



Truffaut: A Biography

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Here is the definitive story of one of the most celebrated filmmakers of our time, an intensely private individual who cultivated the public image of a man consumed by his craft. But as this absorbing biography shows, Truffaut's personal story—from which he drew extensively to create the characters and plots of his films—is itself an extraordinary human drama.

Truffaut: A Biography Details

Date : Published September 4th 2000 by University of California Press (first published 1996)

ISBN : 9780520225244

Author : Antoine de Baecque , Serge Toubiana

Format : Paperback 476 pages

Genre : Biography, Culture, Film, Nonfiction, Cultural, France

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From Reader Review Truffaut: A Biography for online ebook

Paul Secor says

A story - perhaps not THE story, time will tell - about my favorite film maker.

Matt Micucci says

Though I knew a lot of what is said in this book, I can identify this as the best Truffaut biography translated in the English language. Therefore, I recommend it to any fan of the cinema of the times, cinema in general, and of course of the great Truffaut.

Will says

Or at 4.25 stars. Definitely for French New Wave geeks.

Everything on the first decade of Truffaut's career is excellent (especially *Fahrenheit 451*) and worth the purchase alone. Major problem was a bit too much emphasis on his critical career and not enough on basically every film from *Mississippi Mermaid* on (*Small Change* barely gets a few pages).

Mark says

Biography is a genre I always like to turn for reminders of the fundamentally flawed nature of humanity, affirmations that once people's most notoriously praiseworthy accomplishments are enumerated, the subjects of biographies, even the most esteemed public figures, are not so fundamentally different from their readers, which is to say subject to deep moral failings and personal misgivings (and if a biography doesn't happen to mention this, it can't be a very honest account). Sometimes, I will find myself identifying more closely than that general sense, and extremely rarely, I will read a book like *Truffaut: A Biography* which portrays a man so familiar to me that it's impossible for me to maintain real objectivity--a fiercely private man who is an avid reader and filmgoer, has no affection for society, dislikes politics ("What most bothered him about any political commitment was the simplification of reality, the Manichaeism implied in any militant discourse, for, as he put it, 'life is neither Nazi, Communist, nor Gaullist, it is anarchistic.'"; "I have never engaged in political activity and am no more a Maoist than a Pompidou supporter, as I am incapable of having feelings for any head of state."), keeps an extremely limited circle of intimates, carefully partitions his life, eschews a personal or social life in favor of work, leads a highly ritualized life, stewes in despair and dark thoughts, and is haunted by death.

Of course, this inability of mine to be impartial is an indicator of the key success of the book. Many biographies, even decent ones, leave you with a picture of a person that still feels more like a CV; de Baceque does what so many biographers can find so paradoxically difficult by making a human feel human. Simply put, the François Truffaut of this book is one of the most vividly portrayed and most in-depth characterizations I have ever read, fictional or non-, from his childhood through his career as maybe the

greatest film critic of all time and his equally superlative directorial career; any one of those three portions of his life would have made for an excellent, if shorter, book, and the fact that all three were both noteworthy and interesting was quite the gift to his biographers. The authors interweave the threads of Truffaut's work life, love life, and personal life (what little else there was of it) in an irrevocably tangled way that perfectly befits a man who considered film his life and everything else more or less derisory, with his personal concerns, worries, and peccadillos liberally included throughout. I thought I knew a fair bit about Truffaut coming into this, but it's almost laughable how this book renders even a strong background paltry. The book is extremely dense with facts and anecdotes, unlike some biographies where there is a lot of narrative elucidation and editorializing on behalf of the author in between sourced material to stretch said material or make tenuous connections; this is all carefully sourced and researched, and more importantly, well curated, so that chosen quotes and scenarios get well beneath the surface of the facts of Truffaut's life. Truffaut's extensive archives of his correspondence help immensely with the texture of his characterization, as do the author's interviews with most of the major peripheral figures in his life; in combination, we get an apparently very accurate sense of his thought processes, and get to see as he and those thought processes mature throughout his life. Like a Baroque portrait, this book contains more details than could ever be remembered (all the more reason to re-read! I've forgotten some things already--despite going through five sets of Post-It tabs marking the book up on my read-through--like which film it was in which Truffaut carefully structured the transition from the polite *vous* to the informal *tu*), but the indelible effect of the total painting is unforgettable.

