

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot Le Fou*
Edited by David Wills
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot le fou*

Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot le fou*, made at the height of the French New Wave, remains a milestone in French cinema. More accessible than his later films, it represents the diverse facets of Godard's concerns and themes: a bittersweet analysis of male-female relations, an interrogation of the image, personal and international politics, and the existential dilemmas of consumer society. This volume brings together essays by five prominent scholars of French film. They approach *Pierrot le fou* from the perspectives of image and wordplay, aesthetics and politics, history, and high and popular culture, offering thought-provoking insights into the film while demonstrating its relevance for a new generation of students of film. Also included are a selection of reviews of the film, as well as a complete filmography of Godard's work.

David Wills is chair of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at the University at Albany, SUNY. A scholar of French literature and film, he is the author of *Prosthesis*, co-author of *Screen/Play: Derrida and Film Theory*, and co-editor of *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts: Art, Media and Architecture*.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot Le Fou
Edited by David Wills
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot Le Fou
Edited by David Wills
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot le fou*

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot Le Fou
Edited by David Wills
Frontmatter
[More information](#)



Jean-Luc Godard

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot Le Fou
Edited by David Wills
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

THE CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS FILM HANDBOOKS SERIES

General Editor

Andrew Horton, *University of Oklahoma*

Each CAMBRIDGE FILM HANDBOOK is intended to focus on a single film from a variety of theoretical, critical, and contextual perspectives. This “prism” approach is designed to give students and general readers valuable background and insight into the cinematic, artistic, cultural, and sociopolitical importance of individual films by including chapters by leading film scholars and critics. Furthermore, these handbooks by their very nature are meant to help the reader better grasp the nature of the critical and theoretical discourse on cinema as an art form, as a visual medium, and as a cultural product. Filmographies and select bibliographies are included to help the reader go further on his or her own exploration of the film under consideration.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot Le Fou
Edited by David Wills
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot Le Fou
Edited by David Wills
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Jean-Luc Godard's *Pierrot le fou*

Edited by

DAVID WILLS



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot Le Fou
 Edited by David Wills
 Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
 Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
 Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521574891

© Cambridge University Press 2000

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2000

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot le fou / edited by David Wills.
 p. cm. – (Cambridge film handbooks)
 Filmography: p.
 Includes bibliographical references
 ISBN 0-521-57375-0 (hardcover)
 1. Pierrot le fou (Motion picture) I. Wills, David, 1953–
 II. Series. Cambridge film handbooks series.
 PN1997.P482 J43 2000
 791.43'72 – dc21 99-043660

ISBN 978-0-521-57375-7 Hardback
 ISBN 978-0-521-57489-1 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate. Information regarding prices, travel timetables, and other factual information given in this work is correct at the time of first printing but Cambridge University Press does not guarantee the accuracy of such information thereafter.

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	page ix
<i>Note on References and Abbreviations</i>	xi
<i>List of Contributors</i>	xiii
Introduction	1
<i>Oui, bien sûr . . . oui, bien sûr</i> DAVID WILLS	
1 The Imaginary Element: Life + Cinema	23
RICHARD DIENST	
2 <i>Pierrot</i> in Context(s)	43
ALAN WILLIAMS	
3 Godard's Tricolor	64
JEAN-LOUIS LEUTRAT	
4 Language Gone Mad	81
TOM CONLEY	
5 <i>Pierrot le fou</i> and Post–New Wave French Cinema	108
JILL FORBES	
<i>Filmography</i>	133
<i>Additional Films Cited</i>	160
<i>Reviews of <i>Pierrot le fou</i></i>	163
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	183
<i>Index</i>	185

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot Le Fou
Edited by David Wills
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Acknowledgments

I wish to thank, in the first place, Andy Horton, the series editor, for inviting me to edit this volume and for encouraging its progress across a number of continents; and, in the second place, the contributors for their enthusiasm and cooperation.

I am most grateful to David Laatsch, a graduate assistant in the French program at Louisiana State University, for his assiduous bibliographical research and preparation of reprinted reviews of *Pierrot le fou* that appear at the end of the volume. His draft translations of those and other materials, acknowledged in the text, were invaluable in speeding up the editing process.

Film stills from *Breathless*, *Pierrot le fou*, and Abel Gance's *Napoleon* are provided courtesy of the Museum of Modern Art Film Stills Archive. I am most grateful to Mary Corliss and Terry Geesken for their assistance in providing these illustrations. Thanks are also due to David Sterritt and Jonathan Rosenbaum for assistance with the filmography.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot Le Fou
Edited by David Wills
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Note on References and Abbreviations

Two important texts are referred to in both French and English editions.

