



FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT: FOR THE LOVE OF FILMS

The Representation of Women in Truffaut's Films

The role of women in Truffaut's life and their representation in his films constitute one of the most complex areas of his work. Truffaut's films evidently favour female characters and offers stars such as Jeanne Moreau, Catherine Deneuve, Bernadette Lafont, Isabelle Adjani, Fanny Ardant and others, memorable leading parts. Yet, while many of these women are put on a pedestal as 'magic' creatures, there is often, at the same time, a dark undercurrent to their roles; indeed, some of Truffaut's most celebrated female characters can be seen in the light of destructive stereotypes such as the *femme fatale*.

While many scholars have considered Truffaut's representation of women in terms of his biography (in particular his relationship to his mother), his films can also productively be read in the light of trends in filmmaking, such as the New Wave, as well as social and cultural changes in France in the 1960s and 1970s, especially as they affected women's lives.

Ranging across Truffaut's career, this illustrated talk addresses such issues, taking also into account the impact of actors and actresses' images and performances on these representations. Re-assessing Truffaut's films in the post-#MeToo period offers other challenges, in particular the repeated trope of men who not only love, but relentlessly pursue, women. Finally, the talk will briefly look at some women who played a major role in Truffaut's work 'behind the scenes', notably Helen Scott (his American translator and correspondent) and his co-scriptwriter Suzanne Schiffman.

Ginette Vincendeau is Professor of Film Studies at King's College London and co-Chief General Editor of *French Screen Studies*. She has written widely on popular French cinema, notably stardom, as well as edited and contributed to several volumes on French and European film. Among her books are *Pépé le Moko* (BFI, 1998), *Stars and Stardom in French Cinema* (Continuum, 2000), *Jean-Pierre Melville: An American in Paris* (BFI, 2003), *La Haine* (I.B. Tauris, 2005), *Brigitte Bardot* (BFI/Palgrave-Macmillan, 2013) and *Brigitte Bardot, The Life, The Legend, The Movies* (Carlton and Gründ, 2014). She is currently completing a monograph on *Claude Autant-Lara* for Manchester University Press; her new, expanded edition of *The French New Wave, Critical Landmarks* (with Peter Graham) is forthcoming this year with Bloomsbury.

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