon as he proposed them.⁶⁶⁷

Even though *La Vie est à nous* proved to be the most popular political film of the Front era, the left-wing film associations produced very little actual output. Cine-Liberté made only a handful of non-educational films that were more focused on topics like the June 1936 factory occupations and the Spanish Civil War.⁶⁶⁸ Instead of producing a surge of new educational films, Ciné-Liberté and the other film initiatives quickly fell apart. By the beginning of 1937, “the energy and projects binding together Ciné-Liberté seemed to be exhausted.”⁶⁶⁹ Its final project, and the one to which all of its limited resources were devoted, was Renoir’s *La Marseillaise* (1938), a propaganda effort to connect the Popular

⁶⁶⁵ “Project,” 2. AN F60 301.

⁶⁶⁶ Présidence du Conseil. “Commission de coordination des questions cinématographiques,” dated 21 September 1938. AN F60 304.

⁶⁶⁷ Ory, 434-438; Crisp. *The Classic French Cinema*, 38.

⁶⁶⁸ Including *La vie est à nous*, Buschbaum cites a list eleven others but cautions that these are not distinguished from those they actually produced and those they simply distributed. Buschbaum, 225.

⁶⁶⁹ Buschbaum, 223.

Front with the republican legacy of 1789 that premiered much too late to be an effective advocate for the Front⁶⁷⁰

Moreover, the Front's initial promises led to frustration within the cinema press. In January, 1937, a month before the Renaitour commission meeting, Collette in *Cinéopse* could still wanly echo the tentative optimism from the previous July. "The existence of a Popular Front government in France has given birth to many hopes," he wrote. "It is claimed that the Ministers of Education and Leisure are preparing a vast program of *films d'enseignement* and *film éducatifs*. We will note, perhaps, the results of the union of these two ministers this year."⁶⁷¹ By the fall of 1937, however, *Cinéopse* had reverted to its conventional lament over persistent government inaction. Reviewing the recent publication of the Renaitour commission's sessions, Coissac sourly challenged the effusions of a government minister by saying that "we do not share [his] satisfaction in stating 'that the public authorities have finally understood the considerable role of cinema in modern life.'... Public authorities have for twenty years promised to understand and favor the cinema without ever following through on their projects."⁶⁷²

That Popular Front did not have enough time to implement its ideas can be seen through the experience of the regional offices and their adherents. As was true of the government and the left-wing associations, there was much initial enthusiasm followed by a dispiriting lack of follow-through. The theme of the Ligue de l'Enseignement's 1937 Congress, for example, was to create civic education for young people in terms which resonated with Frontist ideology: "we must develop through words, action, and example...the sentiment of human solidarity, the devotion to community, and the passion

⁶⁷⁰ See Ory's (1994) extended discussion of the film, 448-462; Jackson (1988), 142-145.

⁶⁷¹ Adrien Collette. "Le Cinéma Éducateur en 1936." *Cinéopse* 19, no. 209 (1 January 1937), 28.

⁶⁷² Coissac. "A Propos de l'enquête Renaitour." *Cinéopse* 19, no. 218 (1 October 1937), 174.

for justice.”⁶⁷³ The League’s Montpellier Cinema Educational Office also adopted resolutions in April of 1937 that demanded the creation of the national Educational Cinema Bureau and for national subventions to purchase 16mm projectors due to “obligation to rapidly constitute new collections of films...”⁶⁷⁴

Yet, as the extant copies of the Montpellier Office’s bulletin attest, the group did not translate their activities into pro-Popular Front propaganda, nor did their activities focus on the League’s goal of civic education during 1936-37. Further research will be needed to determine whether there was variance among local societies from different regions with comparatively strong or weak republican traditions. In their year-end review, the Montpellier Office attested that 1936, the height of the Front, had been a comparatively weak year in terms of rentals and showings and that “there was not much proof of a lot of activity in the domain of cinema...”⁶⁷⁵ Finally, material shortages persisted. By April 1938, the National Federation of Educational Cinema Users, a recently organized association of teacher-cineastes, published an angry editorial on the declining conditions. In spite of the Ministry of Public Education’s decision to authorize only 16mm and 35mm, their bulletin reported that there was still a plethora of different formats used among the nations’ schools – 35mm was by the most dominant (but most expensive to replace) - while the number of 16mm silent and sound projectors was only half the number of 17.5mm.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷³ “Ligue Française de l’Enseignement: Congrès National de 1937.” *Documents Scolaires et Post-Scolaires* 3, no. 10 (January 1937), 1.

⁶⁷⁴ “L’Assemblée Générale du l’Office Régional du Cinéma Éducateur.” *Documents Scolaires et Post-Scolaires* 3, no. 12 (May 1937), 2.

⁶⁷⁵ “Rapport sur l’activité et le fonctionnement de l’Office durant l’année 1936.” *Documents Scolaires et Post-Scolaires* 3, no. 12 (May 1937), 4.

⁶⁷⁶ Pierre Berthelin. “Le problem du cinéma éducatif.” *Le Cinéma à l’École* 2, no. 6: April 1938, 1-2.

From Education to Propaganda: 1938-1940

The decline of the Popular Front and the closing of the League's Educational Cinema institute – both in late 1937 – brought the educational cinema movement to a static point. On the one hand, local practitioners and the Ligue de l'Enseignement were still committed to using films despite the material limitations. Government ministries maintained collections of varying sizes. Specialized journals reported a dwindling number of activities or initiatives. Collette in *Cinéopse* spent the latter half of 1938 rewriting the long-established experimental psychological arguments in favor of educational film rather than report on new developments. Coissac himself devoted more editorial space to the need to organize propaganda in favor of French national and economic interests and, to the extent he mentioned educational film at all, it was within broader objectives of mass persuasion, “cultivating the public's taste” rather than the more pedagogical arguments that he had made in the 1920s for state-industry collaboration.⁶⁷⁷ In the Bulletin of the Société de l'Art à l'École, one of the earliest promoters, articles on educational cinema drop off noticeably by 1936 and are practically non-existent by 1938-1939.

Although the Popular Front did not create a policy for educational cinema, or the industry as a whole, it did underscore the fluidity between “educational films” and propaganda. If anything, interest in propaganda films was continuing to eclipse that of educational films. While *Cinéopse* still ran Collette's monthly column, the journal also featured a May 1938 editorial calling for the creation of a Propaganda Bureau.⁶⁷⁸ A December, 1938 report on film propaganda asserted that France had not devoted any

⁶⁷⁷ G.M. Coissac. “Éduquons le gout du public.” *Cinéopse* 19: no. 211, 1 March 1937, 61-63.

