LATE GODARD

AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF CINEMA

DANIEL MORGAN

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Is there anywhere a space where everything becomes light?

—F. W. J. SCHELLING

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ILLUSTRATIONS

One of the exciting and maddening features of Jean-Luc Godard's work is that everything he touches invariably seems to lead to a disquisition on the nature and possibilities of cinema. A striking example of this tendency comes in an interview with the American filmmaker Hal Hartley. Their extended conversation focuses mainly on making independent films and on the difficulties (and opportunities) afforded by shooting on a low budget. At a certain point, however, they turn to the relation between film and television. Hartley notes that he enjoys seeing certain of his own movies on television, but Godard disagrees, saying that this is impossible: what television lacks, preventing it from being able to genuinely show films, is *light*. Godard means something particular here. Light is generally taken as mattering to cinema because of the role it plays in the physical creation of the film, the reaction of the emulsion; it contributes to the specific qualities of the celluloid image. Light is also the basis for the mode of viewing central to the history of cinema, the projection of the film on a screen in a darkened theater. Godard has both in mind, but he does not stop there. Light, he claims, has a third, less obvious function as a sort of goal or orienting point: "You go to where the light is coming from."[1] And in the kind of leap he is so fond of making, he connects this principle to the history of Western culture: our orientation toward light in the cinema mirrors the path of the "three shepherds" as they followed the star to reach the infant Christ (somewhat typically, he also misremembers the tale). As a result of all this, Godard claims that the success of cinema requires a filmmaker to exhibit "a feeling of light."

In truth, it shouldn't be surprising that Godard turns to the figure of light to think about cinema; it's a connection he's made since the beginning of his career.

In his early films, characters went to the movies to be bathed in light: Patricia and Michel in *À bout de souffle* (*Breathless,* 1960), Nana in *Vivre sa vie* (*My Life to Live,* 1962), even Michelangelo in *Les carabiniers* (1963). Later, the idea of light became almost metonymically associated with the cinema, as in Godard's 1966 declaration that it was appropriate for the French to have invented cinema, because the name of the inventors (the Lumière brothers) matches the nickname for Paris (City of Light). In 1983, he stated that the goal of his film *Passion* (1982) was simply "to show that film consists in following the light."[2] More recently, the connection between light and cinema has taken on an added political reverberation. In *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* (*Germany Year 90 Nine Zero,* 1991), a young couple—associated in the film with a pair of anti-Nazi resisters—sit in a car and switch the overhead light on: "This way the light always stays on," the woman says, a line that Godard links to the promise of the Enlightenment. In *Notre musique* (2004), over a shot of a swinging lightbulb—an image recalling both *Psycho* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1960) and *Alphaville* (1965)—Godard declares that "the principle of cinema [is to] go towards the light and shine it on our night." The binding of the figure of light to the perseverance of political hope sounds one of the deepest themes in Godard's late work: that an inquiry into what cinema is, could have been, and still can be is central to understanding the political and historical situation of our time.

It's perhaps apt, then, that this project began in a movie theater in 2001, when I had the good fortune to be living in London during the National Film Theatre's monumental retrospective of Godard's films and videos. Over the course of that summer, I saw most of his works: many of which I had seen before and many of which I hadn't. Among the latter were *Nouvelle vague* (1990) and *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* two films that impressed me at the time with their aesthetic and intellectual power. Several years later, I happened to see *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* in Chicago and became interested in its ambitions once more. As I started to think about the film more seriously and began to look at the films that preceded it, *Nouvelle vague* and *Soigne ta droite* (*Keep Your Right Up!* 1987), there seemed to me to be something like a common project at work, one marked by an exploration of the aesthetic possibilities of cinema, a preoccupation with cinema's past, and an anxiety about historical transformations. These concerns ran throughout Godard's works of this period, leading up to his eight-part video essay, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–98).

Part of what struck me was the variety of ways in which these films are preoccupied with the sense of an ending. One ending is the impending turn of the century and the events that seemed to coincide with it: the fall of the Berlin Wall, the unification (or reunification) of Germany, the end of socialism. Another is personal in nature: in his various appearances in his own work, it is clear that Godard was aging, and his films of this time are rife with references to mortality.

Godard, however, was by no means in a state of artistic decline. The 1980s and 1990s were years of intense productivity and creativity, as if he was following the path Thomas Mann had seen in Theodor Fontane's late years: "He is used up, life is behind him, and all that he will still be able to give the world is a mere eighteen volumes, each one up to *Effi Briest* better than the one before."[3] At the same time, his work suggested that cinema as he knew it was coming to an end, that he had outlived it, and that it was no longer a privileged site of artistic innovation.

Godard's response involves turning back to revisit and work through the history of cinema. At times, this retrospective gesture feels almost obsessive. Even within their titles, all three films make explicit and overt gestures to cinematic precursors. *Soigne ta droite* refers back to the collaboration between Jacques Tati and René Clément, *Soigne ton gauche* (1939), and *Nouvelle vague* apparently promises to deal with and reassess that cinematic movement (in which Godard of course played no small part). *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* evokes Rossellini's great film about the postwar world and the difficulty of starting over (*Germania anno zero* [*Germany Year Zero,* 1945]) and, through the person of Eddie Constantine in the role of Lemmy Caution, establishes a link to Godard's own work of the 1960s. And *Histoire(s) du cinéma* simply names this concern in its title, a subject developed and born out across its episodes. But if Godard is looking to rediscover cinema by exploring its past, this is not a gesture of nostalgia but an effort of reinvention, intended to discover cinema's powers and possible futures. He undertakes this project, moreover, in the context of changes taking place not only in social and political history but also in technologies of media production and distribution, especially the rise of digital media and the increasing movement away from theatrical projection. This book aims to show the results and significance of Godard's attempt.

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My parents, Mickey Morgan and Barbara Herman, have continued to teach me how to think (and why); for this, as for so many things, I owe much to them. Kristin Boyce has been central to everything in and around this work. Without her intelligence, criticism, and care, neither this book nor my life would be half what they are.

This is a book about Jean-Luc Godard's late work, in particular the films and videos he has made since the late 1980s. It is also a book about the place of aesthetics in cinema, and about the persistence of modernism, political radicalism, and late nineteenth-century artistic and philosophical concerns into the end of the twentieth century. Last, it is a book about how all these things go together, about the way Godard's films and videos make use of this inheritance and in so doing transform it in and for the cinema.

As any viewer of Godard's work over the past several decades can readily attest, his films and videos tend to evoke a feeling of being at sea. Watching them, we feel adrift amid vaguely present and confusing narratives, amid stunning images of natural and industrial beauty, and, most of all, amid a vast range of references and allusions to the history of literature, painting, philosophy, and cinema, seemingly too vast to negotiate. It's not so much a question of being able to identify every reference thrown our way—a task that seems not only fruitless but also pointless—as it is a problem of not knowing where to start, of not understanding what Godard is doing. If there is a frequent impression, conveyed in part through weighty allusions and citations, that great things are at stake, that what Godard is doing is of the highest intellectual importance, there is also a nagging suspicion that it may all be, in a sense, a sham, that we have gestures of seriousness instead of the genuine article.

Godard's late work is not that, but neither is it self-evident how the films and videos achieve the meaning they have. There are serious questions about how the larger problems Godard is interested in fit with and emerge out of the complexity of the individual films and videos. A large part of this book is therefore an attempt

to work through this interpretive challenge by way of sustained analyses of visual and aural details; only by staying with the intricate weave of sound, image, and text can Godard's late films and videos be approached and understood. These are difficult works, and it will be hard to make their power visible and accessible. But the effort is well worth it: the reflections they contain on the history and future of cinema, and its relation to the history of the twentieth century, are original and profound.

This book focuses on three of Godard's films from the late 1980s and early 1990s—*Soigne ta droite* (*Keep Your Right Up!* 1987), *Nouvelle vague* (1990), and *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* (*Germany Year 90 Nine Zero,* 1991)—and his major video work of the period, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–98). Several distinct yet interwoven intellectual concerns run through these works, involving cinema, history, politics, and the arts. Taken together, they form the core of Godard's late cinematic project: a sustained engagement with what he sees as cinema's inheritance of terms and debates that come out of a tradition of philosophical aesthetics, a tradition that emerges in particular from the legacy of German idealism and romanticism.

The task of this introduction is twofold: first, to give some sense of the central issues of this book by placing Godard within a broader cinematic and intellectual context, one that will illuminate the terms and arguments of his late work; and second, to analyze several brief sequences from his films and videos to provide an example of how I will proceed. The intention in combining these activities is to give an initial picture of the ambitions of Godard's late films and videos, the interpretive challenges they pose, and, most important, the rewards they offer.

1. A FRATERNITY OF METAPHORS

Two examples from Godard's work show the daunting range of issues he takes up and at the same time give an indication of their intellectual payoff. One is from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* the other from *Histoire(s) du cinéma. Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* is set in Germany at the end of the cold war, its story following the path across Berlin taken by a secret agent—Lemmy Caution from *Alphaville* (1965), again played by Eddie Constantine—as he tries to take stock of one hundred years of European history in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall. The journey is repeatedly interrupted by the appearance of a variety of literary figures, from Freud's Dora to Goethe's Charlotte Kestner to Cervantes's Don Quixote; Caution even takes a side trip to Weimar. Amid this literary and historical wandering, a little more than halfway through the film, Godard suddenly cuts from shots of iconic Berlin locations (Checkpoint Charlie, the Reichstag) to the interior of the Alte Nationalgalerie.

FIGURE 1. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* (1991)

The scene that follows lasts less than a minute. It starts with a medium close-up of a woman with a camera. She raises the camera up to her eyes, looks through it, and we hear the sound of the mechanical shutter. There is a roughly 180-degree cut to a shot over her right shoulder (figure 1), and we see that she has just photographed Gustave Courbet's *The Wave* (1870); Caution says, in voice-over, "Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet." So far, all this is relatively straightforward, even if the scene is somewhat unexpected within the overall flow of the film. But then we begin to hear the sound of the sea, and, after a moment, Godard cuts directly from the painting to a black-and-white film clip of a large wave rising up from the bottom of the frame and tossing a small ship at the top right. It's precisely this kind of gesture that makes thinking about Godard's late work so difficult. It seems fairly clear that the transition works through an associative logic: the sound of the sea motivates the transition from one image of waves to another, from still to moving images. But the intrusion of the clip raises questions. Why is sound the trigger for the transition? Why is there a clip here at all, and one that clearly does not belong to the world of the scene? Should we understand it as a memory that belongs to the woman with the camera? Is it an illustrative gesture made by Caution? Or is it a marker of the authorial presence of Godard himself,

directing our reading of the sequence? A further complication is that the clip of waves itself functions as a transition, allowing the film to move from Berlin to a shipyard on the Baltic coast, where Godard will stage an enigmatic and dense scene around the departure of Russia—its sailors, politics, and culture—from Germany.

Although considerations of narrative are by no means irrelevant here, I don't think they're of primary significance. Instead, I want to draw attention to the appearance of painting, photography, and cinema in such close proximity to one another, a connection that suggests an interest in the relation among these arts. Comparing cinema to painting and photography is a well-worn critical gesture, the most familiar version of which is articulated by André Bazin in a remark that Godard cites several times during this period: "Perspective was the original sin of Western painting. Niepce and Lumière redeemed it."[1] From there, Bazin claims, painting was able to free itself from the demands of verisimilitude and move into abstraction, handing over the burden of realism to photography and eventually to cinema. In this vein, the scene from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* can be read as a meditation on a succession of media, in which Godard posits a developmental model for the origins of cinema based on technological innovation and progress: from painting to photography to film.[2]

It's not clear, however, that this is the line of argument offered by Godard here. Note that the sequence of media does not go from painting to photography to cinema, as the traditional version of the genealogy of cinema would have it. If we follow the sequence of images faithfully, painting is the middle term and not the beginning: we go from the woman taking a photograph to Courbet's painting to the film clip. This is not a minor matter. By showing cinema as directly following from painting, *not* photography, Godard seems to be suggesting that photography had to pass through painting, to learn its lessons, in order to become cinema, and not the other way around. (I will argue in chapter 4 that painting also serves as a model: for Godard, cinema aspires to the condition of painting.) This way of reworking the genealogy of cinema moves away from a tradition of thinking about cinema in terms of the direct recording of the world. Instead, it becomes a medium oriented around the creation of images: not the automatic replication of the world, but also not fully removed into abstraction.

Godard's conception of cinema has never been straightforward. For every remark like the famous line, "Cinema is truth twenty-four times a second" (from *Le petit soldat* [1960]), there is an opposed (and equally famous) claim, such as his description (from *La chinoise* [1967]) of Lumière as a fabulist and Méliès as a documentarian.[3] These questions about the basic orientation of cinema—and the relations they imply between fiction and documentary, between film and video, between image and history—have taken on a pressing importance in Godard's work since the 1980s. Over and over, in films and videos made during these

years, he turns to questions of what cinema is, both in itself and in relation to other media. Though photography is never out of the picture, its role is generally superseded by a tradition of painting (and, at times, by literature as well).

In *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* Godard returns to these topics but introduces additional elements: chief among these are the history of cinema and his own place in it. Throughout the video series, Godard explicitly positions himself as both author of the inquiry and part of its subject. The most prominent example of his role as author of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is an image that appears across all the episodes: Godard shows himself seated at his desk, ostensibly calling up the various images, sounds, and texts that constitute the video we're watching. By contrast, his place as part of the history of cinema is generally found in the historical and film-historical analyses he creates. In this vein, Godard persistently claims that the *nouvelle vague,* and the role he played in it, occupied a privileged position within the history of cinema. In a conversation at the beginning of episode 2A, the French critic Serge Daney remarks to Godard, "This [*Histoire(s) du cinéma*] could only come from someone of your generation, the New Wave generation. . . . the New Wave is perhaps the only generation which started to make cinema, in the fifties and sixties, which found itself in the middle both of the century and perhaps of the cinema."[4] Daney suggests, and Godard agrees, that the *nouvelle vague* arrived at a moment not only when they could understand something fundamental about the history of cinema (they had the right distance on it) but also when they could still use that knowledge in the attempt to produce something genuinely new.