Formally, de Baceque doesn't set the world on fire, though it can be argued that he didn't need to; a linear, following-the-filmography style doesn't feel out of place here, and as mentioned before, fitting personal details around the relentless train-schedule of Truffaut's work life is fitting. In the last chapter (of eight), though, there is a slight feeling of inadequacy, not merely just the natural narrative decline of the end of one's life but a sense that the writing may have been hampered by fewer source materials, perhaps; whatever the reason, that chapter was notably short on revelations compared to the others, though not to say notably less interesting. There were times when I would have liked to have been provided more detail (for example, when it was mentioned that Truffaut was recommended Tolstoy and Chekhov stories to read in preparation for a project, I would have liked to know the specific ones in order to better understand how they might have informed his product; another time, the authors mentioned one critic's response as a negative exception to the critical acclaim for a film but failed to specify further) and there were some odd choices, such as the choice of film by which to identify a director (e.g. *Claire's Knee* for Rohmer, which was doubly odd as we'd already been introduced to and familiarized with Rohmer for a while). Also, for a biography of a director so interested in craft, who made that such a focus in his legendary touchstone book of interviews with Hitchcock, there's rather little discussion of his technical choices, which seemed surprising; I suppose this could be a possible concession to the audience, though it's difficult to imagine someone reading this who wouldn't have been up for it. I wouldn't have minded, either, a bit more critical commentary on Truffaut's films; biography is maybe the only literary form where you don't want the author to have *too* much of a point of view, lest the biography tip off-balance toward either screed or hagiography, but there are a few moments of sidelong, short-form film criticism and re-evaluation peppered in, and it's pretty delightful when it occurs, but the authors may have held back less out of deference to Truffaut and more out of a sense of not being true film critics, per se. The biggest frustration for me, though, was the use of endnotes; while the vast majority of the notes were boilerplate bibliographical sourcing not necessary for in-line reading, de Baceque sometimes chose to make editorial comments in the notes, sometimes paragraphs long, and I had to keep track of the next note that actually needed to be read mid-text. I think the book would have been better served with these more crucial, commentary-style notes as footnotes instead of endnotes, with the others left as endnotes.

Sophie says

It's probably the best biography I've read about François Truffaut, and one of the best I've ever read. The authors of this biography has been very thorough, all François Truffaut's life and work are in this book. It starts with his unhappy childhood, the revelation that he is a illegitimate child, his first wedding to a wealthy young women, his first work as a cinema's critics in "les cahiers du cinema" in where in met most of his future colleagues, his fascination for the work of Alfred Hitchcock and then, how he began to direct films.

All his films are described, with a lot of anecdotes about how were the movies' shooting, his relationship with the actor (and with the actresses as he had affairs with most of them).

The most moving moments are the one about his relationship with actor Jean Pierre Leaud that he discovered when he was barely 14 with whom he had a father-son relationship and his last years, when he was very ill but still continue to work.

This is the perfect book to discover François Truffaut, one of the best french film director.

Ed says

Why did I read this? I don't even really like Truffaut. Trying to be intellectual or continental or something.

Chanhee Lee says

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Bob Wake says

[Reviewed in 1999]

French film director François Truffaut died from a brain tumor in 1984 at the all-too-early age of 52. His legacy is substantial: 21 feature films; published collections of correspondence, film reviews, and screenplays; and an influential 1967 book based on interviews he conducted with director Alfred Hitchcock. Truffaut's career as a journalist began when he was still in his teens. He was directing movies by his mid-twenties. It comes as no surprise that his biography is a rich 462 pages in length. Written by Antoine de Baecque and Serge Toubiana—editors of *Cahiers du Cinéma*, the famed French film journal where Truffaut made a name for himself in the 1950s—*Truffaut* was published originally in France in 1996 and has finally appeared here in a 1999 U.S. edition.

Catherine Temerson's translation was worth the three-year wait, for she has rendered a complex and detailed text into lively, lucid, and always readable English prose. The authors had access to an enormous archive of personal files containing letters, private journals, film scripts, and memorabilia stretching back to the director's childhood. Truffaut once characterized himself as a "self-hating autodidact," and there is no question that his life was minutely annotated by his own hand beginning at an unusually early age. As a youngster, he began compiling voluminous clipping-files of articles on his favorite films and directors.

Anyone who has seen the 1992 documentary *François Truffaut: Stolen Portraits* (co-directed by Serge Toubiana) will recall the amazing sight of Truffaut's office, the bookshelves lined with hundreds of carefully labeled files which he placed in meticulous order during the final year of his life when he knew he was dying. At the time of his death, he was at work on an autobiography that was never to be completed, titled *The Screenplay of My Life*.