⁶⁷⁸ G.M. Coissac. “Des films pour la propagande française.” *Cinéopse* 20, no. 255 (1 May 1938), 81-82.

significant resources to this increasingly important technique. It proposed “encourag[ing] private initiatives tending toward the commercial diffusion of films, properly called educational” to Lycées Français and foreign classrooms.⁶⁷⁹ Beyond appealing to foreigners, such films were also promoted as means of creating support for France’s colonial policies within the metropole. An independent film producer’s proposal to make a film on “L’Épopée Coloniale Française” stated that colonial propaganda films “would reinforce the confidence that our country places in its administrators, which can only exalt French morale, and particularly among the young, because after their [commercial] distribution, they can be grouped and diffused through the Education Ministry and in schools....”⁶⁸⁰ In June 1939, a representative from Les Editions Filmées, another production company, made this connection between “education” and “propaganda” explicit in a proposal to a government official: “...Certain State organs or commercial houses offer films to schoolmasters because they constitute, for them, an effective and inexpensive means of propaganda. In effect, the child, upon whom the films make an impression at school, hastens to relate to his parents what he has seen becoming, in this way, a propaganda agent within his family.”⁶⁸¹

One example of the extent to which educational films genres were becoming propagandized – and a fascinating anticipation of Vichy’s cultural outlook – is a June 1938 proposal by the company France Outre-Mer Film for a film, *France Éternelle*.⁶⁸² Similar to the opening of *La Vie est à nous*, the proposed film script reworks the

⁶⁷⁹ “Propagande par le film,” report dated December 1938, 2. AN F60 301.

⁶⁸⁰ *L’Épopée Coloniale Française*, undated proposal, 1. AN F60 301

⁶⁸¹ Pierre Pourrech to the Secrétaire Général de la Présidence du Conseil, letter dated 9 June 1939. AN F60 301.

⁶⁸² Located in AN F60 304, there’s no supporting documentation to discern to whom the proposal was submitted or whether the film was ever funded.

travelogue film form into a testament to France's enduring agricultural and cultural achievements. In this film, the travelogue is inscribed within a conservative narrative that stresses duty to country, the "eternalness" of rural culture, and the essential humanitarian quality of France's colonies.⁶⁸³ Jean Villiers, the son of a fallen soldier (the film would open with a prologue showing the elder Villiers' death in 1916), returns to France from America where he's greeted at the Gare St. Lazare by his fiancée, Denise. The couple are also professional collaborators – he is a journalist in the cinema industry while she has been working at the Bibliothèque Nationale to "get together all the documentary elements for a great French propaganda film to destined to make their true face of France better known to the world."⁶⁸⁴ First, they visit Jean's grandfather, a great farmer, who celebrates the couple's engagement with a huge feast drawn from all the agricultural products of his region. After telling him about their documentary project, he advises them to "dedicate his film to his compatriots, French people of all stations, to workers, to artists, to intellectuals, to all those in whom the sentiment of Frenchness vibrates."⁶⁸⁵ The couple sets out on their tour by motorcar of all France and its colonies and the remainder of the film consists of their visits to the different regions.

Beginning in Rouen, the couple enjoys the cathedral before gaining an exclusive interview with Joan of Arc who serenely refutes all the accusations against her before she is consigned to the pyre.⁶⁸⁶ Following a tour through Brittany, the Vendée, Bordeaux and the Pyrénées, where again France's viticultural and agricultural riches are celebrated, the

⁶⁸³ On the latter, see Bloom. *French Colonial Documentary*, 153-181.

⁶⁸⁴ *France Eternelle*, 3. The unknown scenarist wanted Jean-Pierre Aumont and Michèle Morgan for these roles, respectively. AN F60 304.

⁶⁸⁵ *France Eternelle*, 4. AN F60 304.

⁶⁸⁶ The scenarist was clearly seeking to incorporate Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928) as part of France's visual patrimony through the descriptions of the framing of Joan, with an emphasis on her face and body to the exclusion of all other details including the couple, and the quixotic dream of having Renée Falconetti reprise her role

couple embarks by ocean liner for North Africa. Here *France Éternelle* expressed the humanitarian motives that provided the rationale for the empire. “The work of France in black Africa is of an incontestable nobility,” the proposal enthuses. “[the French] have formed the blacks in their image, they have made them teachers, doctors, nurses and one day it is even possible that they will be self-sufficient.”⁶⁸⁷ Returning to France, the couple travels through Nice and Provence, Burgundy, and the North before returning to the Paris region where they explore the city’s architectural treasures. At the end, Jean and Denise go to the Arc de Triomphe where the Marseillaise plays while they hold hands and the tricolor is superimposed over them. Though it does not appear to have been made, *France Éternelle* shows the geographic educational film translated into the service of nationalist propaganda. Earlier geographic films like Jean Bréault’s *La Loire* (1935), shot for Pathé, attempted an objectivity in their presentation of the geography, architecture, and customs of France’s regions, going through each item like a chapter in a textbook.⁶⁸⁸ In *France Éternelle*, however, the documentary and travelogue aspects are subsumed under a clear traditionalist and colonialist narrative.

There is also evidence that teachers themselves also began to seek out opportunities to employ propagandistic films in their classrooms. In January of 1939, the National Federation of Educational Cinema Users pledged to assist the government’s new Coordination Commission because “the usage of educational films so often concerns the moral and material knowledge of the French Empire.”⁶⁸⁹ That same month, the Education Ministry received a letter from the Minister of Defense turning down the requests from “a great number of teachers... toward obtaining copies of his [and Premier Daladier’s]

⁶⁸⁷ *France Éternelle*, 11. AN F60 304.

⁶⁸⁸ The brochure for this film can be found in BIFI DULAC153-B12.

⁶⁸⁹ Pierre Berthelin to Cinema Coordination Council, letter dated 18 January 1939. AN F60 301..

voyage to North Africa” due to his own ministry’s limited number of copies.⁶⁹⁰ Proposals came through the Ministries of Colonies, Defense, or the service branches, each of which had their own film repositories. The Air Ministry, which organized its cinema service in September 1937, made it as their first goal to produce “propaganda films, both in-house and with different private production firms.”⁶⁹¹ Then, they sought to make *films éducatifs* for use in “military and post-military schools, technical services, aero-clubs, and public education establishments.” Films with such titles as *La Ligne Maginot* (1938, Pathé Studios) or proposals for films like *Somme-Nous Défendus? (Are We Defended?)* (1938, Ciné-Reportages) stressed post-Munich anxieties over the state of French preparedness.⁶⁹²

By 1939, seven ministries maintained film repositories: Education, Agriculture, National Defense, Foreign Affairs, Marine, Air, and National Defense. Based on a survey commissioned by the Conseil d’État in early 1939, these ministerial cinematographic services were – if not particularly lavished upon – were funded well enough to sustain themselves and build modest collections. The Marine Ministry, for example, reported an increase from 150,000 francs in their initial year, to 202,500 francs for 1939. The Ministry of Colonies’ service grew from a 100,000-franc budget in 1937 to 135,000 francs two years later while the Ministry of National Education reported 666,000 francs for 1939, much of that coming from municipalities.⁶⁹³

It seems, however, that the war intervened before these ministries were able either to produce or to finance effective propaganda films. The aforementioned December 1938

⁶⁹⁰ Ministre de la Defense Nationale to the Ministre de l’Education Nationale, letter dated 31 January 1939. AN F60 300.

⁶⁹¹ Ministère de l’Air au Vice-Président du Conseil, attachment to letter dated 12 July 1939. AN F60 301.

⁶⁹² A script for *Somme-nous défendus?* can be found in AN F60 301.