This is not simply a gesture of self-aggrandizement. Godard's belief in the historic centrality of the *nouvelle vague,* and hence the significance of his own place in the history of cinema, is deeply interwoven with his larger arguments about that history. A sequence from episode 3B, appropriately titled "Une vague nouvelle," gives a version of how this goes. Godard begins with one of the most recognizable cinematic moments from the *nouvelle vague,* the end of François Truffaut's *Les quatre cents coups* (*The 400 Blows,* 1959) when Antoine (Jean-Pierre Léaud) runs down the beach toward the sea. As Antoine moves to the right, Godard quickly alternates between that shot and the end of Fritz Lang's *You Only Live Once* (1937), the doomed lovers (Sylvia Sydney and Henry Fonda) staggering to the left through a forest. After several moments, he begins to print the words "*égalité / et fraternité / entre le réel / et la fiction*" (equality and fraternity between reality and fiction) over the screen and at the same time changes the clip he uses in alternation with Truffaut's film. After *égalité,* Godard goes to Ingrid Bergman at the stake from Rossellini's *Giovanna d'Arco al rogo* (*Joan at the Stake*, 1954), then, after *fraternité,* to Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1960), with James Stewart swimming to rescue the apparently drowning Kim Novak (figure 2). With the phrase *entre le réel,* he cuts away from Antoine on the beach to show a black-and-white

FIGURE 2. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (1988–98) 3B

photograph of himself, washed out in high contrast, in alternation with a news-reel of soldiers moving through a river or swamp (perhaps from the Vietnam War). The printing of the phrase "*et la fiction*" does not immediately produce a change in the type of image, although Godard does use different newsreel clips, but it eventually triggers a move back to *Les quatre cents coups* with a still of Antoine's face—not the freeze-frame Truffaut uses at the end of his film, but Godard's own appropriation of a different moment—superimposed over a clip of him running on the beach.

The sequence is certainly part of Godard's longstanding effort to sort through his relationship with Truffaut. He sets out what appears to be a stark opposition, placing himself on the side of documentary and Truffaut with fiction, more or less an echo of Godard's older complaint that Truffaut lived and worked in a realm of fantasy while he was involved in the pressing historical and political concerns of the time. But the sequence is more complicated than that. After all, when Godard does return to Truffaut at the end, he is operating under the heading of "*le réel*"; is Truffaut aligned with the documentary tradition as well? The argument seems to be that *Les quatre cents coups* is merely fiction until its end when the evocative freeze-frame of Antoine's face allows the film to pass into reality. But this reality is not that of the world Truffaut creates. Godard's substitution of his own close-up—the one he creates out of *Les quatre cents coups*—in place of Truffaut's original suggests that the image of Antoine's face matters more than the film itself. Indeed, it's *this* face that matters, since Léaud will become an icon of the *nouvelle vague,* a figure whose physical (and political) maturation can be traced through his appearances in Godard's and Truffaut's films over the next decade. As Godard sees it, Truffaut's film surpasses its fictional status only after the fact, in its afterlife; it's in the context of the *nouvelle vague* as

a whole that reality and fiction intertwine, that fantasy takes on the weight of the documentary.

The sequence, then, is not merely a matter of settling scores; the ghost of the *nouvelle vague* clings closely to it. When Godard begins to alternate the end of *Les quatre cents coups* with other clips, he chooses films that were touchstones for the critical enterprise of the movement. Lang, Rossellini, Hitchcock: this is a roll-call of the major directors from whom the young critics and filmmakers drew inspiration, the exemplary figures of Hollywood cinema and postwar realism that animated discussions at *Cahiers du cinéma* and the Cinémathèque Française. With the printed phrase, "equality and fraternity between reality and fiction," Godard gives the genealogy the appearance of a definition. As in the interplay between Godard and Truffaut that the sequence creates, the *nouvelle vague* was neither one nor the other, neither simply fiction nor reality, but both together. Or, as Godard put it in 1962, "The New Wave . . . may be defined in part by this new relationship between fiction and reality."[5]

All this comes together through another ghost in the sequence: the echo of the French Revolution in the words *egalité* and *fraternité*. We might treat this is as an allusion to the history of cinema. Where the French Revolution replaced the *ancien régime* with the Republic, the *nouvelle vague* did away with what Truffaut termed the "tradition of quality" in order to install its own values and modes of filmmaking. There's something here about the idea of nation as well, a concept central to Godard's understanding of cinema. If he seems to picture the *nouvelle vague* as constituting its own country—the country of cinema, he will say at times—it is also connected to France itself and therefore follows from and inherits this historical and political tradition. But what does it mean, then, that *liberté* is missing from the list? Where is it to be found? Godard's idea seems to be that "*liberté*" was precisely what Truffaut, in *Les quatre cents coups,* represented, the personal revolt against institutional constraints. This was not enough. Truffaut focused only on *personal* freedom; he was not up to the full political and social vision that cinema demanded. The *nouvelle vague* needed "*égalité*" and "*fraternité*" as well, and this, presumably, is what Godard provides, both then (in his films) and now (in his titles).

These sequences from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma* give an indication of how Godard thinks about and through the cinema. It's not just that he makes peculiar arguments: about the relation between cinema and the other arts, the historical legacy of the *nouvelle vague,* the intersection between cinema and the idea of a nation, even the very idea of a history of cinema itself. He also generates these arguments in a particular way. Rather than presenting straightforward propositions or even carefully encoded allegories, Godard works with an array of images, clips, texts, and references, whose density frustrates our ability to read meanings off them. If the contents of Godard's arguments are idiosyncratic,

it is in part because we are called on to judge and make sense of them in new ways.

<div align="center">2. AGAINST PRIVATE LANGUAGES</div>

The sense of difficulty that attends Godard's late work shaped much of the initial response to it. In both popular reviews and scholarly articles, these films and videos have been described as impenetrable, obscure, confusing, even solipsistic. They are taken to be actively hostile to attempts to find anything like coherent meaning in them; conversely, they are thought to have no meaning at all, at least none that can be made available to a public. While such judgments can be found about each of Godard's films, all the way back to *À bout de souffle* (*Breathless* 1960), the criticism intensified around the time of *Nouvelle vague,* when Vincent Canby saw the film and simply declared, "The party's over." The trend has continued with each film or video released since.[6]

Some of the dissatisfaction with Godard's late films and videos is due to the way they resist readily accessible interpretive frameworks that could be used to circumvent the effort required to negotiate their dense layering of sound, image, and text. Other features that contribute to the negative critical judgments include a use of images that appear to have only personal meaning (such as the villa in *For Ever Mozart* [1996], his summer home when he was a child); a variety and density of references that no viewer could recognize or decipher; a montage style in which the connections between images—and between images and sounds and texts—are obscure; a reliance on images of stunning beauty that do not obviously mean or signify; and the recurrent on-screen presence of Godard himself in the role of fool or idiot.

The most serious worry has to do with matters of style. Is Godard's practice of montage best understood as an externalization of an interior monologue? Do the films have nothing but inaccessible personal meanings? Are they instances of a private language, unintelligible without reference to Godard's thought processes (and his own storehouse of images and their meanings)? I think these questions, at least posed in this way, are largely unproductive. After all, the worry about privacy and interpretation, when connected to difficulties of style, is hardly unique, and his use of references and allusions has precursors. This worry, for example, involves an old debate about literary modernism, and indeed one way to think about Godard's project is as a cinematic analog of Pound's erudition in the *Cantos* or Joyce's penchant for neologisms (or "portmanteaus") in *Finnegans Wake*.[7] The difference is that these concerns and this debate are less common in film than they are in the other arts.

Much of the scholarly work over the past decade has tried in various ways to address the difficulties involved in attending to Godard's style. Three major

biographies—by Colin MacCabe, Richard Brody, and Antoine de Baecque—have filled out the personal and intellectual context of these films and videos, and a burgeoning literature of interpretation has identified and explored many of the theoretical models on which Godard draws.[8] The bulk of this work has focused, not surprisingly, on *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* among which Céline Scemama's on-line "score" of its references, along with similar work on the Japanese DVD (2001), is an indispensable tool for all scholars, myself included, and has enabled a shift from identifying references to understanding how they work.[9]

The difficulties, however, do not go away with increasing knowledge and information, and to think that they could is to get something wrong about the kind of filmmaker and artist Godard is. He is not trying to communicate something directly to an audience, a message that could be easily deciphered if only we were in possession of the appropriate knowledge or code. As we saw in the sequences from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* what Godard has to say is inextricably bound up with the means he chooses for saying it. Difficulty is, quite simply, an ineradicable, even constitutive, feature of Godard's late work, and the only way to get at his arguments is to work through the difficulties the films and videos present, to understand how his cinematic and intellectual ambitions emerge in and are created by their dense and intricate construction.

To begin with, from the two initial discussions of sequences we can draw out five features of Godard's late work that will be of importance throughout this book:

1. Godard makes claims, proposals, and arguments about film and film history by bringing together a range of clips, ideas, fragments of music and dialogue, and printed texts, few or none of which have any internal (natural) connection to one another. This aspect of his style contributes to the distinctiveness of his films and videos from this period (it's one of their most recognizable features), but it raises several questions. How do the fragments hang together? What kinds of arguments is he making, or could he be making, in employing such unconnected pieces? At issue here is the process by which Godard sets out a history of cinema, the way he marshals fragments to serve his broader projects, and, most important, the place of montage in achieving those ends.

2. Godard does not simply insert clips but manipulates their playback: they are stopped, slowed down, sped up *(saccadé).* When we see the clip of waves from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* there is an almost dancelike manipulation of tempo in which Godard suddenly speeds up the movement as the wave crests, as if to make palpable the sense that the boat in the frame is being swept away. In addition, editing devices such as superimpositions, irises, and wipes, are used to bring images together in visually startling ways. Rather than being presented with clips and images "as they are," we are made to *feel* that they

are being used or worked on. But how the manner of presentation contributes to the structure and content of the claims being made is by no means self-evident.

3. Every argument Godard makes using the resources of cinema involves some account of the medium. This reflexive gesture is, as we've seen, further complicated by his relatively unfamiliar way of thinking about cinema. For example, film theory has historically employed two basic definitions of the "essence" of cinema: a direct recording of the world in front of the camera at the time the image was taken and a language-like form of communication directed toward the viewer. When we look at sequences from Godard's late films and videos, however, neither version seems satisfactory: the account of cinema in terms of painting or the description of the *nouvelle vague* as caught up in a tension between reality and fiction fits neither model. Instead, starting in the mid-1980s, Godard begins to define cinema as the *projection* of an image on a large screen in a darkened theater for a collective and public audience, a definition he endorses in response to increasing concern over the growth of television and other small screens as alternate ways of consuming images. Godard's emphasis on projection as the defining criterion of cinema eschews concerns over the technology of image production (analog or digital) to focus, among other things, on the structure of the relation between screen and audience, the nature of the images, and the experiences of the viewer. In so doing, he uses the idea of projection, and the way it denotes an experience central to the history of cinema, as the conceptual underpinning for his method of combining fragments of film and history.

4. Godard gives himself an important role in his own work, both implicitly, as in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* and explicitly, as in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Ever since *À bout de souffle,* in which he played a police informer, Godard has made appearances within his own films and videos. Frequently, as in his depiction of himself as a decrepit filmmaker in *Prénom Carmen* (*First Name: Carmen,* 1983), these appearances have to do with considerations of authorial presence (however compromised). But something different is going on in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and other late works. Godard situates himself as part of the *history* of cinema and, precisely because of his place there, takes himself to be in a privileged position to understand that history. This dual role as both author and object of study informs his entire practice, from his understanding of the history of cinema to the way the various fragments of his montage hang together. He places himself at the center of all this activity, the figure whose judgment forms the basis on which the films and videos are constructed.

5. Godard's use of images of nature and natural beauty is prominent and striking, something that's been true since his self-styled "return" to feature

filmmaking in 1979 with *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*. Nature, however, is more than just a topic for him, certainly more than a source of attractive imagery. It becomes a tool for thinking about other concerns, ranging from the analysis of history to the status of the medium. In the sequences discussed above, nature is at the heart of their reflections about cinema: in the presence of the beach and the water to evoke the *nouvelle vague* (and Truffaut's film), in the use of the motif of the wave to tie painting and cinema together. Elsewhere, images of nature mark the contrast between cinema and television (for example: "A projection is like looking at the sky, but watching television is not. It doesn't reveal reality, it shows our fear of seeing real life").[10] Exactly how Godard uses images and tropes of nature to think about, even to conceptualize, questions of cinema, and how this use of nature is justified, is an ongoing question about his late work.

Over the course of this book, I will argue that these five features, and others as well, are best understood under the broader heading of aesthetics. That is, I will argue that central aspects of Godard's work since the late 1980s draw on a set of questions, topics, and debates that emerge from his engagement with a tradition of philosophical aesthetics based in German idealism and romanticism (and this tradition's return in the work of Adorno and others). One of its attractions is to focus attention on areas that are generally occluded in the analysis and construction of film but are important to Godard and therefore important to serious attempts to come to grips with his work. These areas include the sensuous quality of images and the complexity of viewers' experience of them; the centrality of a viewer's (aesthetic) judgment in grasping the connections films and videos make between events and ideas; the way this judgment ties the individual viewer to a broader viewing public; and how nature and natural beauty can be revitalized and used in film.

Although I do not think this approach can (or should) account for the entire scope of Godard's late films and videos, I will argue that the major strands of their ambitions are best illuminated by—that is, the way they work through their problems emerges from—the terms and categories of this tradition of aesthetics.

