

# Early French Film

1920 - 1930

- Leading film producers: Pathe and Gaumont
- Time of experimentation
- Epic films
- One fourth film production of Germany
- Film seen as important art form
- (question of film as art debated in Germany, largely ignored in America)

# Photogenie

- Coined by Louis Deloc (director)
- “defines a dialog between existing world and actual world”
- Film transforms our perception of actual events (what’s in front of the camera) without altering the event through:
  - framing
  - editing
  - lighting
- Opposed to German style
- Objected to commercial French cinema (too stage-like)

# “Film must be visual”

- Germaine Dulac
- Sounds redundant
- Dulac’s intention:
  - Reduce emphasis on dramatic action
  - Focus on “Image and its rhythms”

# Cinegraphie

Logical extension of photogenie

Led in two directions:

Poetic cinema or pure movement (avant garde)

Utilization of techniques to reflect interior states (impressionism)

# Important names

- Abel Gance (*Napoleon* 1927)
  - Sweeping visuals
  - Fluid camera
  - Painterly style (screen as canvas)
- Rene Clair (*Entr'acte*, 1924)
  - *Surreal imagery*
  - Disorientation
  - Fast and slow motion
  - Stop-motion animation

# French Film Industry in the 30's

- France had one of most diverse and artistic film industries
- Dominated by Germany and Hollywood until about 1933
- Poetic realism (dominant style)

# Poetic realism

- ▶ Fidelity to milieu
  - Settings of everyday life
  - Working people and lower classes
- ▶ Characters driven by destinies larger than themselves (by fate)
- ▶ Dominated by ideology of social determinism
- ▶ Attempts to transcend fate



# Two Important Names

- Marcel Carne (1909-1996)
  - Port of Shadows (1938)
  - Children of Paradise (1945)
  - Films w/national symbolism
  - Stresses feelings and human relations
  - Quiet and atmospheric music
- Jean Renoir (1894-1979)
  - Boudu Saved from Drowning (1932)
  - La grande Illusion (1937)
  - Rules of the Game (1939)
  - Socially committed cinema
  - Deep focus
  - Constantly moving camera
  - Long takes
  - Contrapuntal use of the sound and visual tracks
  - “unity of image in space and time” (not broken down by edits)