⁶⁹³ See the folder “Achat projecteurs cinématographiques et films pédagogiques” in AN F60 301.

report on propaganda films asserted that they “were not inexistent; they were in an embryonic state.”⁶⁹⁴ Even in the Air Ministry produced more films for technical training than for propaganda purposes: e.g., in 1939, they made eleven of the former, six of the latter.⁶⁹⁵ It is not even clear that these tentative propagandistic efforts were especially effective. In a rare instance where the archives preserve some feedback from viewers, a government report noted the poor reception of a colonial propaganda film from 1940, *La France est un empire*, which was deemed by the author as too long and “had too many excessive details for a pure propaganda film.”⁶⁹⁶

Thus, the final period of the Third Republic witnessed a more active institutionalization of propaganda films within the ministries and a partial-eclipse/partial-subsuming of educational films within a new propagandistic framework. By 1937, following the end of the progressive phase of the Popular Front, governmental ministries other than Education and Agriculture began to take notice of films and an interest in their propaganda potential was vocalized among teachers, ministers, and filmmakers. Yet, it would take the centralizing efforts and ideological conservatism of the Vichy regime to fully merge educational cinema with propaganda and become actively involved in the organization and funding of the industry as a whole.

Vichy: The Ironic Apogee of State Involvement in Educational Cinema

France’s “strange defeat” in June 1940 led to the bifurcation of the country into a northern zone occupied by Nazi Germany, and a southern zone administered by the

⁶⁹⁴ “Propagande par le film,” December 1938, 1. AN F60 301.

⁶⁹⁵ Ministère de l’Air. “Films réalisés ou en cours de réalisation en 1939.” AN F60 301.

⁶⁹⁶ Letter to the Secrétaire Générale de la Présidence du Conseil, letter dated 12 March 1940. AN F60 300.

Vichy regime.⁶⁹⁷ The regime, headed by Marshall Philippe Pétain, sought to erase France's entire republican legacy and impose a traditionalist, Catholic order on civil society under the motto "*Work, Family, Fatherland.*" The regime was especially insistent on remaking the state educational system, long seen by both republicans and clericals as the strongest institutional support for the Republic and its secular philosophy. In the words of educational historian, Rémy Handoutzel, at the moment of Vichy's instauration it "set out to combat this symbol of republicanism *par excellence*" and to break the long-held equation "school = Republic."⁶⁹⁸

Almost immediately, the regime began to ban books and purge teachers, especially those who had been especially active in the largest teachers' union, the Syndicat National des Instituteurs (SNI) [National Teachers Union]. Vichy singled out teachers because they were believed to have inculcated strong pacifist sentiments and a moral dissoluteness into France's young that had left the nation vulnerable to Hitler. Civic associations were either closed or had to radically reconstitute themselves. The Ligue de l'Enseignement re-christened themselves the Cercle Parisien d'Education Populaire et Nationale and sharply curtailed their activities. Based on their very limited internal records preserved in the League's archives, they did not hold any film screenings during the period 1940-1944.⁶⁹⁹ Since educational cineastes were republicans and supporters of secularism, some also joined the resistance, while others, like Gustave

⁶⁹⁷ The phrase comes from Marc Bloch's classic account of the fall of France. See Marc Bloch. *Strange Defeat. A Statement of Evidence Written in 1940*. G. Hopkins, trans. New York: Norton, 1968.

⁶⁹⁸ Rémy Handoutzel. *Vichy et l'école*. (Paris: Éditions Noësis, 1997), 17.

⁶⁹⁹ Cercle Parisien de la Ligue de l'Enseignement. *Procès-Verbaux/Assemblées Générales, 1926-1947*. Archives de la Ligue de l'Enseignement. These meeting notes indicate that educational film screenings were revived by 1946.

Cauvin, witnessed the burning down of the Lyons regional office and cinémathèque by the Nazis in 1944.⁷⁰⁰

Vichy and its educational ministers sought to instill a “moral reformation” of French youth. This reformation, stemming from the Pétain’s own ideas on education, would inculcate such Christian values as “‘discipline, obedience, service.’ Moral education is inextricably linked to training in patriotism... School and army share a common task: ‘to develop physical strength, temper the heart, and forge the will.’”⁷⁰¹ Youth groups such as the Compagnons de France, a scout-like organization that emphasized martial values, and the Chantiers de la Jeunesse, which was more rigidly proto-militaristic in its emphasis on discipline, formed important extra-curricular support organizations. Vichy’s education ministers also believed that cinema could perform a crucial role in inculcating the values of Petain’s National Revolution. “If ‘moral reformation’ could be encompassed by propaganda,” writes W.D. Halls, “the most effective instrument would be the film show, since it became easily the most popular form of wartime entertainment.”⁷⁰² Thus, more than Republican governments ever had, Vichy would become actively involved in the use of educational cinema.

The regime’s involvement with educational cinema took place within a context of both the reorganization of public education and of the cinema industry itself. Historians like Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit, Colin Crisp, and, more recently, Philip Nord, have recounted the new regime’s efforts to centralize the industry, both for ideological

⁷⁰⁰ Charles Lebrun. “Gustave Cauvin.” *Image et Son* 48 (December 1951), 4.

⁷⁰¹ W.D. Halls. *The Youth of Vichy France* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 9-10.

⁷⁰² Halls, 169.

purposes and to put it on a more financially secure and coordinated foundation.⁷⁰³ In the fall of 1940 Vichy created the first governmental office dedicated to the coordination of the cinema industry, the Service du Cinéma within the Information Ministry. At first, Guy de Carmoy, who wrote the aforementioned 1936 report on the financial state of the industry, led it. From the fall of 1941 Louis-Émile Galey, who had begun his Vichy career in the Compagnons de France, headed the information bureau. The Service was responsible for all aspects of the industry, including censorship, issues involving imports and exports, and propaganda. Vichy quickly created, by the fall of 1940, a sub-organization to coordinate film production – the Comité d’Organisation des Industries Cinématographiques [The Organizational Committee of Cinema Industries]. The Service du Cinéma and the COIC enabled Vichy both to shape film production according to its political values, and also allowed an effective means for the Nazi Occupation government to monitor activities from Paris. As far as Berlin was concerned, the organizations would administer “within a general schema devised to renovate all French industry along lines acceptable to Germany and designed to make it an efficient source of goods and wealth to support the future German empire.”⁷⁰⁴ During its first operational year, the COIC passed a series of reforms designed to restructure and stabilize the industry. These included the formalization of a “professional card” (*brevet*) for employment, monitoring of receipts as a means to gauge the industry’s health; and an advance on future receipts to spur film production.

⁷⁰³ Bertin-Maghit. *Le Cinéma sous l’occupation*, 70-119; Crisp, *The Classic French Cinema*, 43-89; Philip Nord. *France’s New Deal: From the Thirties to the Postwar Era*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 277-295. Stéphanie Corcy’s *La vie culturelle sous l’occupation* (Paris: Perrin, 2005) also discusses aspects of this in relation to Vichy’s cultural policy, but focuses more on issues such as censorship and national patrimony rather than education. Most of the following summary in this paragraph comes from Crisp and Nord.

⁷⁰⁴ Crisp (1993), 48.