The French script of the film appears in the journal *L'Avant-Scène Cinéma* 171–2 (1976). It is translated as *Pierrot le fou: A Film by Jean-Luc Godard*, trans. Peter Whitehead (London: Lorrimer Publishing/New York: Simon & Schuster, 1969). The translation also contains extracts from the *Cahiers du cinéma* interview “Let’s Talk About Pierrot” (N&M, 215–34; B, 263–80 [see next paragraph for these references]). Note that various discrepancies exist between the spoken French dialogue and the *Avant-Scène* transcription, and between the Whitehead translation and the subtitles to the English version of the film. Throughout this volume the French and English published transcripts are referred to in the text as, respectively, A-S and W, followed by a page number. When the Whitehead translation is not followed, indicated by “cf. W,” the translation is by the respective contributor.

A collection of interviews with and writings by Godard is published in French as Alain Bergala (ed.), *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard* (Paris: Cahiers du Cinéma-Éditions de l’Étoile, 1985). An earlier edition (Paris: Pierre Belfond, 1968), covering Godard’s work up to and including *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle/Two or Three Things I Know About Her* (1966), exists in English translation as Jean Narboni and Tom Milne (eds.), *Godard on Godard* (New York: Da Capo, 1986). (This is a reprint of the 1972 Viking edition. The new edition lists Tom Milne as editor and translator.)

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot Le Fou
Edited by David Wills
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xii NOTES ON REFERENCES AND ABBREVIATIONS

Throughout this volume the French and English editions are referred to in the text as, respectively, B and N&M, followed by a page number. Whenever the French edition (B) only is indicated, the reference is to matter not included in the translation. In such cases the translation is by the respective contributor.

Contributors

Tom Conley is Professor of French at Harvard University. His books include *Film Hieroglyphs*, *The Graphic Unconscious in Early Modern French Literature* (also published in French), and *The Self-Made Map: Cartographical Literature in Early Modern France*. He has translated Deleuze's *The Fold* and Michel de Certeau's *The Deluge, the Plague: Paolo Uccello*, and *The Capture of Speech and Culture in the Plural*, and Christian Jacob's *The Sovereign Map*. He is completing a study on space, event, and violence in critical writing.

Richard Dienst is Associate Professor in the department of English at Rutgers University and author of a groundbreaking work on television that uses Godard as an essential reference, *Still Life in Real Time: Theory After Television*. He has also published articles and essays in the areas of cultural studies, media politics, and the imaginary dimensions of economics, and has two volumes forthcoming: *The Shape of the World* (with Henry Schwarz), and, on indebtedness and the global economy, *Who Owes the World?*

Jill Forbes is Professor of French at Queen Mary and Westfield, University of London, a film critic, and former governor of the British Film Institute. A specialist in French cultural studies and postwar French culture and society, she has published important works in French cinema including a study of the Marcel Carné classic, *Les Enfants du paradis*, and *The Cinema in France: After the New Wave*. Other published works include *Contemporary France*

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-57489-1 - Jean-Luc Godard's Pierrot Le Fou
Edited by David Wills
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

xiv CONTRIBUTORS

and *French Cultural Studies: An Introduction* (co-editor Michael Kelly).

Jean-Louis Leutrat is Professor of Film Studies and President of the Université de Paris III – Sorbonne Nouvelle. He has published books on French writer Julien Gracq as well as in various areas of film studies, among them the western, Nosferatu, the fantastic, and Godard. Titles include *L'Alliance brisée: le Western des années 1920*, *Le Cinéma en perspective: une Histoire*, *Vie des fantômes*, *L'Année dernière à Marienbad*, *Jean-Luc Godard* (with Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues), and *L'Autre visible* (with Francis Jacques).

Alan Williams is Professor of French, Comparative Literature, and Cinema Studies at Rutgers University and the author of many essays on film, including work on Godard and sound, and *Max Ophuls and the Cinema of Desire*. His 1992 book, *Republic of Images: A History of French Filmmaking*, is the first general and comprehensive history of French film to appear in English. He is the editor of the forthcoming *Film and Nationalism* and is currently writing a history of American “studio system” filmmaking from 1915 to 1960.

David Wills is Professor of French and English and chair of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at the University at Albany (SUNY). His publications include *Screen/Play: Derrida and Film Theory* (co-author Peter Brunette), *Writing Pynchon* (co-author Alec McHoul), *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts* (co-editor Peter Brunette), and *Prosthesis*, which he has also translated into French. He is translator of Derrida's *Gift of Death* and *Right of Inspection*, and is currently writing a book on jazz.