3. IMPURE AESTHETICS

Part of what makes Godard's project in these films and videos surprising—though, I think, ultimately compelling—is the way it goes against a dominant trend in art and theory over the past half century. After all, perhaps *the* art-historical narrative about these decades highlights an increasing anti-aesthetic tendency, a movement away from the categories of aesthetics on the grounds that they cannot adequately account for significant aspects of artistic production.

While art was traditionally defined in terms of its sensuous properties, starting in the early decades of the twentieth century major artworks systematically and intentionally exceeded the explanatory power of this interpretive framework. The most common version of this story holds that the break arrived with Marcel Duchamp's ready-mades, later to be confirmed by Warhol and pop art, and then institutionalized in the post-1960s art world. For this reading, the aesthetic qualities of Duchamp's works like *Fountain* (1917) and *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919) are only incidental to their status as works of art. His ready-mades were first and foremost about the kind of object an artwork is, what makes an object a "work of art" rather than a mere thing, and how far the concept of art can be extended.[11]

For much of Godard's working life, he seemed uncannily attuned to the mood of the cultural zeitgeist (whatever it may have been). Jonathan Rosenbaum writes, "If you wanted to know what was going on in the Western world [in the 1960s], you'd go to his movies—because he had this capacity to pick up on all these things that were current in the culture."[12] In the 1980s, that changed. Godard's films and videos of that decade no longer embrace contemporary artistic trends but turn instead to the legacy of classical European art. He appears as a kind of cultural mandarin willfully avoiding changes in the world around him.

There's a serious charge here. One of the most common criticisms of Godard's late films and videos is that they are deeply conservative in their ambitions, retreating from earlier experiments that were political as well as artistic.[13] Starting in the mid-1960s, politically oriented art, including Godard's own work, explicitly eschewed a tradition of art and aesthetics and gave a political twist to the terms of conceptual modernism. (In chapter 1, I discuss in greater detail the equation of an interest in aesthetics with a politically conservative position, an influential line of thought within film studies.) I suspect that the indifference, even hostility, that has been expressed toward his late work results from this correlation. Taken together, the various commitments of Godard's films and videos since the 1980s can seem irreconcilable with the main currents of twentieth-century art, the demands of a politically engaged cinema, and the contemporary transformations of the medium itself.

It should be clear that I think this assessment is mistaken. Part of the problem with it lies in treating aesthetics as a doctrine of sorts, a set of clearly defined principles and positions that are then instantiated in specific works. From there, it is, and has been, fairly easy to conclude that Godard is an "aestheticist" or "idealist." A better approach, by contrast, is to see aesthetics as giving shape to the topics, questions, and debates he is interested in. Godard, that is, depends less on the specific judgments and claims within a tradition of aesthetics than on the way that tradition poses and works through various questions. This kind of approach to aesthetics and film is not necessarily antithetical to political engagement, nor is it a gesture of nostalgic longing. Instead, I'll argue that Godard

draws on the terms and categories of aesthetics to rethink basic aspects of his cinematic practice, intellectual interests, and political concerns. And he does so with a sense that aesthetics furnishes the resources to articulate the value of cinema as it plays out across the end of the twentieth century.

The idealist and romantic tradition of aesthetics with which Godard engages is complicated, deep, and varied, and I will go into some of its details in the specific discussions that arise in the book. This tradition can be seen, however, as resting on two interlocking critical principles that come out of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. The first is that aesthetic judgments are thoroughly particular; as Kant puts it, "All judgments of taste are *singular* judgments," formed out of an individual encounter with a specific object.[14] Aesthetic judgments can be used to make general claims, aesthetic or otherwise, but the bases of these claims will always be the singular encounter. The second principle is that aesthetic judgments implicate a wider community. It is in the nature of aesthetic judgments that they be communicable: we expect others to have the same experience we have and to judge the object as we judge it. Another way to put this is that we take our experience as representative, as responding correctly to the object, and for that reason expect others to agree with our judgments, whether or not they in fact do. Kant calls this the "subjective universality" of aesthetic judgments.[15] Aesthetic judgments lay claim to a universality they cannot hope to attain but that they are nonetheless bound to strive for.

I isolate these two principles not simply because they are the methodological axioms on which a tradition of aesthetics is built but also because they are intimately bound up with the way Godard's late films and videos operate.[16] We can see the first principle in the sheer density of each work, the sense that the particular construction of image, sound, and text has been arranged with exceeding care. If Godard's claims about cinema incline toward the general and abstract (e.g., his repeated investigation of what cinema is), they start at and are developed in the details of his and our engagement with the work. The discussion of the brief sequences from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma* made clear the importance of this principle: an attunement to the specificity of their construction allows for an understanding of their general concerns and arguments. The second principle, concerning the subjective universality of aesthetic judgment, is equally important. As I've already noted, one of the features of the way Godard brings pieces of history and film history together is the absence of any "natural" connection between the fragments being combined or compared. What we see are the results of Godard's own judgments, and these judgments work by making demands on us (as an audience) to recognize them as well. Because of this, the connections he draws always run the risk of failure: nothing in them guarantees success except a specific act of viewing, of seeing the appropriate relations between them. I will argue toward the end of the book that only

by recognizing this contingency in Godard's cinematic and historiographic claims—the way they take the form of aesthetic judgments—can we understand the logic behind his historical (and film-historical) work.

Godard, however, does not simply incorporate the terms and conditions of aesthetics. While he adopts central portions of this tradition, he also modifies them, especially with a lingering emphasis on various kinds of "purity." One of these has to do with the state of mind that emerges in response to a work of art. Schiller, for example, argues that the appropriate response to a "genuine work of art" is a mood of "lofty equanimity and freedom of spirit,"[17] a line of thinking that comes from Kant's insistence on the formal presentation of an object (in art or in nature) as the only significant material for aesthetic judgment. In a sense, we can understand Godard as picking up the tone of the romantic reaction against this tendency, a reaction that centers on how we respond to individual parts or fragments of a work in precise and specific ways and how both responses and fragments build on one another to produce new forms of experiences. Godard's is an approach that follows instead Friedrich Schlegel's defense of wit and irony, "the clear consciousness of eternal agility, of an infinitely teeming chaos" that the best poetry requires.[18] It also allows, I suspect, for a more complex engagement with the historical world, one based on the multiple and fragmentary possibilities of interaction.

A second kind of purity involves an understanding of aesthetics in which attention is paid solely to "pure" forms of an artistic medium, to those aspects uncorrupted by outside influences. This position emerges from the influence of idealist aesthetics on art criticism and practice, frequently associated with Clement Greenberg's theory of painting (which explicitly drew on a legacy of Kantian aesthetics).[19] The cinematic equivalent has historically entailed the rejection of the value of anything that does not come from specifically cinematic means: the literary, the theatrical, the painterly, and so on. (It's a line of thought particularly prominent in the "pure cinema" movement of French film criticism and production in the 1920s.) Godard might seem to be an adherent of doctrines of cinematic purity in a way that raises a worry, since his emphasis on cinema as a historically privileged medium comes at a time when the growth of television, video, and digital technologies of image production and manipulation is displacing cinema's historical centrality as the primary artistic medium of the twentieth century. A reliance on cinema looks anachronistic, even nostalgic.

One response to this view of Godard is to point to his own history. After all, he cannot be unaware of the changes in the media landscape: his work since the early 1970s has consistently employed new technologies for the production and manipulation of images, and the media he has worked in range from cinema and video, through television, to gallery installation (often in various combinations).[20] Accordingly, we can treat Godard's emphasis on cinema as stemming

from a belief that cinema has something that cannot be found in other media, something that warrants preserving. What that is, it will turn out, involves a specific kind of experience made possible by the conditions of theatrical projection.

Another issue is also at stake. Though Godard inherits part of a modernist lineage of medium specificity, he also comes out of a tradition defined by the influence of Bazin, who insists that the development of film is based on its interaction with and incorporation of the other arts. Deriding critics, theorists, and filmmakers who long for the "so-called purity of the silent screen," Bazin argues that cinema has always been influenced by a wider artistic field.[21] Indeed, one of the central features of Godard's late style is the wide range of quotations from the other arts; for every reference to and citation of some piece of cinematic history, there is one that comes from another artistic medium.

Last, there is a conception of purity that limits the domain of the aesthetic to the purely formal, indifferent to the historical world around it (and even to the content of artworks themselves). To some extent, this is a legacy of interpreting Kant's insistence that "free beauty does not presuppose a concept of what the object is meant to be" as leading to his praise of "designs *à la grecque,* the foliage on the borders or on wallpaper, etc."[22] This conception of purity forms a model of aesthetics that suggests a kind of rigid formalism that has long been viewed with suspicion (though Kant himself had a more complex view of these matters).[23] Insisting on the inadequacy of this familiar version of purity is important, especially when we are attempting to grasp Godard's efforts to think through the relations between the history of cinema and the social, political, and cultural history of the twentieth century. If we don't, we risk falling into a reductive criticism that ignores basic aspects of his late style.

I want to describe Godard's departures from these three kinds of aesthetic purity as amounting to an *impure aesthetics.*[24] By using this term, I mean to invoke the title of Bazin's essay in which he criticizes the tradition of pure cinema, "In Defense of Mixed Cinema," or, as it is better translated, "In Defense of Impure Cinema." Impure aesthetics marks the path by which Godard incorporates the older tradition of philosophical aesthetics, simultaneously adapting and transforming its terms through his own cinematic (and videographic) practice. The plethora of quotations, ranging from literature to painting to music, that striate Godard's late films and videos are a testimony to the impurity in his vision of what cinema is, while the sheer messiness of his films and videos precludes any sense of formal or spectatorial purity.[25]

One of the implications of this claim is that Godard's late work is not only supported by but also articulates an aesthetics based on impurity. An obvious instance of this is in the image-sound relations that structure his films and videos. Although there is a tendency in mainstream cinema for sound to be subsidiary to the image, with music cueing our reaction to what is being shown, a commitment

to the equality of sound and image runs throughout Godard's career. Starting with *À bout de souffle,* an idiosyncratic use of sound is one of the most recognizable elements of his films of the 1960s, as he employs a combination of jagged rhythms, often cutting up preexisting music, and more extended quotations from classical music. At times, Godard even seems to privilege sound over the image. This may be a familiar gesture in a French context, part of a long-standing suspicion of the fluidity of the visual field,[26] but in the aftermath of May '68 it takes on an explicitly political tone, which he encapsulates in the famous dictum from *Vent d'est* (*Wind from the East,* 1970): "This is not a just image; this is just an image" (Ce n'est pas une image juste; c'est juste une image). Throughout his films of the Groupe Dziga Vertov period, and *British Sounds* (1970) in particular, Godard uses sound to model the appropriate way of reading the film; sound, especially speech, functions as the necessary complement to or corrective of the image.

The 1980s continue Godard's complex employment of sound, as music, noises (especially the cries of gulls), and whispered voice-overs are central to the construction of his films. Music in particular takes on a privileged role, becoming at times a model for the way Godard thinks about cinema itself: the titles of *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* describe the film as "composed" rather than directed, and *Prénom Carmen* interweaves a string quartet rehearsing Beethoven with the film's narrative, providing not just musical accompaniment but also an overt commentary on the way actions and events are being shown. In 1988, Godard signed a deal with ECM Records that granted him full rights to their catalog of music and paved the way for the release of *Nouvelle vague* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma* as audio CDs.[27] For all the words written about the stunning imagery in the films and videos of these years, these releases suggest that their sound design can stand alone as a work of art.

All this seems to support a picture of impure aesthetics as the governing rationale behind Godard's late work. This view will hold true for many of the arguments in the chapters that follow: the imbrications of nature and history, the modality of the beautiful against the sublime, the mixing of film and video, the alignment of cinema with the other arts, and so on. But there is a danger of assuming that the commitment to an impure aesthetics functions as an absolute principle. If we think this, we risk missing a wide range of arguments and styles in Godard's late work that do not follow a logic of impurity.

Let's go back to the relation between sound and image. If they are used in roughly equal measure to structure the films and videos, starting in the mid-1980s Godard signals an important change, repeatedly arguing for the importance of the visual as the primary domain in which cinema does its work. He goes so far as to say that his goal is simply to "make visible" *(rendre visible):* to use cinema to show, to reveal, something of importance to the viewer.[28] Or, as he put it in a discussion about *Histoire(s) du cinéma:* "I'd say that in films there's the

spectacle of history, living history almost, really that's what cinema does, it's a living image of the unfolding of history and the tempo of history."[29] As opposed to words, which can only state the existence of a historical fact or event, which can only *tell* us about something, cinema is able to *show* us the event—it forms a "living image"—in the large-scale projection of an image for a public audience.

At times, Godard's explanations for his emphasis on the visual follow familiar medium-specific arguments: "Cinema is a visual medium," he asserts in a 1988 interview.[30] All the same, he does not really base his argument on the physical nature of film, its materiality, but rather bases it on cinema's history. Take the sequence I discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the scene in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* in which a woman photographs a painting by Courbet. It's not that sound is absent from this sequence—Caution's voice-over and the noise of waves in fact guide our viewing—but the genealogy of cinema is presented as emerging from a series of visual media: the gramophone is missing from the picture. Because cinema starts as—and, Godard sometimes says, finds its apex as—a silent medium, he takes cinema's history to be fundamentally oriented by the visual.[31]

This is not so much a radical shift in orientation as it is a calculated redefinition. While Godard continues to use sound in increasingly complex ways, he starts to treat it in his thinking about cinema as more or less equivalent to speech, that is, to words. The opposition, then, is less between sound and image than it is between text and image: "my great enemy, the text," he says at one point. The consequences of this are twofold. First, the image/text opposition serves as one of the key rationales behind *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* as Godard argues that video, a visual form, is the only appropriate way to account for the history of cinema. A written history would be inadequate, too "small," and what's needed is "a history not spoken but seen."[32] Second, this opposition leads him to talk about a more long-standing opposition between image and text across the history of culture. Some of this is due to his participation in debates over the possibility of representing historical atrocities, but it also spreads to a more theologically tinged polemic between what Godard takes to be an Old Testament, Mosaic injunction against the image and a line he (falsely) attributes to St. Paul in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* "The image will come at the time of the resurrection." (Unsurprisingly, this theological opposition has caused much debate.)[33] As is so often the case with Godard, a question of formal aspects of cinema leads to the widest possible intellectual resonances, while an account of intellectual history feeds back into the detailed construction of the films and videos. Film's ability to show history becomes the basis for, and is also justified by, an argument about the transhistorical valuation of images.