The COIC identified “the production of short films, and notably documentaries... for special budgetary support,”⁷⁰⁵ Crisp suggests that this was meant as a spur to train young cinema professionals, one of Vichy’s key goals, which would lead ultimately to the creation of France’s first state film school in September 1943, the Institut des hautes études cinématographiques. (The school, which survived the war, was rechristened La Fémis in 1986). As early as February 1941, when Paul Marion became the new minister, the government employed all means of mass media to promote its vision of French society. According to Marcel Déat, a French fascist wrote that spring, Marion “wants to treat the French as sick persons and to create a psychological propaganda.”⁷⁰⁶ Paul Creyssel, the Ministry’s first chief of propaganda, conceived of his mission as “seduction proceeding through suggestion, unified and above all, non-violent... [It] must reveal the ‘truth’ to the masses, leading them progressively through ‘word-of-mouth’ to adopt] the views] relayed by the elites of the National Revolution.”⁷⁰⁷

Private companies, too, recast cinema through the moral imperatives of the new regime. In 1942, two agents from the Compagnie Cinématographique Fumière stressed cinema’s role in educating people on regional culture, national folklore, and the touristic riches of the *patrie* and the Empire.⁷⁰⁸ Thus, the Vichy regime had a strong impulsion to become involved in and even to coordinate the activities around educational cinema – it would effectively unite the regime’s educational policy with its propaganda activities.

Nonetheless, it took some time for Vichy’s involvement to materialize as there appears to have been little significant governmental initiatives until 1942. Vichy’s initial

⁷⁰⁵ Crisp (1993), 53.

⁷⁰⁶ Quoted in Peschanski. “Contrôler ou Encadrer?,” 68.

⁷⁰⁷ Quoted in Corcy, 26.

⁷⁰⁸ Jean Fumière and Edouard Romblau. *Rapport sur les possibilités éducatives du cinéma, de la radio, de la presse*. AN F17 13378

actions in 1940-1941, in terms of its educational policy, were to purge the teaching staff of suspected republican faculty and re-work the national curriculum. With regards to the cinema industry, its aim was simply to get the industry up-and-running within the framework established by the Nazi government (along with purging Jews from all sectors from studio owners to actors and directors).⁷⁰⁹

By early 1942, however, the Vichy government was poised to develop their policy and to define their sphere of actions regarding educational cinema. In February 1942 letter to the Education Ministry, Galey voiced his support of their call for a national law on educational cinema “for which has been anticipated for fifteen years.”⁷¹⁰ Finally, following the first period of academic purges, Vichy appointed a new educational minister, the historian Jérôme Carcopino who sought to moderate the polarized climate and was far less interested in allowing Vichy propaganda to filter through the schools.⁷¹¹ It was both under Carcopino’s administration and the subsequent appointment of a new arch-collaborationist education minister, Abel Bonnard, when Vichy’s interest became more pronounced. That Bonnard, especially, was a significant contributor is clear from a 1943 article in *L’Illustration* in which he was quoted as saying: “it is important that we become masters of cinema so that we can submit it to our intentions. Instead of pelting a passive public with insignificant images...cinema has to become a powerful means of cultural instruction not only for children, but for the entire nation.”⁷¹² The *L’Illustration*

⁷⁰⁹ For the impact of Vichy on Jews in the cinema industry, see Alastair Phillips. “Migration and Exile in the Classical Period.” In *The French Cinema Book*. M. Temple and M. Witt, eds. (London: British Film Institute, 2004), 103-117.

⁷¹⁰ Galey to Verrier, Délégué du Ministre Secrétaire d’Etat à l’Education Nationale, letter dated 12 February 1942. AN F17 13778.

⁷¹¹ On Carcopino, see Handoutzel, 114-116; and Stéphanie Corcy-Debray. *Jérôme Carcopino, un historien à Vichy*. Paris: L’Harmattan, 2001.

⁷¹² Anon. “L’effort français dans le cinéma au service de l’enseignement,” 1. Article transcript, AN F17 13378

article proceeded to trumpet Bonnard's initiatives as a radical break from the temporizing efforts under the Third Republic: "to aid the formation of French youth, our minister of education and his collaborators have decided to generalize the use of educational cinema. This decision, which will revolutionize our old pedagogy, will truly create a new method of teaching that addresses at the same time auditory and visual memory."⁷¹³

The Information and Education Ministries sponsored a series of initiatives and activities during 1942 that served to fully articulate Vichy's policy. In March, the Education Ministry's Secrétariat Générale de la Jeunesse, an office that was tasked with providing vocational training to French youth and to act as a liaison with other Vichy youth groups, funded a series of screenings at schools throughout the region of Provence.⁷¹⁴ In June, the two ministries co-sponsored a conference at the Musée Pédagogique (still under the direction of Charles Lebrun) where Dr. Zierold, the director of Nazi Germany's educational cinema' program – the Reichsanstalt für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft (RWU) - presented a paper.⁷¹⁵ The conference – which was not open to the public – was spurred by the Institute Allemand, a cultural propaganda office attached to the German embassy, with the aim of impressing upon the French audience the structure and philosophy of the Nazi educational cinema program.⁷¹⁶ Early in the Occupation, the Nazi authorities expressed a strong interest in how the French used cinema in their schools. In January 1941, the *Propagandastaffel*, the German military's propaganda

⁷¹³ "L'effort français," 2.

⁷¹⁴ Secrétariat Générale de la Jeunesse. "Compte-rendu sur le fonctionnement du service du cinéma éducatif en Provence, report dated 21 May 1942. AN F17 13378.

⁷¹⁵ See Inspector General for Education, Maurice Roy's note to Bonnard, dated 7 October 1942. A French translation of the German representative's speech can also be found in the same sub-folder. AN F17 13378.

⁷¹⁶ See a letter from Information to the Education Ministry, letter dated 1 June 1942. AN F17 13378. Corey discusses the origins of the Institut Allemand in *La Vie Culturelle sous l'Occupation*, 35-36. According to Roy, the Institute intended for Zierold to give this talk in different cities in the occupied zone as well. See Roy to Bonnard, 7 October 1942. AN F17 13378.

office, invited Lebrun to provide them with information on the circulation of educational films, especially among the regional offices (which were organized by the Ligue de l'Enseignement) that the new authorities suspected of communist political sympathies.⁷¹⁷ The Nazis intended that both Occupied France and Vichy adopt their organizational methods by keeping educational cinema strictly under the control of the state. As early as October 1940, the Occupation authorities had already provided the French education ministry with a detailed description of the RWU and Zierold's June 1942 talk simply reinforced the centralized organization of Germany's program – whose main office oversaw 37 regional centers and was supported by a quarterly levy of 20 pfennings on each student.⁷¹⁸ Zierold claimed that this system, nevertheless, left schoolmasters free to choose whichever films they wanted. "Centralization without constraint, that's the formula that governs German pedagogical film. Without this centralization, the introduction of film into teaching is, in our view, not possible."⁷¹⁹

The French authorities followed up these Nazi promptings with several measures. First, they commissioned a survey of the state of educational cinema, and second, they created a new commission to coordinate activities in this period. The survey, jointly sponsored by the Educational and Information ministries, was to be the basis for a nationwide plan for equipping French schools with projectors and refurbishing the collections of film repositories.⁷²⁰ Although the responses concerning equipment are not preserved in the Education Ministry's files at the Archives Nationales, we can get some

⁷¹⁷ Lebrun to Grandclaude, letter dated 29 January 1941. AN F17 13778.