Truffaut's much-admired first feature-length film, *The 400 Blows* (1959), remains his most literal in terms of its autobiographical content. Antoine Doinel, played indelibly by 14-year-old Jean-Pierre Léaud, is a troublemaker at school, a colorful liar, a truant, and a petty thief. He is also the product of a chaotic Paris home life with an uncaring mother of adulterous passions and a passive-aggressive stepfather. This outline is faithful to the director's life. Doinel offhandedly reveals what is perhaps the most significant true-life corollary during the famous interview scene with his boarding school psychiatrist: he was raised by his maternal grandparents until he was ten years old. When his grandmother died, his mother and stepfather reluctantly brought him into their home. The melancholy and aloof self-reliance of an unwanted child were qualities that forever left their imprint. Twelve-year-old Truffaut, unaware that his stepfather Roland Truffaut was not his real father, discovered the truth one afternoon while reading through his stepfather's journals. Years later, in 1968, Truffaut hired a private detective to locate his biological father, who turned out to be a Jewish dental surgeon living in the town of Belfort in eastern France. Although he made the trip to Belfort and even staked out his father's house and watched the man leave for work one morning, Truffaut chose not to make contact with him.

If François Truffaut's adult career as a renowned filmmaker follows a certain predictable pattern of artistic triumphs and failures, it is the early years of his life, and his movie-obsessed teens, that are the more engrossing to read about in de Baecque and Toubiana's biography. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, Truffaut saw hundreds of films, and he came to know many of them by heart, such as Welles's *Citizen Kane* and Renoir's *Rules of the Game*. At sixteen, he went seriously in debt attempting to start a film club, which involved renting a movie theater and contacting studio representatives and convincing them to loan him films on credit. So incensed was Truffaut's stepfather by the financial losses his son incurred with this enterprise, that he arranged to have the boy thrown in jail and then given a three-month stay in a juvenile detention center. By seventeen, Truffaut was in a strict religious boarding school in Versailles (from which he would soon be expelled as a disruptive influence). The following autobiographical self-analysis was composed for a classroom writing assignment at the time:

My life, or rather my slice of life to this day, has been banal to the utmost. I was born on February 6, 1932; today is March 21, 1949, therefore I am seventeen years 1 month and 15 days old. I've eaten almost every day and slept almost every night; I think I've worked too much and haven't had very many satisfactions or joys. My Christmases and birthdays have all been ordinary and disappointing. I had no particular feelings about the war or the morons who took part in it. I like the Arts and particularly the movies; I consider that work is a necessary evil like excreting, and that any person who likes his work doesn't know how to live. I don't like adventures and have avoided them. Three films a day, three books a week and records of great music would be enough to make me happy to the day I die, which will surely occur one day soon and which I egoistically dread. My parents are no more than human beings to me; it is mere chance that they happen to be my father and mother, which is why they mean no more to me than strangers. I don't believe in friendship, and I don't believe in peace either. I try to stay out of trouble, far from anything that causes too much of a stir. For me, politics is merely a flourishing industry and politicians intelligent crooks. This sums up my adventure; it is neither gay nor sad; it is life. I don't gaze at the sky for long, for when I look back down again the

world seems horrid to me.

Almost a manifesto, this youthful essay says much about the man that Truffaut would grow into: a pugnacious aesthete embracing film, literature, and music, reactionary in his politics, passionate in mood and feeling, incurably romantic and idealistic, while at the same time a sardonic and dispassionate realist. Here, fully developed at seventeen, are the contradictions and enthusiasms that would imbue his life and films.

By eighteen, Truffaut was making a comfortable salary as a society reporter and photographer for *Elle* magazine and contributing film reviews and articles to journals like *Ciné-Digest*. His credentials as a journalist gained him access to filmmakers in the French movie industry. He met and interviewed director Robert Bresson on location while the final scenes for *Diary of a Country Priest* were being filmed. Nevertheless, exciting as his world had become, it was also during this period that Truffaut attempted suicide for the first time by administering 25 razor slashes to his right arm. He was depressed and despondent over his unrequited infatuation with Lillian Litvin, a member along with Truffaut of the loose-knit group of young friends and film enthusiasts (including Jean-Luc Godard, Jacques Rivette, and Claude Chabrol, all future film critics and directors) who frequented the screenings at the Cinémathèque Française.