Godard's emphasis on the image, then, is not a repudiation of impure aesthetics: image, sound, and text remain in as complicated an interaction in the late films and videos as they do in any other period of his career. But he will, for different

reasons and at different times, emphasize the importance and contribution of specific features of cinema. Thus, we get the image valorized over and against sound, speech, and text; we also get cinema itself, as a medium full of its own impurities, defended against the threat of other media, most notably television. The interpretive task that results from this requires us to see how Godard uses the background of impure aesthetics to drive a range of arguments that tell us about what cinema is, has been, and can be.

4. ONE THING AFTER ANOTHER

This book argues for the existence of a sustained project across Godard's films and videos since the late 1980s, despite the differences among the individual works. I focus initially on his films from the late 1980s and early 1990s: *Soigne ta droite, Nouvelle vague,* and *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* In them, Godard produces an attempt to articulate the limits and possibilities of an aesthetics of cinema, along with an interrogation of how its various concerns—such as an emphasis on sensory experience, the role of natural beauty, the activity of aesthetic judgment—can emerge in and be made productive for cinema. At the same time, getting a handle on the issues at stake in these films will lead to a more complex and deeper reading of *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* perhaps Godard's magnum opus. While *Histoire(s) du cinéma* turns to more overt considerations of the relation between film and history, it also develops the themes, topics, and formal strategies of the earlier films. The account of cinema it provides, in terms of both medium and history, is implied by, and emerges from, the explicit turn to aesthetics in the earlier films.

Taking Godard's films and videos to have a distinct yet shared project, one that is bound up with his working method, goes against two common ways of thinking about his oeuvre as a whole. The first treats the films and videos as autonomous units, wholly individuated works (if loosely connected by a shared authorial worldview).[34] The second divides his body of work into several large and distinct periods, ranging from his beginnings as a critic in the 1950s to his multimedia work in more recent years, each of which is characterized by a dominant and stable set of concerns.[35] Both approaches are familiar ways to analyze a filmmaker's career, but, perhaps because of this, they miss the peculiar way Godard has gone about doing things.

One of the difficulties here is simply that he has made so many works (114 on a generous count, since many are short subjects). It has therefore been tempting to make the problem of scale manageable by relegating some to "minor" status, of less importance than more celebrated works. *Soigne ta droite* is a prime example of this. Critics have generally regarded it as relatively insignificant and so tend to pass over or dismiss it. MacCabe refers to the film several times but only in the

context of surveying Godard's performances in his own films, and Sterritt is content to note that, though the film premiered at the Cannes festival, it was seen by relatively few people (even for a film by Godard).[36] Dixon describes *Soigne ta droite* as a sketch, a film conceived of and made quickly, using several recognizable stars in order to raise money to help finance other projects.[37] Loshitzky does not mention the film, nor do Silverman and Farocki. And though Morrey devotes several pages to *Soigne ta droite,* seeing in it moments of compelling beauty and interest, he finds the film fragmented and confusing, and so is content to leave it to the side.[38]

The danger of dismissing films like *Soigne ta droite* out of hand is that we miss the fact that key features of later films and videos are first found there. That is, by concentrating only on isolated works or clearly defined periods, we can lose sight of how Godard actually works and thinks: ideas and techniques rarely emerge, as it were, fully realized, but instead take shape and develop through a range of cinematic experiments over a number of years and in a number of forms.

I propose that a more fine-tuned and productive way to see Godard's career is as proceeding through the creation of distinct yet overlapping "series" of films and videos. Rather than treating each film as the summation of a distinct period of thinking and planning, the idea of a series focuses attention on the way Godard works out various concerns and problems across multiple works. The films of the late 1980s and early 1990s constitute just such a series, leading into *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and other later works. Another example is how, in the early 1960s, films such as *À bout de souffle, Une femme est une femme* (*A Woman Is a Woman,* 1961), and *Bande à part* (*Band of Outsiders,* 1964) work through an indebtedness to a tradition of Hollywood genre films, whereas at the same time *Le petit soldat, Les carabiniers* (1963), and *Une femme mariée* (*A Married Woman,* 1964) show an initial attempt to take up the relation of film and politics. In neither case can we fully understand any one film without consideration of the others, nor does either group of films constitute a sustained portion of a career: after all, the two distinct groups of films are made during the same years. Moreover, multiple series operate across the same films. Although Godard's 1960s films generally fall into the overarching categories of genre and politics, other series are present as well: one that deals with the role of cities and urban life (*À bout de souffle, Vivre sa vie* [*My Life to Live,* 1962], *Alphaville, Masculin-féminin* [1966], and *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* [*Two or Three Things I Know about Her,* 1967]); one that deals with intimacy (*Une femme est une femme, Une femme mariée,* and *Masculin-féminin*); and one that deals with escape fantasies (*Les carabiniers, Le mépris,* and *Pierrot le fou* [1965]). The lists could go on.

By describing Godard's films as falling into various series, I mean to emphasize the way themes, visual strategies, motifs, and problems are worked through both within and across them. The idea of a series places attention on the question

of why one particular work follows another, why Godard becomes interested in and disenchanted with certain concerns, even how he reads his own work.[39]

A concern with problems of succession has long been apparent in Godard's work. One of the guiding motifs of *Pierrot le fou,* as he explained it, was the question "Why do one shot rather than another? . . . What is it ultimately that makes one run a shot on or change to another?"[40] Or, from *Alphaville,* "Once we know the number 1, we believe we know the number 2, because 1 plus 1 makes 2. But we have forgotten that firstly we have to know the meaning of 'plus.'"[41] Despite such statements, ideas of succession are less frequently recognized at the level of the films themselves, much less as a way of regarding Godard's career as a whole. Several critics, however, have discussed the presence of these questions and concerns. Philippe Dubois notes that Godard's video projects of the late 1970s feed into the concern over the role of artistic creation in the films of the early 1980s.[42] And Gilles Deleuze makes use of the principle behind the idea of a series in describing the relation between *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* and *Passion* (1982): "Godard goes from problems to categories, even if the categories end up presenting him with a problem again. For instance, the structure of *[Sauve qui peut (la vie)]*: the four great categories, "the Imaginary", "Fear", "Business", "Music", lead to a new problem, "What is passion?", "Passion is not this . . . ", which is to be the object of the next film *[Passion].* According to Godard, categories are not fixed once and for all. They are redistributed, reshaped and reinvented for each film."[43] The idea of a series is meant to bring out this sense that the problems that emerge in one film are dealt with in the next, that the films are less separate and autonomous works than they are the coalescence of different moments of thinking.

Finally, by describing Godard's work as constituting multiple series, I mean to invoke the way he has repeatedly said that all his films are essays, in the etymological sense of trying, experimenting: *essai.*[44] His films are attempts, always provisional, to work through ideas that preoccupy him at the time (the kind of project Montaigne gestured toward in his many efforts to account for his own enterprise). Seen under the heading of a series and shaped by the tradition of the essay, Godard's films and videos turn out to be intimately related to one another by virtue of shared concerns, ideas, and representational strategies. Each film and video is in a sense both complete and incomplete: a definite though not definitive statement of ideas, an individual work made with the knowledge that other works will be produced in the future—that, as Montaigne puts it, no certainty can be guaranteed, since everything may change with the next attempt.[45]

The series that is the focus of this book starts in 1987 with *Soigne ta droite,* continues with *Nouvelle vague* and *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* and finds, in a sense, its culmination in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* In this series, Godard moves away from a range of concerns that preoccupied him earlier in the 1980s: about the limits of representation and its relation to the idea of the sublime, for example, and about

the role of traditional narratives and conventions in the contemporary world. The series of films that treats such concerns comes to a head with *Je vous salue, Marie* (*Hail Mary,* 1984), in which the story of the virgin birth (and the idea of divine communication) brings the series to a logical conclusion. There, Godard takes an interest in using images of nature to evoke the category of the sublime and moves it into the realm of the divine, to what is often taken to be, by definition, unrepresentable; at the same time, he transposes his use of familiar stories and iconographies in *Passion* and *Prénom Carmen* onto one of the foundational narratives of Western culture. But if *Je vous salue, Marie* is the end point of the series of films that begins with *Sauve qui peut (la vie),* where Godard was going to go from there was unclear. (Why this series reaches an end is another question; some reasons for this are provided in the discussions of nature and natural beauty in chapter 2.) Neither *Détective* (1985) nor *King Lear* (1987) produces themes or tropes that found a new series of films; they are, in effect, one-off productions.[46] With *Soigne ta droite* (a film that, ironically, initially appeared to be a genuinely throwaway work), Godard begins a new series, one whose contours he continues to elaborate in *Nouvelle vague* and *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* (Indeed, it's precisely because of the later two films that we can see *Soigne ta droite* as the beginning of a series.) These films initiate a shift in Godard's concerns to a consideration of the interrelation of history and the history of cinema, an engagement with aesthetic categories that focuses on the more historically situated mode of the beautiful, and a concern with the role of film in the age of television and new media. If this series reaches its most sustained and developed articulation in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* Godard has continued working through its concerns in the fifteen years since.

5. *UNE HISTOIRE COMPLIQUÉE*

Since the first part of the book is an analysis of *Soigne ta droite, Nouvelle vague,* and *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* and since I return to these films throughout the second part, a brief account of their respective narratives, to the extent that they in fact have them, will be of help.

Soigne ta droite is constructed around three narrative threads: Godard, playing the role of Dostoevsky's Idiot (updated as a filmmaker), travels to the city from his isolation in the Swiss countryside in order to deliver a film; the pop duo Les Rita Mitsouko (Fred Chichin and Catherine Ringer) rehearse and record an album in a studio; and a man called the Individual (Jacques Villaret) moves through a series of quasi-allegorical episodes.

The film loosely proceeds through several motifs. One deals with fragmentation and is an explicitly artistic concern that reflects on the film itself: we never hear a full version of a song; scenes don't finish but repeat in partial forms; completion and unity seem illusory. Another motif has to do with solitude and history.

Soigne ta droite begins with the Idiot having fled into solitude "at the end of the twentieth century," shown by a series of aerial shots of lakes, forests, and fields (images of natural beauty that recur throughout the films in this series). He is dragged back into the social and economic world, forced to make a film. But the status of this world is obscure. We get a sense of *Soigne ta droite*'s historical understanding only through strange and highly theatrical episodes. In one, there is a redoing of La Fontaine's *Ant and the Grasshopper;* in another, the Individual is taken away on a train in handcuffs, apparently as a renegade member of a revolutionary organization (the discussion on the train, an extended reworking of a similar scene in Godard's *La chinoise,* focuses on the failed connection of art and politics in the twentieth century).

With these compromised fragments, *Soigne ta droite* articulates a set of desires—to produce a coherent artwork, to reside in solitude and isolation, to understand a specific historical epoch—that it then shows to be impossible. These fragments eventually lead toward the projection of the film made by the Idiot, *Une place sur la terre,* which is also the subtitle of *Soigne ta droite* itself.

Nouvelle vague continues to focus on issues of nature, history, and narrative. It begins with a black screen as a male voice-over says that he "wanted the film to be a narrative," one that would proceed solely from memory. But this wish is immediately defeated by images of nature that insist on their physical presence and beauty, and the use of the past tense in the voice-over implies that the film doesn't actually succeed in being a narrative. As in *Soigne ta droite,* a desire for solitude is articulated but shown to be unsustainable, even undesirable.

Still, there is something that more closely resembles a narrative in *Nouvelle vague.* Godard presents a love story between Elena Torlato-Favrini (Domiziana Giordano), an Italian countess who runs a multinational corporation, Torlato-Favrini Enterprises, and Roger Lennox (Alain Delon), a drifter she takes in after he is hit by a truck.[47] As their relationship unfolds, Elena controls their activities, and problems begin to appear: about work and love, about what it means to take equal roles in affairs. Going for a swim in a lake, Elena pulls Roger into the water and watches him drown. Later, after her associates have covered up his death, Roger is apparently resurrected in the guise of someone claiming to be his twin brother, Richard, who somehow knows everything Roger knew (the plot dances around the question of whether this new person is the man who drowned or someone different). But now the roles are reversed: Richard is the dominant one, taking over the running of the corporation and relegating Elena to the sidelines. In a film filled with repetitions and reversals, they again go out onto the lake, and Richard pulls Elena into the water but grasps her upraised hand before she drowns. *Nouvelle vague* ends, almost miraculously, on a note of reconciliation: Richard declares that he is "the same, yet different" from Roger, and he and Elena leave on terms of equality.

The bulk of the film takes place at Elena's rural mansion, as Godard intersperses shots and discussions of natural beauty with conversations about the state of the economic world and the uncertainties of finance capital. Although natural beauty partly functions as a place from which to escape the impositions of the modern, industrial world, it does not remain untouched. By juxtaposing the story of Elena and Roger with these thematic concerns, Godard shows the profound confusion that the intersection of nature and economics introduces into personal relations. Life and death, repetition and innovation, comedy and tragedy, exchange value and uniqueness, nature and history—these are the terms through which interpersonal relations are established, distorted, and reconciled.