⁷¹⁸ See the report, "Administration générale du film éducatif en Allemagne," dated 31 October 1940; and Zierold. "L'importance du film en matière de sciences et d'enseignement," 8. Both AN F17 13378.

⁷¹⁹ Zierold, "L'importance du film," 9. AN F17 13378.

⁷²⁰ See form letter from Bonnard to the school inspectors, dated 28 July 1942.. A September, 1942 note from the Education Ministry shows that they piloted an equipment survey in the Côte d'Or that May. Both AN F17 13378.

sense of the sorry state to which the cinema had fallen to according a survey of extant film copies. Comparing the total number of copies in the cinémathèques of the Education, Agriculture, and Public Health ministries in 1942 to the number listed in the 1934 catalog for the IICE Rome conference, the Ministry showed that while there were 1,644 geographic films in 1934, eight years later their number had fallen to 227. History films declined in number from 199 copies to 17, the natural sciences from 1,378 to 585, and those on *orientation professionnelle* from 300 to 96.⁷²¹ The Musée Pédagogique's funding, which had been 103,115 francs in 1930, reported that it was down to 6,000 ten years later.⁷²² Moreover, as another government report made clear, the effective shuttering of civic associations like the Ligue de l'Enseignement has led to "a very marked diminution" in public screenings and "the disappearance of the regional office's activities."⁷²³

The plan for re-equipping the schools and ministerial repositories, however, required a centralized authority and, during the summer and fall, drafts for a new commission were mooted about. Initially, there was an effort to recreate a somewhat convoluted inter-ministerial commission, similar to that of the Popular Front, which would be under the dual authority of the Information and Education ministries.⁷²⁴ A draft from late July argued that an inter-ministerial commission would coordinate the different propagandistic and training prerogatives of each ministry.⁷²⁵ Each ministry would thus

⁷²¹ "Etat des films figurant au Catalogue français des films éducatifs édité en 1934: la situation en 1942." AN F17 13378.

⁷²² "Etat des sommes affectées au cinéma d'enseignement sur les Crédits au Musée Pédagogique." AN F17 13378

⁷²³ "Note sur le cinéma éducatif," undated. AN F17 13378

⁷²⁴ See a note from the Education Ministry. "Commission interministérielle et Commission ministérielle du Cinéma éducatif," dated 4 July 1942. AN F17 13378.

⁷²⁵ "Decret relatif à l'équipement des établissements d'enseignement et des oeuvres d'éducation en films et en appareils de projection fixe ou animée," late July 1942. AN F17 13378.

have a say in choosing and approving films, and in limiting the number of standardized projectors for governmental approval. For reasons not entirely clear, however, the inter-ministerial commission idea fell apart, and the Education Ministry asserted its own plan instead. On December 31, 1942, Bonnard formed his own Commission du cinématographe d'enseignement, du cinéma éducateur et de la projection fixe [Commission on Instructional and Educational Cinema and Fixed Projection].⁷²⁶ It was tasked with completing the national equipment survey and to “list and acquire all the useful films that can be put at the disposal of the French State, to build relationships with similar organizations in other European countries in order to create profitable exchanges.”⁷²⁷ Finally, it would be responsible for “equipping scholarly establishments with projectors, revive the regional and departmental film distribution centers under state auspices, renovate and enrich the central repository at the Ministry of National Education... monitor the veritable creation of films destined to accompany lessons and courses...and finally, guide the choice of commercial films uses by school and after-school establishments and forbid the projection of those deemed dangerous for children and the young.”⁷²⁸ This new commission was headed by Maurice Roy, the Inspector General of Public Instruction, and Marc Cantagrel, Professor at the *École Supérieure de Commerce*, along with Lebrun, Etienne Lallier, a film producer, and Maurice de Lansaye, chief of the Propaganda Service at the *Secrétariat Général de la Jeunesse*.⁷²⁹ For the first

⁷²⁶ “L’effort français,” 4-5.

⁷²⁷ “L’effort français,” 5.

⁷²⁸ “L’effort français,” 5.

⁷²⁹ In the 1930s, Cantagrel, a chemist, founded and directed the Centre de productions de films scientifiques at the Conservatoire des Arts et Métiers (CNAM) until his acrimonious departure in 1937. Documents concerning Cantagrel’s tenure and departure at CNAM can be found in AN F17 18059, and in CNAM’s Centre du Cinéma archives 3EE-12 and 3EE-13.

time, this government body would have the authority and financial wherewithal to develop and to effectuate a coherent policy on educational cinema.

The commission's surviving meeting notes reveal the direness of the situation. At their initial meeting, which occurred on January 13, 1943, they estimated that only one film in ten still retained any value and concluded that "it was not extravagant to envisage that it will require a delay of four to five years for French repositories to be entirely remade or reconstituted..."⁷³⁰ Nonetheless, they sought to establish priorities – re-outfitting classrooms and producing geographic and natural science films came first. With regards to equipment, the commission's effort was frustrated since many local communes had not yet responded to the national survey as late as February 1943, and French firms were under new Nazi restrictions that limited their production of film equipment as a means for supporting German manufacturers.⁷³¹ At a February 1943 session, a representative from the Information Ministry's Direction du Cinéma (formerly Service du Cinéma) informed them of material limitations that would restrict output of new films. The commission found the situation vexing in other ways as well. The Direction du Cinéma wanted to have control over all the technical aspects of future productions and wanted educational films to have a higher level of technical competency.⁷³² Yet, the lack of qualified technical personnel was glaring. As one commission member put it, "nobody denies how few cineastes are up-to-speed on the needs and necessities of documentary film, and even more *cinéma d'enseignement*."⁷³³

⁷³⁰ Commission du Cinéma. "Réunion du Mercredi 13 Janvier 1943." AN F17 13378

⁷³¹ Commission du Cinéma. "Réunion du Mardi, 2 Février 1943." AN F17 13378.

⁷³² Commission du Cinéma. "Réunion du 19 Février 1943." AN F17 13378.

⁷³³ Commission du Cinéma. "Réunion du 19 Février 1943." AN F17 13378.

The extant documentation does not reveal how the commission negotiated many of these issues. Their efforts appear to have been dedicated to developing screening programs for each grade level and selecting subjects for future educational films.⁷³⁴ Nonetheless, in early 1943 the Education Ministry sought significant new financial backing from the Vichy government. In January, the Ministry requested an allocation of 5,000,000 francs “destined for the production and diffusion of films d’enseignement.”⁷³⁵ The 1943 budget year indicates the extent of the Ministry’s commitment. They allocated over 2.5 million francs for the production of twelve educational films, and nearly 2 million francs for the purchase of negatives.⁷³⁶ For the 1944 budget year, the Education Ministry sought to attain 10 million francs for the purchase of equipment, 15 million francs for the purchase of negatives, and 10 million francs for the production of new films.⁷³⁷ Along with the larger funding commitments, the Secrétariat Générale de Jeunesse (SGJ) advocated for the creation of a national cinémathèque for young people that would replicate the Ligue de l’Enseignement’s structure of affiliated offices by creating their own set of regional centers. These “*cinémathèques de la jeunesse*” would host screenings on subjects such as hygiene, family, colonies, and sports, all according to Vichy’s goals of “moral reformation” which had striking parallels to the Republic’s program of “social education.”⁷³⁸ Under Vichy, the previous collaboration between the

⁷³⁴ Commission du Cinéma. “Programs Proposés,” undated report AN F17 13378.

