



# **Cinema of Paradox: French Filmmaking Under the German Occupation**

*Evelyn Ehrlich*

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From 1940 to 1944 the French cinema thrived both economically and artistically under the Nazi occupation. Despite the harsh and grim conditions of defeat, the French film industry produced many good films and a few enduring classics, including Carne's *Children of Paradise*, one of the most beloved of all French films.

*Cinema of Paradox* reveals, for the first time in English, the difficult course of French filmmaking from the declaration of war in 1939 through four years of misery to France's liberation in 1944. Evelyn Ehrlich examines the conditions of filmmaking as they reflected the larger political, cultural, and social context within occupied France. And, using previously unexamined German documents, she also looks at the French film business from the occupier's perspective, showing how the Nazis actually encouraged the French to maintain their high cinematic standards to achieve German economic and propaganda goals. *Cinema of Paradox* goes beyond the old clichés about resistance films versus collaborationist films and in doing so is very much in line with new sophisticated methods of viewing the French experience in World War II.

The book is filled with the famous names of the French cinema: performers such as Jean-Louis Barrault, Simone Signoret, and Harry Baur; directors including Bresson, Carne, and Clouzot; and the films themselves, including *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne* and *Le Corbeau*.

Based on interviews with French filmmakers of the period and on considerable research into French and German sources, *Cinema of Paradox* will be of interest not only to film historians but to those interested in the history of modern French and Jewish studies as well.

(Stanley Kauffman)

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