Allemagne 90 neuf zéro is set in Germany at the end of the cold war. The film begins with a search for Lemmy Caution (Eddie Constantine), a secret agent abandoned in East Berlin. Two people, Count Zelten (Hanns Zischler) and an unnamed narrator (André S. Labarthe), find him living above a hair salon. The remainder of the film follows Caution through Berlin (with a side trip to Weimar) as he tries to take stock of one hundred years of European history: two world wars, the Russian Revolution, the Holocaust, a divided Germany, the corruption of the East, and the materialism of the West. Caution's journey is interwoven with sequences of Zelten and a woman (Nathalie Kadem) discussing German history and reading Hegel in both French and German.

The concerns of the two earlier films are again present in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* but Godard, by placing them into a more explicit historical and political context, gives them a new resonance. The motif of solitude, rather than being a general response to anxieties about the end of the century, is now seen as a response to the specific failure of left-wing political commitment. Natural beauty receives a more complex treatment as well. Where the opening of *Nouvelle vague* contrasts an oak tree spreading its branches to personal memory, *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* again gives us an oak tree but now suffuses it with historical memory. As we hear, on the soundtrack, Hegel's proclamation that "world history is not the place for happiness,"[48] a series of shots shows the image of the tree in the midst of references to Nazi concentration camps. Godard surely has in mind that Buchenwald (outside Weimar) was built around Goethe's oak; more generally, he wants to show how deeply intertwined the category of natural beauty is with the history and politics of the twentieth century.

Allemagne 90 neuf zéro is explicitly grouped into six "variations" on solitude. With Caution as the guiding thread, a kind of witness to the scenes he encounters, each variation presents a meditation on the entwinements of art and politics in the twentieth century. (Figures such as Kafka, Mann, Shostakovich, Luxemburg, and Brecht are all discussed.) The film concludes in West Berlin, where the ruins of East Germany find their counterpart in the extravagances of consumer capitalism. But history is not erased by the surface sheen. In the Hotel

Intercontinental, Caution reencounters a woman from East Berlin now working as a chambermaid in the West. She tells him, "Arbeit macht frei," and he discovers, to his despair, that a Bible is always kept in the drawer of the bedside table.

6. ABOUT ARGUMENTS

The first part of this book directly takes up central questions and topics in aesthetics as they emerge in the three films of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Instead of presupposing a conception of aesthetics and then applying it to Godard's work, I try to get at what aesthetics means for him by attending to specific visual strategies in the films. Chapter 1 looks at Godard's repeated use of carefully controlled focus pulls and camera movements, showing how they work on an audience at a basic perceptual level. I argue that it is through such avowedly aesthetic devices that Godard articulates the terms of his larger arguments about the intersections of film and history. In particular, he uses a shift from film to video within *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* to work through a set of contemporary anxieties about the possibility of German (re)unification after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Chapters 2 and 3 take up the role of nature and natural beauty in Godard's late work. Images of nature (shots of waves, the sky, the sun, the wind in the grass, and so forth) have been a striking feature of his films since *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*. While critics have taken this turn to nature to signal a withdrawal from concerns more intimately bound up with questions of politics and history, I argue that these questions are in fact most forcefully developed in his films and videos of these years precisely through the changing images of nature and their resonance across a history of art and aesthetics. One of my central concerns in chapter 2 is to track the changes in Godard's use of images of nature and to show how these changes motivate larger shifts in his aesthetic preoccupations, themselves connected to new accounts of the relation between film and history. In chapter 3, I argue not only that Godard shows nature to be deeply marked by and enmeshed within the history and politics of the twentieth century, but also that his reflections on nature generate some of his most sustained investigations into the history of the medium and the possibilities of an aesthetics of cinema itself.

The second part of the book is primarily about *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* looking at the consequences of Godard's emphasis on aesthetics for his understanding of cinema more generally. In particular, this part focuses on an explicit move in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* away from thinking about cinema as a primarily photographic medium. Chapter 4 looks at the manner in which Godard turns to painting as an alternative genealogy of cinema. I argue that this reorientation serves to displace familiar assumptions about the ontology of cinema onto a more complicated relation to the historical world, one based on forms of representation and narratives rather than on the recording capacities of the camera. Godard's move

away from photography, though it presents several challenges for his historiographic work, creates the conceptual space necessary for his peculiar recounting of the history (and histories) of cinema.

Chapter 5 fills in the theory of cinema that emerges once the terms of a photographic ontology have been removed from their historical place at the heart of accounts of cinema; this theory is captured by the idea of "projection." I argue that Godard self-consciously uses projection to specify what cinema is, covering both the physical screening of a film and the viewer's experience of it. In particular, he draws on the idea of projection to motivate the historiographic ambitions of his late work: the specific way a film, or video, can bring together disparate and seemingly unrelated texts and events, and the role the viewer's judgment has in grasping these connections. I conclude in chapter 6 by briefly examining the way that the films and videos Godard has made since *Histoire(s) du cinéma* continue its formal and historiographic concerns while picking up issues central to the feature films of the late 1980s and 1990s, adapting both to a changing cinematic and political landscape.

Before I begin, I want to pause over a methodological concern. Over the course of this introduction, I've repeatedly used a number of variants of the idea of "making an argument" to describe the work done by Godard's films and videos of this period. I will continue to do so throughout the book. But there are questions: What does it mean to say that Godard's films and videos make arguments? In what sense can a film do this? And what status do such arguments have? In a sense, these questions are a version of a more common debate over the extent to which film can be said to do the work of philosophy.[49] Though films do not, by and large, make arguments in the way that philosophy does, there has been a persistent sense that they are able to raise and answer questions of philosophy, perhaps even in ways that philosophy itself (as a discipline) cannot. Yet it can be hard to say exactly what this position amounts to. One approach has been to look for moments in film where philosophy makes an explicit appearance. When philosophically oriented conversation takes place within a film (e.g., about the deception of the senses in *The Matrix* [1999] or about the role of fate and chance in Eric Rohmer's *A Tale of Winter* [1992]), critics can justifiably assume the related philosophical issues to have been raised. Similarly, a filmmaker's biography can provide evidence that philosophical concerns are present in a film: Terrence Malick's translation of Heidegger's *Essence of Reasons,* for example, is often cited as justification for the discernment of related themes in his work.

Godard seems to be an exemplary figure in this regard. Not only do characters in his films quote liberally from philosophic and literary sources, but he has also included philosophers within his films, as early as Brice Parain's conversation with Anna Karina in *Vivre sa vie* and as late as Alain Badiou's lecture on Husserl in *Film socialisme* (2010). Despite how well this view of Godard seems to

fit his films and videos, I want to avoid taking such a path. Godard may or may not intend his work to be seen as philosophy, but there are deep limitations in conceiving the relation of film and philosophy as dependent on the filmmaker's intention to do philosophy. This conception can lead, in particular, to the reductive thought that the only philosophically significant elements of Godard's films and videos have to do with conversation and dialogue. What is missing is a sense of the subtle texture of the images and sounds that make up a film and the way Godard's philosophical ambitions emerge out of these explicitly formal concerns. In a sense, he is part of a tradition of filmmaking in which the aesthetic features of the films themselves are bound up with their philosophical ambitions: the violent juxtapositions of Eisenstein's montage or the expansive grace of camera movements in Renoir's films of the late 1930s. If there is something of philosophical importance in the work of these filmmakers, the visual and aural dimensions of their work are central to it, whether or not they are themselves self-consciously concerned with philosophical topics. Any account of cinema that takes it to be a medium capable of philosophy needs to pay attention to such questions of style and meaning.

In order to deal with questions of style as well as dialogue, with form as well as content, I want to make a fairly modest proposal: We can say that a film (or video) raises questions of philosophy if and when considerations of these questions are necessary to arrive at a good interpretation of the way that film's images, sounds, and texts are put together. The burden here is on the act of reading, of viewing; rather than emphasizing biography or intention, it has to do with developing a compelling interpretation of the works in question, and, in so doing, discerning the practical intelligence within the films and videos themselves. Such will be the case with my discussion of Godard's late work: none of the claims I make about his films and videos, or about his more general project in these years, rests upon his own views of these activities (whether or not he does, or would, endorse them).[50] It's also for this reason that I only rarely have recourse to Godard's interviews and writings, mainly turning to them in chapter 5 to establish the general prominence of the figure of projection.

The stakes of this methodological proposal can be seen in an argument made by Fredric Jameson, insisting that *Passion* attempts to give art a "trans-aesthetic vocation—in which the work of art wants to be much more than a mere work of art, but rather to replace philosophy itself (an august Hegelian and anti-Hegelian vocation)."[51] To a certain extent, Jameson is right: Godard is part of an intellectual and artistic tradition in which the medium of the artwork is designed to be at least part of the content of that work. But he makes a mistake in assuming, albeit implicitly, that when Godard takes cinema itself to be the subject of his film it is tantamount to asking cinema to *become* philosophy and thereby to renounce its aesthetic ambitions. Where Jameson goes wrong, in other words, is in assum-

ing that Godard's cinema, insofar as it operates primarily in a reflexive mode, has to take a nonaesthetic form.[52]

In contrast to Jameson, I'm going to argue that the significance of Godard's late work has to do with the way its broader intellectual ambitions, vast and varied as they may be, emerge not by an evacuation of cinema's aesthetic capacity, thereby modeling itself on philosophical discourse, but by staying with and working out its aesthetic potential. Godard delves into the resources of aesthetics in order to make a sustained argument about cinema as the medium most adequate to our understanding of the twentieth century, both its own history and the media that have displayed that history, along with its transition into the twenty-first.

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PART ONE

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The Work of Aesthetics

1. FILM ART?

If my argument is for the importance of aesthetics within Godard's films and videos since the late 1980s, two kinds of questions quickly arise. First, if I am taking a tradition of philosophical aesthetics to be not only an interpretive framework but also explicitly present within these works, what evidence is there in the films and videos? Where does this concern manifest itself? Second, if aesthetics is as prominent as I am claiming, why have critics by and large failed to bring it up, much less discuss it as a central orientation?

Though the primary purpose of this chapter is to work through the first question, to begin to discuss the place of aesthetics in Godard's late work, I'm going to start with the question about criticism, the question of why aesthetics has rarely figured in writing about these works. To a certain extent, I think this is a mistaken, if natural, way of phrasing the question. Aesthetics may not have received explicit attention in critical writing on Godard's late films and videos, but a range of associated terms (*natural beauty, form, free play,* and so on) are staples in the discourse. Yosefa Loshitzky, for example, discerns in *Nouvelle vague* a sustained treatment of natural beauty: "Nature is celebrated through adoring shots of the Swiss forests, lakes, and meadows which serve as contrapuntal points of reference to the decadent world of the power-lustful industrialists."[1] But something is lost in the shift from aesthetics proper to terms that have been historically associated with the discourse of aesthetics. When Loshitzky talks about natural beauty, she treats it as a *topic*—in the way that industrial production and finance capital are treated in the films—that Godard has an opinion about. Thus,

she concludes her discussion by noting: "The biblical, edenic associations of the garden emphasize the religious, utopian dimension of nature, envisioned by Godard as the last resort from late capitalism."[2] From an observation about the presence of images of nature, Loshitzky draws a set of conclusions: to work in terms associated with aesthetics is to be uninterested in questions of history and politics, even to evince an idealist or conservative position.

I'm going to spend much of this chapter laying the groundwork for a more expansive and intricate account of the role of aesthetics in Godard's films, one that encompasses modes of perception and experience, judgment and knowledge, and is wholly intertwined with history and politics. But what's needed is more than a revisiting of Godard's late work. The terms of criticism deployed in response to it emerge out of a long-standing tradition within film studies, one that minimizes or rejects aesthetics as a category of valuation. It's a tradition in which Godard himself played a prominent part. Getting clear about the nature of Godard's cinematic project in the late 1980s and 1990s will require working through and undoing central elements of this critical legacy.

The place of aesthetics within film history, and within film studies as well, goes back to the first decades of the twentieth century. As film was struggling to be recognized as a genuine art, more than a mere recording of the world or a form of "canned theater," film critics and theorists frequently made use of terms from aesthetics to demonstrate the medium's artistic legitimacy. Film had emerged not in the context of high artistic culture, the spaces of the theater and the museum, but rather at the fairground, in the vaudeville theater, and in the traveling exhibition. As Tom Gunning argued, early films functioned as a "cinema of attractions": their appeals were predicated less on traditional artistic values than on the creation of sensory thrills, new experiences, and a direct solicitation of the viewer's attention.[3] For this reason, early film has often been described as opposed to the bourgeois world of artistic cultivation.[4] At a certain point, though, this began to change. In the 1910s, the period of "narrative integration,"[5] a number of filmmakers and critics sought to raise the standard of the cinema, to improve not only the films being made but also the character of the audiences watching them. They sought, in short, to give film the status of the other arts.

Two basic strategies for this effort emerged. The first was articulated by D. W. Griffith in the wake of the controversy over *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Decrying its censorship, Griffith argued that cinema's status as a legitimate art form was bound up with debates over the freedom of speech. Labeling cinema a "medium of expression," he wrote, "A people that would allow the suppression of this form of speech would unquestionably submit to the suppression of that which we all consider so highly, the printing press."[6] This is the core of Griffith's argument: censorship of the press is forbidden by the Bill of Rights; the cinema is a "pictorial press"; therefore, the cinema cannot be censored, because it is on par with the

printed word. As a result, Griffith concluded that "the development of the moving picture industry constitutes the birth of a new art," and so can claim the protection the law gives to artistic productions.