⁷³⁵ Education Ministry to Finance Ministry, letter dated 20 January 1943. AN F17 13378.

⁷³⁶ *Depenses imputables sur le chapitre 112 article 2 du budget de l’Education Nationale en 1943*. AN F42

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⁷³⁷ It appears that these were not final figures, as hand-written corrections were inscribed beside each entry; to wit: equipment purchases: 1 million francs; purchase of negatives: 3 million; and production of new films: 3,650,000 francs. Ministry of Education. “Chapitre du Budget et Désignation des Dépense,” 2. AN F17 13378

⁷³⁸ Secrétariat Générale de Jeunesse. “Note relative à la creation de la cinémathèque de la jeunesse,” undated report. AN F17 13378.

state and civil associations was to be transformed into an exclusively state coordination of educational cinema showings.

It was only in Vichy's final two years, therefore, that the French state finally prepared to make a serious financial and organizational commitment to the educational film. While the governments of the Third Republic maintained only a provisional interest over twenty years, Vichy was the first government to succeed in creating the financial and organizational foundations to produce and distribute films and equipment. While it seems that the regime did not last long enough for many of these initiatives to bear fruit (a trait it shares with the Popular Front), the commitment to educational film – especially as a propaganda tool – is demonstrable. In a recent study, Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit has shown how *cinéma d'éducation* screenings began to revive sporadically in late 1941 and early 1942.⁷³⁹ Screenings often centered on Pétain and his many official excursions and voyages, as well as anti-Semitic films like *Le Péril Juif*. Moreover, in April 1943, the Information and Education Ministries co-sponsored Vichy's 1st (and only) Congress on Documentary Film. The Congress, whose goal was, according to its program, to convince people of the documentary film's political and aesthetic value, and to “fight for good documentaries and against bad ones.”⁷⁴⁰ The conference featured special sessions on small format films, scientific films, and educational films. Its program also included an affectionate testimonial from a schoolteacher Émile Brucker, who discussed the challenges of using equipment in the pre-World War One era.⁷⁴¹

⁷³⁹ Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit. *Les documenteurs des années noires: les documentaires de propaganda, France 1940-1944*. (Paris: Nouveau Monde Éditions, 2004), 69-70.

⁷⁴⁰ “Pourquoi ces congress?” *1er Congrès du Film Documentaire*. BIFI Fonds Gaumont LG711-B80.

⁷⁴¹ Émile Brucker. “L'introduction du cinéma dans l'enseignement.” *1er Congrès du Film Documentaire*. BIFI Fonds Gaumont LG711-B80.

And what of the films themselves? Bertin-Maghit argues that two departments of the Education Ministry – the SGJ and the commissariat générale à l'Éducation générale et au Sport (CGEGS) were the two organs most responsible for using films to achieve Vichy's ideological ends. These focused on sport films such as *Le Serment de l'athlète*, *Messagers du sport en Afrique du Nord* (1941) that represented the regime's dream of the "new man," the logic of which "aimed to form elites capable of supervising the masses and, in another way... to give to French youth the premier role in its project of national regeneration where physical education and sport would occupy a privileged place."⁷⁴² Bertin-Maghit cites an article from the CGEGS's trimestral bulletin by Gautier-Chaumet, the head of the Information Ministry's propaganda service, that conflated cinema's capacity for capturing the instantaneous on film and its ability to reconstruct the actions of athletes in the imagination in order to excite the viewer. For Bertin-Maghit, this expresses the view of cinema held by totalitarian regimes, "that the image is capable of provoking mimetic responses."⁷⁴³ Yet, this is to restate the notion of "suggestion" in different terms. If relatively sophisticated Popular Front films like *La Vie est à nous* both invoked and challenged the educational film form as a means toward a dialectical pedagogy, Vichy intended to utilize cinema's suggestive power to influence its young future cadres in such martial values as physical prowess.

Nonetheless, Bertin-Maghit also emphasizes the very limited resources available for film production and the regime's overall low output. In part, this was due to the Nazis' increasingly stern economic demands, which both raised the price of materials and

⁷⁴² Bertin-Maghit (2004), 32.

⁷⁴³ Bertin-Maghit (2004), 33.

also restricted French firms from producing new equipment.⁷⁴⁴ Consequently, it is unlikely that much of the Education Ministry's outlays for 1943 and 1944 for educational film production was ever allocated; of the 178 propaganda films that Bertin-Maghit lists in his index well over half were newsreels (*actualités*) commissioned by the Information Ministry for exhibition in commercial theaters. A testimony to Vichy's unrealized ambitions is shown in a June 1944 article from *Les Nouveaux Temps*, a collaborationist newspaper founded by Jean Luchaire, the son of Julien.⁷⁴⁵ "With its pedagogical films," the author observed, "French education has provided many unworthy examples... For the *cinéma éducatif et scolaire*, as for the establishment of a new kind of teaching, we are still obliged to wait." Beyond this oft-repeated refrain of frustration, however, the author indicated a growing disenchantment with the educational cinema as a whole. "Let's not forget," he went on, "that children themselves do not care for scholarly cinema, after-school séances or others. Families, on their side, resist everything that seems to them a waste of time at school, while the child has things to do and lessons to learn at home." Then he offered a firm rejoinder to thirty years of advocacy for cinema's promise to provide a neutral, objective form of visual education. "Moreover, let us not fool ourselves," he concluded, "let's not believe too much in the virtue of images. Many are the experienced teachers that could say that the tasks required for projecting a film give rise to much confusion after a lecture or a demonstration. Finally, a lot could be written on the *grave deformations on the memory* and on the understanding that is provoked by a pedagogy supported too much by *the visual*."⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴⁴ Bertin-Maghit (2004), 38-40.

⁷⁴⁵ "L'école et le Cinéma." *Les Nouveaux Temps*, 17 June 1944. Clipping in AN F17 13378.

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid. AN F17 13378

Conclusion

Both the Popular Front and Vichy governments demonstrated the first serious state interest and involvement in educational cinema. Vichy, especially, made the first significant efforts to provide consistent financial support for educational films as well as centralized coordination for the industry as a whole. In effect, both regimes provided in some measure the legitimacy and recognition that long-standing members of the movement had been clamoring for since the 1910s. Yet, much like the League of Nations institutions, the recognition came a political cost. Both the Popular Front and Vichy sought to utilize such cinema for their own propagandistic purpose. In the former, this propagandistic drive functioned through the independent left-wing film associations like Ciné-Liberté who supported the Front but were not acting in an official capacity. The Blum government itself had only begun to gain a sense of the problems of educational cinema (and the industry as a whole) before it fell in mid-1937. A closer association between education and propaganda was exhibited itself as a result of the Front's activities and was finally brought to fruition in Vichy. Here, the government itself sponsored the creation of educational films and supporting activities in order to promote its "National Revolution." Educational films were finally merged with the prerogatives of the state and finally achieve some measure of sustained state support. Due to the overthrow of the regime, however, most of Vichy's initiatives failed to bear fruition. Indeed, as the writer for *Les Nouveaux Temps* argues, the entire notion of an educational cinema was itself called into question.