Movies were Truffaut's marked passion, but so was his growing immersion in intense love affairs balanced against what would be a life-long dalliance with prostitutes. Of course Truffaut survived the suicide attempt, but his self-loathing remained strong enough that he decided to enlist in the military in 1951 and was posted to Saigon. But he had a disastrous (or fortuitous, depending on your interpretation) change of heart, and decided instead to become a deserter, an action which landed him in an army prison. After another suicide attempt while incarcerated, he was placed in a military psychiatric hospital.

However far removed from society he found himself during these years—whether in boarding school or the military or prison or a psychiatric hospital—Truffaut invariably strengthened his resolve by turning inward, toward aesthetic contemplation and literary pursuits. He was never without books in prison, never without his journals and letter-writing. Proust and Balzac were always near at hand. While in the military, Truffaut read Jean Genet's *A Thief's Journal*, which deeply affected him, and he began a correspondence with Genet that resulted in a friendship with the author and existential outlaw (famously dubbed "Saint Genet" by Jean-Paul Sartre).

Another formative and crucial friendship for Truffaut had been forged earlier with eminent French film critic and theorist André Bazin, whom Truffaut met while going in debt with his ill-fated film club. Bazin and his wife Janine opened their home to Truffaut when he deserted from the army, and they advocated with legal and military authorities for Truffaut's release from prison after he turned himself in and was jailed. Perhaps most importantly, it was Bazin who encouraged Truffaut's film criticism and published his early pieces in *Cahiers du Cinéma*. As one of the journal's founding editors, Bazin sent a copy of the first issue to Truffaut in military prison in 1952.

Truffaut began writing for *Cahiers* in 1953. So prolific were his film reviews that he published many of them under pseudonyms (including an alter ego who composed a passionate and obsessional essay on Marilyn Monroe's underwear, a theme which prefigures the curious fetishistic attention Truffaut would later lavish on women's stockings and lingerie in films like *The Soft Skin* (1964) and *Mississippi Mermaid* (1969)). But he signed his own name to the controversial essay that appeared in January, 1954, titled "A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema." An unabashed right-wing assault on the mainstream French "cinema of quality," its principle targets were a well-known screenwriting team of the period, Jean Aurenche and Pierre Bost, whom

Truffaut accuses of writing “frankly anti-clerical films” filled with “profanation and blasphemy.” Truffaut sounds off against filmmakers who “desire to be superior to their characters” by manipulating the dialogue and plot to make pessimistic socio-political statements “instead of letting us see [the characters] for ourselves, with our own eyes.” In part, “A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema” seems calculated to explode like a Molotov cocktail aimed at the French filmmaking establishment, and to garner as much attention as possible for its young author. But there’s clearly an ideological element to the essay. In fact, André Bazin refused to print an earlier version that was even more strident in tone. De Baecque and Toubiana stress in their biography that Truffaut’s style as a film critic was often mean-spirited and politically malicious:

Truffaut himself enjoyed being provocatively right-wing. His moralistic intransigence in attacking the leading lights of French cinema sometimes induced him to take extreme, dubious, contrarian positions, as when he went so far as to praise American censorship in the January 1954 issue of *Cahiers* ... His determination to be a redresser of wrongs, while identifying with minority intellectual groups that were decried, and sometimes even banned, occasionally led him to pure political provocation.

If it was attention Truffaut wanted, he certainly received plenty of it with the belligerent tone of “A Certain Tendency” and much of his film criticism that came after. In addition to writing for *Cahiers*, he also published regularly in the right-wing cultural weekly, *Arts-Lettres-Spectacles*. It was during this time that the leftist French journal *Positif* branded Truffaut as a “fascist” and “intellectual vigilante” whose “political choices go hand in hand with a distinct taste for authority and the police.”

While there is no attempt in the biography to whitewash the ugly reactionary strains of Truffaut’s 1950s film criticism, the authors appear at pains to imply that Truffaut’s polemics were a rhetorical style or a “moral” stand rather than a reflection of ideological convictions on Truffaut’s part. This seems disingenuous. If the biography falters, it is in the way this troubling aspect of Truffaut’s personality is left unresolved for us. Other authors over the years have looked deeper into the political subtext of Truffaut’s “auteur theory”—the somewhat vaguely defined school of criticism based on the idea that directors “author” their films in an individualized and identifiable manner similar to novelists—and the postwar environment that might have instilled in him a right-wing temperament. John Hess, for instance, has suggested the following (in the American film journal *Jump Cut*):

La politique des auteurs was, in fact, a justification couched in aesthetic terms, of a culturally conservative, politically reactionary attempt to remove film from the realm of social and political concern, in which the progressive forces of the Resistance had placed all the arts in the years immediately after the war.