The second strategy had to do with cultural legitimacy. Anton Kaes argues that, in the period from 1909 to 1920, "cinema felt pressure to legitimize itself *vis-à-vis* literature as the dominant medium" in cultural life. As it developed its own theaters and new forms of technology, cinema was able to "edge into a competitive relationship with mainstream literature, especially with the novel (which offered ready material for cinematic representation) and with the theater (which lost famous directors and actors to the new medium)."[7] One version of this was the German "*kino debatte*" that Kaes describes; the more famous effort to integrate theater and film involved the French *films d'art,* in particular the use of actors from the Comédie-Française to create prestige productions (such as *L'assassinat du duc de Guise* [Charles Le Bargy, 1908]).[8]

Early theories of film emerged in the context of this debate. As Noël Carroll remarks, "The philosophy of the motion picture was born over the issue of whether film can be art."[9] One example of this position was Vachel Lindsay's 1915 proclamation, "The motion picture is a great high art, not a process of commercial manufacture."[10] Another was Hugo Münsterberg's use (in 1916) of the conceptual framework of Kant's theory of mind to explain the power of films to produce new kinds of (what he took to be almost unimaginable) experiences.[11] A decade later Béla Bálazs invoked the terms of classical aesthetics, drawing in particular on Lessing's *Laocoön,* to argue that film needed to develop into "an autonomous art ruled by its own laws."[12] Rudolf Arnheim also used Lessing as a reference in his description of the rules of art specific to film.[13] The point for both Bálazs and Arnheim wasn't simply that film ought to be accorded the same respect as theater or painting in order to enable the appropriate appreciation; rather, the fact that a film *could* be treated in terms of aesthetics meant that it was on equal footing with the other arts. This line of argument finds its culmination in the art film, which, Dudley Andrew argues, "wants to make us choose to enter the theater just as we decide to go to a concert featuring Beethoven's sonata opus 111."[14]

The tendency to argue for film as high art, and to do so on terms drawn from aesthetics, had important consequences for later conceptualizations of film. One of these consequences involved the creation of the first institutional film collections. In New York, the Museum of Modern Art, along with the more specialized Anthology Film Archives, established a repository of the art of cinema, including experimental works as well as the films of Griffith, self-conscious cinematic "art" as well as that of Hollywood directors. Haidee Wasson has chronicled MoMA's efforts to raise cinema to the status of a genuine art; similarly, P. Adams Sitney described the Anthology Film Archives as being "made to formulate, acquire,

and frequently exhibit a nuclear collection of the monuments of cinematic art."[15] In France, a similar role was played by the Cinémathèque Français, founded by Henri Langlois and Georges Franju. (I discuss its importance for Godard in chapter 5.) Other nations, including Germany, Italy, and Japan, also established similar institutions in the middle of the twentieth century.

Perhaps inevitably, the institutional celebration of film as an art and the linking of the terms of aesthetics to this project generated a movement away from this critical tradition.[16] In 1954, for example, François Truffaut set out the parameters of the *nouvelle vague* in a denunciation of the "tradition of quality" in French cinema.[17] Although Truffaut did not call for the wholesale elimination of aesthetics or art, he argued vehemently against using other arts to add to the prestige of film. His goal was a reorientation of aesthetic value, an end to adapting works of "quality" for the screen in favor of a cinema that would be truer to the authentic possibilities of the medium itself. Truffaut was only an early marker of this criticism. As filmmakers and theorists began to disavow art cinema in the 1960s and 1970s, they rejected the terms of aesthetics altogether. When Laura Mulvey argued in 1975 that the role of criticism was to destroy "pleasure, or beauty," her intent was not to provide a new account of aesthetic value but rather to overturn an entire tradition of aesthetic valuation.[18] The political rejection or suspicion of aesthetic criteria exemplified by Mulvey's early work permeated a wide range of critical methods. Saussurean structuralist semiotics, as it was picked up in film studies, turned language into the central model for analysis, bypassing considerations of aesthetics by turning the viewer into a decoder of a text. Psychoanalytic accounts of cinema either described film viewing in terms of theories of individual development or explored analogies (between the screen and a Lacanian "mirror," for example) to understand the social function of cinema. And "apparatus theory" rejected the indeterminacy of aesthetic considerations in favor of an analysis of the viewing position created by the combination of a camera based in Renaissance perspective and the spatial arrangement of theatrical exhibition. These critical methods became sufficiently prominent to allow Dudley Andrew, in 1984, to say with assurance, "The word 'aesthetics' has nearly dropped from the vocabulary of film theory."[19]

Taken together, these methods constituted a movement that D. N. Rodowick has labeled "political modernism."[20] Rather than drawing on a tradition of art cinema, filmmakers and theorists claimed a lineage defined by left-wing criticism of mass media. The suspicion of artistic "aura" that had been voiced by Benjamin and Brecht in the 1930s returned as an argument that film ought to function as a form of "ideology critique" of and through its own institutional position. This meant not just advocating radical political goals but also exposing the conventions on which "bourgeois cinema" was based, from narrative patterns to the material status of the image—an effort to unlearn, decode, and reject

the habits viewers had gathered from "naïve" moviegoing.[21] Political modernism thus rejected not only Hollywood cinema but the art house tradition as well, a position voiced most explicitly in Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino's call for a "third cinema."[22]

Godard's films from the late 1960s and 1970s were not simply part of the burgeoning growth of political modernism. His work in these years and the production methods he employed served as one of its primary models. Of particular importance was the way Godard sought to find a cinematic form that would be adequate to the political concerns he wanted to express and at the same time tried to discover a politics that would be adequate to the formal innovations he was exploring. As he noted, "We have not yet learned to watch and listen to a film. And therein lies our most important task today. For example, those who are politically aware are rarely cinematographically aware as well, and vice versa. Generally it's one or the other. As for myself, I owe my political formation to the cinema, and I think this is comparatively rare at present."[23] This line of argument emphasized systems of media as the central place for political interrogation, suggesting that filmmakers face a moral and political imperative to challenge and upend the familiar systems of representation and production on which they draw.[24] *Le gai savoir* (1969) may be Godard's most explicit version of this project, with its self-proclaimed mission to "start from zero" and construct a new, and free, language of image, text, and sound.

It's hard to overstate Godard's influence on film theory in these years. Partly, this influence had to do with the films themselves, the way they articulated a pressing political need to rethink the basic elements of film practice. But it correlated with other historical changes as well: while these films were being made, and in the wake of their influence on international film production—an influence that was intense and deep, although not quite as widespread as the influence of his films of the *nouvelle vague* period—film studies was emerging as an academic discipline. I suspect there's something to the thought that trends in film studies respond to the films of the time (or perhaps to the films just before their time), and so the rise of "theory" in the 1970s built on the foundation laid by Godard's work a few years earlier.

While there have been recent attempts to "reclaim" art cinema from accusations of its cultural and political conservatism,[25] I am concerned here with the way the legacy of political modernism shaped the reception of Godard's films and videos from the 1980s onward. It was precisely the importance of the Groupe Dziga Vertov films for a generation of filmmakers and scholars that led to the subsequent charges of nostalgia or naïveté against Godard's later work. Reading critical pieces from the 1980s and 1990s, one is often struck by a tone of betrayal and the repeated description of Godard's later films as amounting to a withdrawal from the political concerns that motivated his turn away from art and

aesthetics in the first place. Frequently, the criticisms are expressed in terms of a fall: having once been at the vanguard of a cinematic and political movement, Godard's films and videos now evince little or no interest in those commitments.[26] His films, that is, explicitly draw on and endorse a tradition of high art and culture (painting in *Passion,* music in *Prénom Carmen,* theology in *Je vous salue, Marie,* literature in *King Lear*) in a way that directly goes against the grain of the films from the previous decade.

This criticism is further grounded by an apparent correlation with biographical facts. In the wake of the failure of his collaboration with Jean-Pierre Gorin and the dissolution of the Groupe Dziga Vertov, as well as a devastating motorcycle accident, Godard founded a new studio, Sonimage, with Anne-Marie Miéville in 1972. He did so, however, not in Paris but in Grenoble, eventually moving to the Swiss town of Rolle in 1977. MacCabe argued in 1979 that this geographical shift changed the nature of Godard's interest in both cinema and politics: "Sonimage's move from Paris to Grenoble and then to Rolle becomes the analogue of confronting the solitude that cities impose but disavow. . . . [This position's] weakness is its concomitant refusal to consider the possibility of the creation of social meaning, of the grounds of social action."[27] As MacCabe sees it, Godard's move marks a turn away from a belief in the importance of political action, a turn represented by his embrace of the idea of solitude. Like Rousseau's solitary wanderer, Godard withdraws in self-imposed exile from Paris to Switzerland in order to free himself from the complexities of the world of history and politics, the world in which public events take place. Away from the urban centers of Europe, he seems comfortable in a role as a cinematic and political outsider.[28]

To an extent, this reading is born out in Godard's work. His collaborations with Miéville during the 1970s, for example, frequently turn toward the question of the home. At times, as in *Ici et ailleurs* (1974), this is figured as simultaneously national and domestic: about the role of France in producing images of non-Western struggle and about the role of the household in maintaining the political order. Elsewhere, as in *Numéro deux* (1975), the focus is on the family unit itself: the relation between industrial and domestic work, the tensions between generations, and the sexual manifestations of larger social and political frustrations. While overtly political, these films eschew Godard's earlier commitments, exhibiting suspicion of any demand to place film in the service of revolutionary activity.

This tendency increased when Godard "returned" to feature filmmaking in the 1980s, as a number of his characters evince a profound anxiety about their place in public or political life. The three films with which I am mostly concerned are not exceptions. In *Soigne ta droite,* "the Individual" worries about the way his identity is threatened by amorphous and impersonal forces. He shies away from figures of paternal authority, the dehumanization of rote manual work, and the

negligence of political parties. In *Nouvelle vague,* Roger Lennox finds himself unable to comprehend the networks of financial institutions into which he has been placed, repeatedly rejecting the public roles he is given. In *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* Lemmy Caution struggles to understand the effects of the political movements that swept back and forth across Europe in the twentieth century— changes in which he played no role as a political actor—as he wanders through the ruins of its epicenter.

In these films, Godard repeatedly shows characters residing in private existence or expressing a desire to be in such a state. Critics have wanted his films to show that countering such a condition of isolation is important, whether politically or morally. But Godard appears unwilling or unable to do this. *Soigne ta droite* ends with a poetic meditation on myth and creation, spoken over a view of a sunset through the window of an uninhabited beach house; *Nouvelle vague* finishes with the central couple rejecting the demands of capitalism, not for political rebellion but in favor of the intricacies and intimacies of love; and *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* shows Caution alone in a hotel room, isolated from a world that has changed without him. There is little to indicate that Godard sees solitude as a problem to be actively countered.

It's here that the traditions of debates over art, aesthetics, and film come together. When critics see Godard's turn away from public affairs, they also observe an increasing interest in the legacy of high art. As a result, a variety of discourses—solitude and politics, art and aesthetics—become mixed together, more or less equated. In this mixing, the terms and categories of art (and of aesthetics as well) are linked to Godard's turn away from political commitment; correspondingly, when he shows interest in art, he is taken to be withdrawing from the political world. An aesthete at heart.

Many of the arguments I will make in this book go against this way of thinking about Godard's late work. Rather than refuting the charges of these criticisms, however, I will try to redefine the basic terms of discussion, since it's in the way questions are asked that this particular line of interpretation gets going in the first place. Crucially, this involves understanding the place of aesthetics in Godard's late films and videos in a very different way.

2. THE DIALECTIC IS INTERESTED IN YOU

Part of the difficulty in coming to terms with Godard's late work is the desire to employ models of political cinema largely derived from the 1960s: as an instrumental support for a political movement or as a politically motivated deconstruction of a dominant ideology or paradigm. Godard's films and videos since the 1980s, however, follow a different model, oriented more by a project of historical understanding.

One reason for this change has to do with historical events. The 1970s and early 1980s witnessed the failure of revolutionary energy across international borders, coupled with the rise of right-wing figures, ranging from Reagan and Thatcher to Pinochet and Videla. In the midst of the reaction from the right, the self-evidence of what counted as political cinema was lost, and it began to splinter and dissipate. One of the major forms that political cinema now took involved a newfound engagement with history. In films such as Chris Marker's *Le fond de l'air est rouge* (*A Grin without a Cat*, 1977), cinema became a way to understand history, a tool by which history could be analyzed rather than changed.

Godard's late work is part of this tendency, as he explicitly takes up investigations into the way the contemporary world has arrived at its current situation, how its transformations should be thought about, and the role cinema can play in this endeavor. Put another way, his films and videos still involve questions that preoccupied him in the era of political modernism—questions about politics, history, and society, and about the place of cinema within them—but they are now cast in a different form and arrive at different kinds of answers. Godard's cinema follows a model that might be labeled "diagnostic," oriented by a concern with historical understanding rather than political transformation (perhaps reversing Marx's line about Feuerbach). The diagnostic model can be seen in the way many of his films use political events as their narrative frame: Chernobyl for *King Lear,* the fall of the Berlin Wall for *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the subsequent wars for *Hélas pour moi* (1993), *Je vous salue, Sarajevo* (1993), *For Ever Mozart,* and *Notre musique.* By explicitly positioning his films in relation to political events, Godard makes them available to be read as responses to those situations. He ensures that a given trope, technique, quotation, or image does not function in isolation, as a self-enclosed topic, but rather as an engagement, obliquely or directly, with a contemporary event or crisis. Taking a political cinema to define itself through its response to a situation may feel odd, especially given Godard's history as a committed filmmaker. Yet he has been attracted to this approach ever since the opening lines of *Le petit soldat* announced, "The time for action is over. I have aged. The time for reflection is beginning."

The diagnostic model provides a way to understand the role of solitude in Godard's late work. Rather than signaling a withdrawal from the social, political, and historical world, Godard uses the motif of solitude to engage with and rethink these very concerns. That is, the desire for solitude is treated less as a value in its own right than as a response to a political context, to the tragedies of the twentieth century and the anxieties that emerge forcefully toward its end. In each film, he articulates a public context that serves, with varying degrees of specificity, as the occasion for a withdrawal into privacy or isolation. Critics are right, then, to say that Godard is relatively uninterested in passing judgment on

whether one should be in a state of solitude; he simply takes it to be the case that solitude is a comprehensible response to certain social and political situations. But this is not equivalent to a full-scale withdrawal from politics by the film itself: Godard uses solitude, or at least the impulse to seek solitude, as a diagnostic tool. The particular form that solitude takes can then be used to think through the public conditions that motivate it.