Conclusion

Near the end of the Vichy regime, the film critic André Bazin described a screening of Jean Grémillon's *Le Ciel est à vous* (1943) that was sponsored by the Student Cinema group at France's new cinema training institute, IDHEC. He remarked how groups were also forming in Paris's *lycées* and suggested that these developments suggested a shift in the way that students were approaching the cinema. "Cinema," he wrote, has often been reproached for the passivity of its public... The cinema knows only indirect lighting and the long prism of rigid light... that carries within it only shadow and fugitive illusions. It was therefore interesting to create in a movie house a community of spectators, a homogeneous public that felt itself at one with the work."⁷⁴⁷

The activity of these groups, however, suggested to him that a more critical approach to the moving image was emerging among the broader student public. "There seems to be a general university movement in favor of cinema," he observed. "Every effort aimed at forming an enlightened cinema public capable of reacting and judging adds a stone to the overall creation itself. A school for film technicians is not possible without a school for spectators."⁷⁴⁸ Looking back many years later, the historian Antoine de Baecque confirmed Bazin's insight that the surge of university cinema groups at the end of Vichy and in the post-war period represented a new way of learning to see – not to

⁷⁴⁷ André Bazin. *French Cinema of the Occupation and Resistance: The Birth of a Critical Esthetic*. (New York: Frederick Ungar Pub., 1981), 69.

⁷⁴⁸ Bazin, 69.

be better able to absorb the lessons presented within a film, but to analyze its narrative strategies, and break down its codes of representation.⁷⁴⁹ “Education about film” was about to replace “education by film” among cineastes and intellectuals; and the introduction of *Cahiers du Cinéma* in 1950 and *Positif* in 1952 accelerated this critical discourse in France.⁷⁵⁰

During the 1950s and 1960s, this discourse expanded into a broader critique of the effects of mass media on individual subjectivity. In *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, Jacques Ellul provides a book-length analysis on the way that political regimes such as Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia instrumentalized images to produce mass compliance.⁷⁵¹ In the later 1960s, this critique was extended to show how the growth of image-based culture in liberal-democratic countries like the United States and France had produced a “society of the spectacle” that have generated passivity in the face of capitalist exploitation among the popular classes.⁷⁵² Since then, French theorists like Jean Baudrillard and Paul Virilo have developed this thesis to argue that late capitalism functions through the symbolic circulation of images that contain no fixed meanings and that poses new optical forms of power and control over human beings.⁷⁵³

This problematization of the relationship of images to political power has meant the attenuation of the confidence that films could function as a socially progressive tool through the engagement of state and private actors. Consequently, movements like those for educational cinema were not sustainable in this new and more critical environment. In

⁷⁴⁹ Antoine de Bacque. *Le cinéphilie: Invention d'un regard, histoire d'une culture, 1944-1958*. Paris: Fayard, 2003.

⁷⁵⁰ Emilie Bickerton. *A Short History of Cahiers du Cinéma*. London: Verso, 2011.

⁷⁵¹ Jacques Ellul. *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. Konrad Kellen and Jean Lerner, trans. New York: Knopf, 1965.

⁷⁵² Guy Debord. *Society of the Spectacle*. New York: Zone Books, 1995 [originally 1967].

⁷⁵³ Jean Baudrillard. “Simulacra and Simulations.” In *Selected Writings*. M. Poster, ed. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 166-184 and Paul Virilo. *Open Sky*. J. Rose, trans. (London: Verso, 2008), 35-45.

contrast, in the United States, the end of the Second World War “brought not only respectability to the educational motion picture but also a testing ground for its efficacy.”⁷⁵⁴ In France, this did not occur. Scholars such as Armelle Sentilhes have attributed the decline of educational cinema to material limitations and the problem of cinema fires, while Valérie Vignaux has argued that other genres of non-fiction film supplanted it after the Second World War.⁷⁵⁵ While these factors no doubt also contributed to the decline of educational cinema, it is also clear that its instability vis-à-vis propaganda and entertainment films, which characterized its interwar existence, made it increasingly difficult to defend in a post-Hitler and post-Vichy world.

In part, its decline was also due to the age of its most active proponents. Edmond Benoît-Lévy, Coissac, and Riotor were men of the nineteenth century and had died (Benoît-Lévy in 1929) or were near the end of their lives – the latter two dying in 1946. Gustave Cauvin, who created the largest and most active regional office in Lyon, died in 1951. Vichy had also forcibly closed down the Ligue de l’Enseignement and its regional cinema education offices and, in some cases, destroyed films and equipment.⁷⁵⁶ The break in continuity as well as the deaths and the aging of its major “apostles” also made a sustained revival difficult.

There were some post-war efforts, nonetheless, to revive intellectual and popular interest in pedagogical films. In September 1945, the Basel Group of German-speaking cineastes hosted a conference in their town; where, among other presenters, the former director of the IICI spoke on the League of Nations’ role in propagating educational films

⁷⁵⁴ Orgeron, Orgeron, and Strieble. “A History of Learning With the Lights Off,” in Orgeron, Orgeron, and Strieble, 41.

⁷⁵⁵ Armelle Sentilhes. “L’audio-visuel au service de l’enseignement: Projections lumineuses et cinéma scolaire.” *Gazette des archives* 173 (1996), 165-182; and Vignaux. *Jean Benoit-Lévy*, 64.

⁷⁵⁶ M.C. Lebrun. “Gustave Cauvin.” *Image et Son* 48 (December 1951), 4.

and Germans-speaker professor rehashed the same argument about cinema's pedagogical superiority.⁷⁵⁷ In France, the Ligue de l'Enseignement recommenced cinema screenings at its Paris headquarters and some of its regional offices resumed their activity.⁷⁵⁸ Even their post-war cinema journal, *Image et Son*, however, revealed how teaching *by* and *about* cinema had overlapped by the early 1950s.⁷⁵⁹ The journal included inserts called *fiche filmographiques* in which a commercial film – such as Vittorio de Sica's *Shoeshine*, in the May 1952 issue – was extensively analyzed in terms of its construction, style, and technique.⁷⁶⁰ Education in the techniques of cinema was slowly supplanting the earlier notions of cinema as a pedagogical tool.

By the early 1950s, then, even the Teaching League was accommodating a new, critical approach to film that taught participants to see in a different fashion than that envisioned by the prewar cineastes. When they began defining cinema's social role in the late 1900s and early 1910s, they did so in an effort to establish the medium's social legitimacy. Already suffering from diminished international stature, the industry found crime films to be a lucrative genre; yet, their success brought them into conflict with the State, whose officials believed that they promoted juvenile delinquency. Cineastes like Edmond Benoît-Lévy and Guillaume Michel Coissac sought to realign motion pictures to cohere with the Republic's social and political values.

⁷⁵⁷ Pierre Berne de Chavannes. "L'Institut international de Coopération intellectuelle et le cinéma," and N. Schaenker. "L'Université et le cinéma." *Cinéma d'aujourd'hui: Congrès International du Cinéma à Bâle*. (Paris: Éditions des Trois Collines, 1945), 79-86, 151-162.