Did Truffaut subscribe to an overarching ideological agenda? Or did his arguments with leftists stem simply from a belief that politics had no place in filmmaking? Was he arguing as an aesthetic purist or as a political dogmatist? The biography doesn’t answer these questions. On the one hand, Truffaut’s formulation of the auteur theory could be seen less as an autocratic enshrinement of the “director” at the expense of actors and screenwriters than a means of bestowing artistic significance on lowly and forsaken B movies and genre films (which is how Bazin characterized the auteur theory and is why he never cared much for it).

According to de Baecque and Toubiana, Truffaut despised “message films” and what he called the “cultural political activism” of leftists and Marxists involved in literature and the arts. Perhaps this is born out in the remarkable irony that Truffaut’s own film career was comprised of motion pictures brimming with sensitivity and psychological subtlety, but devoid of political posturing. Were his more vituperative essays and reviews to be taken at face value, one might suspect Truffaut was poised to become cinema's version of Jean-Marie Le Pen directing agitprop hymns to nationalist purity. (It’s worth noting that he never reprinted “A Certain Tendency of the French Cinema” in published collections of his writings.) Instead, Truffaut inexplicably blossomed as one of the cinema’s supreme poets of childhood resilience and adult sexual desire. In other words, once he began to express himself as an artist, he turned inward once again, to the rarefied aesthetic landscape that he’d nurtured while in prison—the novelistic textures and emotional nuances of Proust and Balzac, the existential doggedness of Jean Genet, and perhaps most of all, the quiet despair of an unwanted yet resourceful little boy named François Truffaut.

[Read Part II of this review titled “The Truffaut Legacy” online at the Cambridge Book Review.]

Nancy says

I fell in love with Truffaut when I read this book.

B.Z.R. Vukovina says

This is one of my favourite film biographies. It's impossible not to fall in love with Truffaut even if you don't love his films (though, really, who could be ambivalent about *The 400 Blows*?), and it's pretty hard to dislike this book even if you don't particularly like life stories. I picked it up in an online bargain bin and have been recommending it ever since. Too many biographies are either nasty or make saints of their subjects. This one does neither, is clear, well-written and more solid than flashy.

Richard Lynn says

Truffaut made one of the best 5 films of all time - "The 400 Blows". This book is very interesting and informative regarding his entire life, recommended for fans of film.

Ju Ribeiro says

I think it's complete. All we need to know.

Justin says

Very informative and obviously researched meticulously; however, de Baecque's biography is so stultifyingly conventional as to recall the interminable works of the positivist historians of the 19th century.

It is not enough to be merely informative, and to record the happenings between birth and death, especially with a subject as beguiling as Truffaut. A biographer who wants his work to be worthwhile should dare not just to record the life of his subject, but to assess the scope of his subject's relevance as well. This of course entails venturing out to draw distinctions, and rendering considered judgments. What de Baecque has instead produced is an over-long, gossipy encyclopedia entry.

lindy says

I can't remember the last time I read a big long biography in its entirety, but I should really read them more often because I enjoyed this one a lot. To the extent that since I finished it a few days ago, I've been kinda missing my ol' buddy Francois and a few times have caught myself absentmindedly wondering what project and/or love affair he is in the middle of today. Though he (SPOILER! LOLZ) died pretty young, he lived a really full, accomplished life and really put his whole heart into every one of the projects that he worked on. And since Truffaut pretty much lived out my most idealistic dream career in real life (nationally renowned writer turned world renowned filmmaker...shit, man), I enjoyed being able to vicariously ride the trajectory of his success. Especially in 1959, what a year for him! Though not written exceptionally well, the book did a pretty great job of filling in a lot of little details about his life, especially in the early years. I was most fascinated by Truffaut's countless affairs with basically every one of his leading ladies, his complete inability to be in a stable relationship with a woman, and his bizarrely heartwarming relationship with Madeline Morgenstern, who he divorced around 1962 but went back to a few times throughout his life and ultimately moved back in with when he was dying of a brain tumor. All in all, I loved reading this book and will probably spend the rest of the summer trying to watch all of his films that I haven't seen.