The first intertitle of *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* "Solitudes: un état et des variations" (Solitude: A State and Variations), already plays with the line between private and public, since a state *(un état)* is a category at once individual (a state of mind) and social (a nation state). As the film goes on, Godard brings them together by developing the odd idea that the state, as a political entity, has achieved or desires to achieve the condition of solitude. (As he put it in an interview, "I did not want to make a film on the solitude of lovers or drug addicts. I found more interest in the solitude of a land *[un pays],* a state, a collective.")[29] Late in the film, Caution remarks, "The dream of the state is to be alone; the dream of the individual is to be two," over a title that reads "Categorical Imperative." Unlike states, individuals are not described as seeking out solitude as much as seeking out one another. The suggestion here is that the state acts to rid itself of competing voices, the critique of individuals, since each time Godard uses these lines in a film he notes that their author was killed by the Nazis.[30] More generally, Caution appears to be pointing to a familiar distinction between two models of society, one based on the organization of individuals and one based on the idea of a self-sustaining state.

Godard builds up to the relation between individuals and the state in a sequence that draws on some of the central political conflicts of the twentieth century. It begins with a title, "The Time of Contempt," and we are shown several clips of Nazi and Soviet soldiers accompanied by an audio recording from a Nazi-era radio address: "There is a whisper from every continent rising up against the Soviet Union." Caution's voice is then heard: "In this atmosphere I could not find my place. The Comintern was not what it had been in 1923 [the last year of Lenin's rule]." Godard then cuts to a bar, where people are drinking, talking, or staring into space; an early Marlene Dietrich song plays on the soundtrack, as if from a jukebox. The text Caution reads is from the autobiography of Jan Valtin, an active member of the maritime division of the German Communist Party from 1918 until his capture by the Gestapo in 1933. It's a reference Godard wants us to pick up on, since we will shortly see Caution seated at a table with Valtin's book in a French translation; another man at the table is reading the German edition. Caution continues in voice-over: "And neither was I the same youngster who had stormed police strongholds and fought behind barricades with a gun in my hand. Firelei [Valtin's wife] now meant more to me than Josef Stalin or the Soviet Constitution."[31] From the standpoint of the 1936 Communist Party, the

time of the purges, Valtin speaks wistfully about the incompatibility of a private life with the duties of a revolutionary. Godard's use of Valtin's text gives a particular slant to the film's depiction of the desire for solitude. The fantasy of a private life, as articulated by Valtin (via Caution), is treated as a disillusioned response to the history of left-wing or socialist politics in the twentieth century, whether in the 1930s or the 1980s. The implication is that fatigue with political action produces the dream of withdrawal, that it is not a simple indifference to politics.

Part of the force of this scene comes from the way Godard adapts a strategy from Rainer Werner Fassbinder's *The Marriage of Maria Braun* (1978). There, Fassbinder explores how the drive for economic self-advancement in postwar Germany deferred or displaced genuine acknowledgment of the nation's involvement in World War II. Among several techniques he uses to show this is the staging of famous radio addresses from postwar German political life against scenes of private activity, usually eating, thereby correlating personal lives with public events. The most shocking instance is when, late in the film, Maria Braun hears Adenauer's announcement of Germany's rearmament while she eats lunch; rising up from her table, she staggers to the side and vomits. Fassbinder suggests that the effects of unacknowledged and ignored political events exist not just in the social sphere but in the individual body; neuroses and other pathological or destructive behaviors are the result.[32]

The bar scene in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* follows a similar pattern. Not only does it share with *The Marriage of Maria Braun* a color palette of browns and grays, but Godard also adopts Fassbinder's use of sound: we hear a radio announcement that German ships are being sent into the Persian Gulf to sweep for mines ahead of the upcoming invasion of Iraq, a controversial moment in contemporaneous German history. For the first time since the end of World War II, German armed forces were involved in an international conflict. As I will argue later in the chapter, one of Godard's main anxieties in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* is over the return to "normalcy" in German national self-identity, part of which involved its remilitarization.[33]

But even though both Godard and Fassbinder use the responses and desires of individuals as a way to understand larger social and political changes, there is an important difference. Fassbinder focuses on the way individuals, immersed in private activity, register political events unconsciously; he is concerned with the dangers of failing to acknowledge the existence of a political world. Godard, by contrast, gives us characters all too aware of politics; Valtin's life constitutes the exemplary form of this position.[34] In this way, *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* uses political narratives and visual strategies from across the twentieth century to articulate a new crisis for political actors: the end of the socialist alternative, however compromised it might have been, that East Germany represented. And with it is a worry over the very possibility of political engagement.

Godard ends the scene on a somber note, suggesting that the desire for a private life separate from battles in the public sphere may be understandable on political grounds but is nonetheless an illusory fantasy. As Caution and the other man sit and read Valtin's book, we hear a phrase from Hegel spoken by the narrator in voice-over: "In following their own interests, individuals make history and are at the same time the means of something higher and greater, of which they are ignorant and which they fulfill unconsciously."[35] Seen from a wider historical perspective, public and private are not separable realms but inextricably interwoven with each other. Godard suggests, albeit with a tone of sadness and resignation, that we are all, willingly or not, caught up in larger political movements and the course of (world) history. The desire for absolute privacy, for living a life not connected to public and political events, involves a fantasy that history continues to prove unrealizable.

Allemagne 90 neuf zéro may constitute the most complex and explicit negotiation of the political dimension of solitude in Godard's work of these years. But if *Soigne ta droite* and *Nouvelle vague* lack the brilliance of the later film, a similar structure of engagement with solitude is nonetheless present within them. The use of solitude in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* is not an isolated treatment so much as the culmination of arguments and experiments in the opening sequences of the two previous films.

Soigne ta droite begins with its title in white lettering on a black background, over which we hear the sound of a telephone ringing. This is followed by a series of aerial shots—a forest suffused with fog, fields, rural towns, and lakes—as a voice says, "At the end of the twentieth century, the Idiot's phone rang. He's through with work, about to spend a quiet evening, as one still can in some remote areas of Europe, lost between the forests of Germany and the lakes of northern Italy. That's when the phone rings . . . just then!" A stranger is calling, saying that the Idiot's sins (unnamed but apparently many) will be forgiven if he makes a film and delivers it that afternoon; a car is waiting for him, so is a plane ticket; he is to leave immediately. Apparently, the icons of industrial modernity aren't so distant after all.

The opening scene presents the Idiot as a modern Rousseau, withdrawn to one of the few remaining "remote areas" in order to escape the presence of others, to achieve the "complete renunciation of the world."[36] This turns out to be impossible, in part because people continually intrude on his solitude. Like Rousseau, he is disturbed, brought out, made to engage with the intrigues of the world once again. But the Idiot's desire for solitude is more a response to the public world than a flight motivated by private affairs and a feeling of persecution by one-time friends. *Soigne ta droite* gives this desire an increasingly broad motivation, culminating in Godard's extraordinary updating of the train scene from *La chinoise*. Instead of having Anne Wiazemsky and Francis Jeanson debate the validity of revolutionary terror, Godard shows a despairing conversation between two older

men, both of whom are members of the Communist Party (or an equivalent or-
ganization). One is being taken to the border in handcuffs, where he will be sent
away to be executed; their extended conversation revolves around the historical
failure of radical politics and its misfiring attempts to incorporate radical art. (I
discuss the train scene further in the next chapter.) In this scene, and in others
throughout the film, Godard presents the public world, the world that surrounds
individuals, as a profoundly unattractive place. The political failures of the twen-
tieth century, seen from the vantage point of its end, have taken away the public
arena in which the possibility for political action once resided.

The problem is even more explicit in *Nouvelle vague*. The appearance of the
motif of solitude in the opening shots of the film marks a radicalization of the
term: solitude becomes less a withdrawal from the public or social world than a
flight from the physical world itself. Over a black screen with the film's title in
white lettering, a male voice says, "But I wanted this to be a narrative [Mais c'est
un récit que je voulais faire]. I still do. Nothing from outside to distract from
memory." There is an initial confusion here. The deictic *this* in the first statement
appears to refer to the film we're currently watching, but the verb is in the past
tense: its author "*wanted* this to be a narrative." Although it might imply that the
film Godard made simply isn't a narrative, "I still do" indicates that the speaker
may instead be articulating a worry that it *won't* be one. (In some ways, this is
familiar territory for Godard: what matters is less the content of a narrative than
the desire for one.) At the same time, he suggests that the desired narrative might
come from memory, the mind separated from the world present to the senses. Yet
if memory, as represented by the black screen, is to be separated from the world
("nothing from outside"), then how should we understand that desire? Is the nar-
rator fantasizing that, with our eyes closed or the screen empty, the world is shut
out, and a narrative can begin that will draw solely on memory? Is the film, or
the audience, to be blocked off to allow memory to emerge? Or is the film the
source of that memory? However we understand it, the fantasy of memory quickly
dissolves as Godard cuts from the black screen to a shot of a tree, branches over-
hanging a verdant field, with two horses grazing in the background (figure 3). It's
a beautiful, almost idyllic, image—and emphatically part of the world. It's as if
the world itself were insisting on its presence, refusing to let the narrator orga-
nize the film according to his dictates; it is *this* tree, here in the world (of the film)
that matters. Any desire for absolute solitude is shown to be unrealizable, per-
haps even undesirable. Do we want to lose the sensuous qualities of the world?
Even if we do, can we willfully ignore them?[37]

The interplay between solitude and world continues to develop over the next
few shots. The voice-over immediately tries to reassert the power of narrative
over the external world by drawing the tree into the terms of memory. It says, "I
barely hear, from time to time, the earth's soft moan, one ripple breaking the

FIGURE 3. *Nouvelle vague* (1990)

surface. I am content with the shade *[ombre]*"—we go back to the credits, which now read "Alain Delon," the speaker of the voice-over—"of a single poplar, tall behind me in its mourning." If we must have something of the world, it will be only minimal. Again, Godard immediately shows the world (of the film) as refusing this desire, though now on different terms. There is a cut to a close-up of a left hand, horizontally extended from the left edge of the frame with its palm presented to the viewer. A landscape, as if from a painting by Poussin, recedes into the distance, while another hand, a right hand closed in a fist, comes into the frame from below and is enfolded within the grasp of the left hand.[38] It's important that we can tell they are the hands of two different people: the placement of one hand into the other thus functions as an emblem of human connection, a sense of togetherness. It turns out that we need other people as well.

Nouvelle vague repeatedly returns to the image of two hands clasped together, generally using it to stand for a relation—of loving, caring, giving, acknowledging—between a couple. But if the image of hands functions as a refutation of solitude in the opening moments of the film, at other moments its significance is less certain. Seen under the auspices of a broader public world, the image of twoness, in its most basic form, suggests withdrawal from or indifference to that world, a retreat to interpersonal intimacy. Perhaps it suffices for our happiness to have one person who responds to us in an appropriate way; perhaps no political or social solution is needed. And yet a recurrent anxiety about the contemporary world runs throughout the film, as characters repeatedly express confusion

about how to understand the economic and political system in which they find themselves. In one instance, a banker notes, "In the past, such rampant manipulation of credit and debit always led to major disaster," and wonders why this doesn't seem to be happening then. When placed in this context, Godard's interest in the form of twoness reads more as a calculated strategy in response to confusion and anxiety about the public world than it does as a reflexive withdrawal from that world. The difference is subtle but significant. In the absence of clear knowledge of what's happening or of what we should do, Godard stages a retreat in the direction of the couple, a retreat that occurs with full recognition of the complexities of the public world.

Across these three films, then, Godard gives multiple accounts of the nature of solitude, including a withdrawal from political action, the rejection of the social world, and a retreat to the romantic couple. In each case, the form of solitude depicted is predicated on the kind of situation being escaped. With the ravages of political activism, we have the fantasy of bourgeois privacy; with the impositions of the public world, we have social isolation; with the demands of finance, we have the solace of love. Importantly, in each film the flight into solitude is shown as failing to sustain itself. The terms of failure are different each time—Caution is still within the political sphere, the Idiot is made to face the world again, and Roger and Elena cannot escape entanglement with the intricacies of power and money—but the result is the same: solitude turns out to be impossible to achieve, much less sustain.

3. MAKING THE STONE STONY

In turning from solitude to aesthetics, we run the danger of treating them as similar kinds of things and so carrying associations from one to the other. The risk is in, among other things, returning to the approach I criticized above, in which aesthetics is treated as a topic, and certain images are taken to be the entire content of aesthetics. But the move has two advantages. First, it allows aesthetics to emerge in a way that lets it function as a mode of analysis; aesthetics is not simply something *in* the film, but a way of thinking that does work for the film. Second, and more important, the investigation of solitude should rid us of the assumption that we know what the category of aesthetics means in these films. A guiding principle of this chapter, and of the book as a whole, is that the terms of aesthetics, at least as they operate for Godard, cannot be given in advance. This principle is largely methodological. Aesthetics is not so much a topic within a larger discourse as it is the very means by which that discourse is pursued. However, I'll also argue that aesthetics enters the picture in no small way because of Godard's sense that other methods of inquiry and analysis have reached a dead end or come up against their own limitations. In this context, he

uses the categories and terms of aesthetics to reformulate basic questions of historical and political understanding, and he does so by exploring the resources of aesthetics in and through cinema.

I will begin by looking at a specific visual device employed by Godard throughout his late films. Starting with *Soigne ta droite* and continuing in most films he has made since, Godard makes prominent use of extended focus pulls. The attraction of this device seems to be primarily nonnarrative, as it brings out an experiential or perceptual register of the film, an aesthetic dimension that can then be mobilized for other and more extensive ambitions. In such moments when concerns about aesthetics become explicit, we begin to understand the work of aesthetics.