⁷⁵⁸ Documents in the National Archives attest to the financial perilousness of these regional offices; in 1948, the director of the office in Nancy pleaded with the government for credits owed to it since 1946. See Colin to the Ministère de l'Information, letter dated 9 September 1948. AN F41 369.

⁷⁵⁹ Charles Acland makes the same argument about the postwar Film Council of America movement. See "Classrooms, Clubs, and Community Circuits: Cultural Authority and the Film Council Movement, 1946-1957." In *Inventing Film Studies*. L. Grieveson and Haidee Wasson, eds. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 149-181.

⁷⁶⁰ "Fiche Filmographique No. 12 – Scuischia." *Image et Son* 53 (May 1952), insert.

They did this first by arguing that cinema's suggestive influence, which was seen as the cause of criminal behavior, could be turned toward facilitating education. Indeed, they went so far as to argue that films could provide a more efficient and direct form of instruction than books. They based their argument on psychological theories of suggestibility first articulated by Alfred Binet in the late 1890s. Binet argued that learning, especially among small children, took place subconsciously, through the continual impression of images onto the mind.

This visually based cognitive model appealed to progressive educators, who congregated in civic associations like the Ligue and the Société de l'Art à l'École, to promote a more child-centered form of pedagogy, whose roots went back to the Enlightenment-era theories of Rousseau and Pestalozzi. They believed that films could contribute to *enseignement* – classroom instruction – and *éducation*, moral or cultural improvement. It was in the immediate post-World War One moment, however, when the cineastes were able to build a broad base of adherents ranging from provincial schoolteacher to the Ministers of Public Education themselves. They did so by asserting that cinema was not only an efficient means of education, but that it responded to the Republic's immediate needs for trained skilled labor and advanced republicans' long-held values of mass education, vocational training, and social hygiene. By the time that the first congress of educational cinema was held in April 1922, the cinema had been re-configured from a dangerous and anti-social influence to a tool for middle-class social reform.

Yet, the integration of films into classrooms challenged and frustrated teachers. Projectors were expensive, fragile, and difficult to operate. Because the French state did

not provide sufficient funding, teachers were forced to cobble together monies from municipalities and civic associations. State funding did cover roughly a third of the purchase cost of a projector, but repairs, maintenance and the renting of films fell onto the users. Although individual ministries provided funding and housed their own archival collections, the Republic developed no central policy regarding standardized equipment. Consequently, users were confronted with competing cameras in different film formats (16mm, 17.5mm, and 35mm) each with their own catalogues of films, confusing the domestic market.

Moreover, many teachers remained resistant to films. Some were hostile to the very notion that film could do more than serve as a distraction or, at best, provide vocational training. Others were frustrated over issues of content control. Film companies often affiliated with major publishers to produce educational films, but often re-purposed documentaries and travelogues, for this purpose. Teachers complained that they were not allowed input on the creation of films and most did not respond to their needs. Also, students tired of instructional films, preferring instead the public shows termed *cinéma d'éducation* where documentaries were combined with entertainment films. Those, like Léon Riotor and Adrien Collette, who insisted on 'pure' instructional films divorced from any hint of spectacle, found that "educational spectacles" were more to their intended audiences' liking. For all their efforts at asserting boundaries, they could not sustain a clear division between a "pure" educational cinema and other types.

Thus, by the mid-1930s, the educational cinema movement was in a contradictory situation. On the one hand, it could boast of having put projectors and films in nearly a quarter of the nation's classrooms. Yet, underfunding, lack of state coordination, and

resistance by the teaching establishment meant that it was fragile as well. French cineastes discovered this in the international domain as well. When the League of Nations decided to create an educational cinema institute in Rome, the French representatives believed in their central role in the endeavor; a French professor, Julien Luchaire, had proposed that the League take film seriously in its efforts for international cooperation, and Paris had hosted the first major international conference on cinema in 1926. Yet, they increasingly found themselves blocked by major American and German interests.

This was especially the case with competing film gauges. France's major company, Pathé, had created a small-format gauge of 17.5mm; American and German companies, however, had adopted the 16mm gauge that had been developed by the Eastman Company. Through their pressure on the League, the French were forced to accept the 16mm gauge as the international standard. They were also very reluctant to accede to the League's proposed international tariff convention that, they feared, would enable a wide variety of films to be classified as "educational." Pressure from Germany led to resentment among French cineastes, disenchanting them from the League's mission of promoting international understanding.

Indeed, by the mid-1930s, one senses a growing disenchantment with educational cinema in France. Ironically, however, the French state was about to take it seriously for the first time. With the election of the Popular Front in 1936, both documentary and educational cinema received attention as a means of propagating its political message. A parliamentary commission investigated led by Renaître sought to determine the state of the equipment in the nation's schools, and an educational cinema commission formed by the Minister of Education, Jean Zay. The Front, however, did not survive long enough,

however, to develop any of its initiatives, and the documentary and pedagogical efforts of its supporters were equally evanescent.

It would be the Vichy regime that took the greatest steps both to rationally organize the cinema industry to put it on a firmer financial footing, and develop educational cinema as a means for mass propaganda. In 1942, the regime commissioned a survey of the state and quality of projectors, and initiated the purchase of large amounts of film copies. Even more than progressive republicans, who thought that educational film could promote its social vision of popular education and social hygiene, the educational films of Vichy more blatantly used overt propagandizing to promote its philosophy of work, family, and fatherland.

Thus, the interwar educational cinema movement can be seen to oscillate between two conceptual poles: one that asserted the primacy of visual media as a means of instruction and the other that struggled to define a specific form of educational film vis-à-vis other genres. In so doing, the movement generated both enthusiasm and conviction among its nation-wide networks of adherents and produced frustrations in the actual practice of using films in this fashion. This oscillation was reproduced in material form through the way in which the French commercial industry opened the possibility of disseminating cinema technologies and films nationwide but also frustrated their domestic markets through a lack of coordination and a reluctance to work with teachers to create properly instructional films. Although the movement generated great expectations, its balance sheet is more complex and contradictory.

For all its limitations, the educational cinema movement cannot be considered a failure. For one thing, it enabled the cinema to reach schoolchildren and their families

throughout the country, even into the remotest village. Secondly, it built an infrastructure and a support network that fostered both the circulation and the collection of films. Regional offices and libraries played an important role in the development of film archival practices. Finally, the movement helps us to understand how notions of the cinematic image shifted in France between the interwar and postwar periods. These cineastes sought to rescue movies from official opprobrium by positing a social role for them. In so doing, they drew on psychology and on the educational politics of the Third Republic to provide a basis wherein which the cinema could attain social legitimacy as a tool for a more efficient and engaging form of instruction. They imagined a world where the French state and the cinema would mutually reinforce each: the former by providing the financial means to allow the latter to educate the popular classes. If this particularly benign and positive vision of a state-sanctioned cinema did not survive the war, the trajectory of the movement can help us to understand why the shift into a more critical stance occurred.⁷⁶¹ By representing a particularly fecund moment when ideas about the social utility of cinema were discussed, debated, and given a wide application, the educational cinema movement reveals how movies, like iPads, produce meanings about technology and motivate networks of actors to realize these meanings through their implementation.

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