Stephen says

I hope I never outgrow my love for *Jules et Jim*. There's something about François Truffaut the man I admire regardless of Truffaut the artist. It's his combination of high intelligence and sweet innocence, so extremely rare, and all the more remarkable when you discover in this biography that the difficult childhood portrayed in *Les Quatre Cents Coups (The 400 Blows)* is not only almost entirely autobiographical, it had been much more desperate and traumatic. How did he maintain such a sweet nature despite all? A love of movies and women in equal measure partially explains it. You'd like to say such a combination of character is impossible nowadays, since from a young age we're forced to know too many things our little brains can handle; virginity in all aspects must be overcome as soon as possible; the police or your parents will never accept "but I didn't know" as an excuse. And what do you want to do with your life?

The following would have to be one of my favorite quotes I've come across in years, Truffaut, writing about himself in *Paris Match*,

I wouldn't consider having dinner with a man. I have this in common with Hitler and Sartre: I can't stand male companionship after seven in the evening. For me, the evening means private life in a private place; it's the time for whispered words, shared secrets, sincere exchanges. The only moment which can rival the joy of filming.

Hitler and Sartre in the same breath!?! Why!?! And why include yourself among this rogue's gallery François?!? But at this point in my life I agree with you: male companionship in lieu of whispered intimacies

past a certain hour isn't worth the one-upmanship and posturing and bravado, a blast though that might be.

I love that the ole romantic can get carried away knowing what MUST be captured before it's too late, here while in pursuit of Isabelle Adjani,

You're a fabulous actress and, with the exception of Jeanne Moreau, I've never felt such a pressing desire to capture a face on celluloid, immediately, and without further delay. I accept the idea that theater is a noble cause (which Adjani was engaged in at the time), but my particular area is cinema and I came out of La Gifle with the conviction that you should be filmed every day, even on Sunday.

It is this Isabelle Adjani obsession Jean-Luc Godard rebuked Truffaut for: you've lost your way, man, stop filming her face.

In earlier days Truffaut would've been more concerned promoting the actresses he loves than being the one to capture them, in this case with the stunning Jeanne Moreau in 1957,

She is the greatest sweetheart in French cinema. While gangsters and gangs kill each other, she dances in a tutu in a circus, is tortured by a sadist and makes her way through bursts of submachine-gun fire, with thoughts only of love. With trembling lips, wild hair, she ignores what others call 'morals' and lives by and for love. Messieurs, producers and directors, give her a real part and we will have a great film.

"Morality" is such an ugly word, but with Truffaut it signals lightness of being,

*I see life as very hard; I believe one should have a very simple, very crude and very strong moral system. One should say "Yes, yes" and do exactly as one pleases. This is why there can't be any direct violence in my films. Already in *The 400 Blows*, Antoine is a child who never rebels openly. His moral system is more subtle than that. Like me, Antoine is against violence because it signifies confrontation. Violence is replaced by escape, not escape from what is essential, but escape in order to achieve the essential.*

Without violence and confrontation you end up with a very limited view on life (there is no Shakespeare without confrontation), but with Truffaut it somehow doesn't matter.

What I love about Truffaut the most is that his sweetness and intelligence is reflected best in his relationships with women, and all to outstanding measure, as they made him the artist he was, a romantic who spearheaded a movement along with Godard and Rohmer that gave us the beauties of France worth any other era, all with spontaneity, a flexible moral code, a love of fashion, a need for Platonic appreciation of feminine beauty. Baudelaire said there's no poetry without appreciation first. That pretty much defines the atmosphere that produced Truffaut's films.

Diffidence was part of his charm, and he used it as an asset in seducing women, or in letting women seduce him. Liliane Dreyfus says, for example, "François had a female sensibility; he knew how to read expressions in people's eyes." He sometimes could seem timid with a woman, in the periods of his life when he lacked self-confidence or was reluctant to commit himself. But he could be bold and was capable of badgering women who resisted him or considered him a friend or a pleasant companion rather than a lover. He was "very loyal, but possessive," by several accounts. "There was always a beginning, rarely an end," Liliane Dreyfus says. "He protected me, like a father, husband, and brother all at once, at every point in my life. Which didn't prevent him from sometimes being cruel, even with the people he loved." "Deeply unfaithful, more out of an appetite for seduction, or a need to be loved, than out of an all-consuming need," is how Madeleine Morgenstern describes it. Love changed into friendship, or continued in a more lasting, explicitly

sexual way. Jeanne Moreau referred to "inescapable harmonies."

... "However, François was not a hollow Don Juan. Because what counted most was his work, the idea of imposing his own style and his own world," said Philippe Labro, "the desire to exhibit all this talent."