Godard's first use of an extended focus pull occurs toward the end of *Soigne ta droite.* The film has again returned to the recording studio where Les Rita Mitsouko are rehearsing a song. A voice-over, referring back to the train scene, remarks, "Then, I realized that, on the train, the policeman forgot to speak of the dead, forgot to say these simple words: 'Yes, what would we do without the dead?' That sentence should have been said near the border." On the word *policeman,* Godard cuts to a shot that resembles an abstract composition. Against the pale white and blue background of the sky, a dark band runs more or less vertically down the frame, slightly to the right of center; two faint and thinner horizontal bands run across the frame near the top and bottom (figure 4). Both horizontal and vertical bands are blurred, out of focus. As the voice-over continues, Godard gradually begins to bring them into focus, a shift that happens slowly enough that five seconds later we are still unsure as to the content of the image. It eventually becomes clear that we are looking at a wooden pole with strands of barbed wire attached to it, shot from below and framed against the sky (figure 5).

A second focus pull immediately follows. On the word *sentence* and when the first shot is finally brought into crisp focus, Godard cuts to another shot of barbed wire. Again, the wire runs horizontally in the foreground, but this time it's in focus at the outset, thereby directing our attention to the foreground. In the background, people seem to be seated in a disorganized cluster but are so out of focus that they appear almost as a spatial arrangement of colors. After a beat, the camera tracks slightly back and moves up, and the focus begins to shift. The combined camera movement and focus pull continue for several seconds until the background figures become clear: a group of people sprawled out in various positions on what looks like the bleachers of a sports stadium. By this time, the barbed wire has gone out of focus. Though it is still recognizable as a wire, the barbs are no longer emphasized, and so it resembles the other wire supports lining the aisles of the bleachers.

A scene then follows in which Godard juxtaposes statements about poetry, loss, politics, and sports (one man intermittently yells, "Go, Platini," as the sounds of a soccer match are heard) with the iconography of concentration camps (the
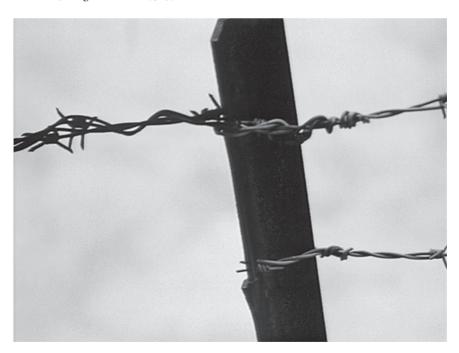
FIGURE 4. *Soigne ta droite* (1987)

FIGURE 5. *Soigne ta droite*

FIGURE 6. *Soigne ta droite*

jumble of bodies, references to Klaus Barbie and the Hotel Terminus). At the end of the scene, several minutes later, he begins another focus pull. Over a close-up of a young woman lying facedown on a bench, the voice-over from the beginning of the sequence is heard again: "And with a final piercing of the border of the dream, a final shattering of every sort of image, a last shattering of memory, the dream grew and grew with it. His thinking became greater than all thinking. It became a second immensity. It became the law that caused the crystal to grow, stated in crystal, stated through music, but over and above expressing the music of crystal."[39] As the voice-over begins, Godard cuts to an out-of-focus shot of the sky. Barbed wire, in focus and running diagonally from the top left to the bottom right of the frame, is in silhouette in the foreground (figure 6). After seven seconds and on the phrase "a last shattering of memory," a focus pull begins, and, over the next eight seconds, the background comes into sharp focus. Several seconds later, as the voice speaks of "a second immensity," Godard begins a second focus pull, which slowly reverses the previous focus pull to place emphasis on the foreground and the barbed wire. The scene concludes with a pair of shots of the two musicians from Les Rita Mitsouko, bathed in shadows but looking up so that their faces are framed by light.

There's a strong temptation to think about these shots in thematic terms. On the basis of the content of the voice-over, the focus pulls lend themselves to a reading that draws on the interaction between sky and wire. The focus pulls on either end of the scene in the bleachers might be about the desire for, and the impossibility of, transcendence: a desire to escape a mundane and imprisoning world. The first shot of the sequence shows the sky in focus and the wire a mere blur, as if a visualization of what the voice-over calls a "piercing of the border": the shot seems to leap over the wire into the open expanse of sky beyond. Then, when the focus pull brings the wire into focus, the freedom and openness it suggested are shown to be an illusion. We didn't see the whole situation, and now we find that we are trapped, imprisoned. But in what? Behind what? Alain Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard* (*Night and Fog*, 1955) opens with a similar gesture, as peaceful landscapes that begin the first two shots are revealed as views from within a concentration camp. In the first, the camera moves down to reveal the barbed wire; in the second, the camera moves back and to the right to expose the location. Is that what's at issue in *Soigne ta droite?* Such a reading seems confirmed in the second shot, which begins outside the wire looking in at the people in the stadium before a focus pull subtly erases the barrier that separates us from them; we, too, are inside the camp. Finally, the end of the scene manifests a similar dynamic when, after the shot of the prone woman, Godard cuts to a close-up of barbed wire. This time, the focus pull that follows feels as if it moves into the sky, toward escape and transcendence. But the subsequent focus pull again suggests that the feeling of escape was merely a fantasy; despite the longing and the dream that "grew and grew," we are still behind the wire.

I think this reading is inadequate: not that it's wrong exactly, but the level of interpretation is off. Before interpreting the scene as being about freedom and confinement, whether historically precise or general, we need to attend to the way the focus pulls emphasize and draw our attention to the look of the images, an experiential dimension they evoke and make explicit. In their formal structure, the focus pulls dramatize a movement against everyday and empirical modes of perception or cognition. At first, the blurriness of the image seems to present a barrier to any attempt to figure out what's on screen. Attempts to work through the puzzle end after a few seconds (the blur is held too long for it simply to be a matter of looking at an out-of-focus shot), and our attention instead moves to the way the image appears. In these moments of uncertainty, it's the look of the images, not what they represent, that becomes the attraction. Even when the focus shifts and the content of the shot is evident, the crisp appearance of the image stands in sharp contrast to the blurriness that came before; we remain at least partly at a level of basic visual engagement. And when there are multiple focus pulls within a single shot, we pay attention not only to the fluctu-

ating appearance of the image but also to the changes occurring in the way we look at it. It's as if Godard were providing a narrative of vision.

A later employment of focus pulls in *Soigne ta droite,* taking place shortly after the scene with the barbed wire, makes this aspect of their use explicit. Two seated human figures, extremely out of focus, can be discerned facing front and toward the right in a medium shot; despite the blur, we can see that they wear dark coats and white shirts. Godard keeps the shot out of focus for almost fifteen seconds, and the duration of the sheer blurriness of the image eventually turns our attention to its formal composition. We notice, for example, the way light reflecting off a pair of glasses is transformed into an isolated globule of color, producing an otherworldly look; we see the abstract pattern of light and dark colors laid out across the frame. After fifteen seconds in which we have nothing to do but look, Godard begins an extended, slow, twenty-second focus pull, finally revealing a man and a woman sitting at a table, looking out in front of them. The final result is surprisingly mundane: the light on the woman's glasses, so fascinating when out of focus, is hardly noticeable now.

A concern with perceptual experience is present in a number of Godard's films since the 1980s. In his video essay, *Scénario de "Sauve qui peut (la vie)"* (1979), he notes, "What I'm trying to show you is how I see things, so that you can judge whether I am able to see, and what I have seen . . . and you can see if I see something. I show if there is something to see and how I see it. And you can say, 'No, he's wrong, there's nothing to see.' So what I would like to show you is a way of seeing: for example, superimpositions, cross-fades, and slow motion."

This declaration of intent at the start of this period in Godard's career is important, and a brief moment from *Hélas pour moi* makes it clear that focus pulls can be added to his list of devices. The focus pull in that film takes place in a scene in which an investigator into a series of strange events talks with a visionary poet who may or may not have witnessed them (basically, the story of Amphytrion). A discussion of Gershom Scholem's notion of truth and its transmission ensues, during which the investigator remarks, "I don't see what you're talking about," to which the poet responds, "You said it just right: 'I don't see'; and yet I saw it. Or rather, heard it. That's how I'd say it." At this moment, Godard cuts to an out-of-focus image: a pattern of green shapes spreads across the screen, with a black band running vertically about two-thirds of the way to the right edge. Curiously, at first the shot goes even more out of focus, where it remains for seven seconds before gradually moving into sharper resolution: a woman in a black sweater is sitting on a stone ledge facing the left edge of the screen, a tree and fields behind her providing the green that dominates the composition. In perhaps the most striking aspect of the shot, red apples are being hurled into the air from the bottom of the frame—a young man, below the frame, is lying on his back

juggling them—the sound of this activity making a harsh contrast to the serene visual composition.[40] Coming directly after the question of what it means to see (and what it means to have seen something that may not have been of this world), the focus pull draws attention to the fact of perception itself.

Godard's use of focus pulls is neither simple nor trivial. Three theoretical accounts of what could be called "aesthetic perception" suggest themselves as ways to describe their work. One account is (roughly) Kantian and looks at the way the lack of focus constitutes a refusal or delay of empirical cognition. Rather than directly subsuming the particular appearance of the image under a concept, the ordinary way we recognize and identify objects in the world, the focus pulls force us to stay with the purely formal arrangement of the shot, the patterns of colors allowing for the "free play" of the faculties of imagination and understanding outside any determinate content.[41] Another account derives from Russian formalist theories of the 1920s, describing the way the blurred images distort and "make strange" our habitual recognition of objects. Viktor Shklovsky describes how such devices are used: "In order to return sensation to our limbs, in order to make us feel objects, to make a stone feel stony, man has been given the tool of art. The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to a knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By 'enstranging' *[sic]* objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and 'laborious.' The perceptual process in art has a purpose all its own and ought to be extended to the fullest."[42]

Finally, there is a Heideggerian description, which likewise emphasizes the breaking down of our ordinary habits of encountering entities. For Heidegger, when things fail—when a hammer falls apart while hammering or when, as happens in *Soigne ta droite,* we are unable to recognize what we see—we don't simply become aware of the object in its objecthood. We become aware of the world as a whole in a new way, with a heightened consciousness.[43] Ordinary events and objects may "light up" the world, but so may art; Heidegger calls this mode of awareness "disclosure."[44]

This list of interpretive frameworks is not exhaustive, nor does it do justice to any of the accounts or mark one as being particularly apt. What it shows is that the work Godard does with focus pulls in *Soigne ta droite* falls under a description of perception—indeed, under several different descriptions—that stands in contrast to ordinary modes of cognition. The focus pulls highlight and articulate a phenomenological or experiential part of the film. In a sense, they have an almost didactic function. Godard forces his viewers to stay or tarry with the look of the image, to refuse (at least initially) the temptation to move toward more abstract interpretation, and even, at times, to refuse a move to a basic level of recognition.

It's important to be clear about the nature of this claim. I do not mean to make an argument for a formalist reading of the sequence or to say that this register of aesthetics has temporal or logical priority in our approach to moving images.

Insofar as a "purely formal" element exists here, it is only analytically separable from everything else the film carries with it: concerns that range from the recognition of objects to the understanding of narrative to the development of larger literary and philosophical discourses. The point is that these focus pulls require a mode of attention attuned to the way formal concerns generate a certain kind of experience in the viewer. (It's also the case that this kind of feature in Godard's films is often overlooked in favor of their more overt intellectual virtuosity.)

In Godard's films since *Soigne ta droite,* he continues to use focus pulls to emphasize a perceptual or experiential register of film, but their function changes in each context. In *Nouvelle vague,* following the accident that starts that film's narrative, there is a cut to a shot of Roger, lying on his back; he raises his left hand and extends it toward the top of the screen. Elena's voice is heard: "How wonderful it is to be able to give what you don't have." As she says this, Godard cuts to Roger's isolated hand, turned away from the camera, rising against the background of a landscape covered in dappled light. Elena's left hand, also turned away, reaches in from the right. Roger says, "O, miracle of empty hands," which she repeats in Italian as her hand twists to face the camera and grasps his. Immediately, Godard cuts to an out-of-focus shot of cars driving down the highway at night. A quick focus pull of little more than a second brings them into focus, after which he cuts to a second out-of-focus shot of cars. This shot remains out of focus for six seconds before Godard cuts to a new scene.

The effect of the brief sequence largely results from the way Godard takes advantage of the lights of cars at night. When shown out of focus, circular globes of light seem to float in patterns on a black background, a reduction of objects to their primary and secondary qualities (shape and color) (figure 7). Only after the focus pull do we become aware that we are in fact looking at cars. (In the second shot, because this particular appearance is now familiar to us, we are able to recognize the spheres of light quickly for what they are.)[45]

What Godard discovers in *Soigne ta droite,* and then confirms in *Nouvelle vague,* is something like the ease with which he can achieve a specific and dramatic visual effect. The focus pulls, after all, are little more than the exploitation of a basic technical feature of the camera apparatus: it isn't possible to maintain focus from zero to infinity. All that needs to be done is to find the right way of using this feature, and then Godard quickly, almost automatically, can generate a strong perceptual experience. The sense of ease is made explicit in Roger and Elena's dialogue before the focus pull, when they suggest that the capacity of two people to reach for and accept each other with "empty hands"—that is, without making demands on one another—is a "miracle."[46] While this gestures toward the ethical difficulties of interpersonal acknowledgment, the focus pulls produce a simple moment of aesthetic grace. It's as if Godard were suggesting that ethics and aesthetics allow for very different sorts of miracles.

FIGURE 7. *Nouvelle vague*

In *Nouvelle vague,* however, Godard does not rest with the success of the focus pulls; he extends the terms of their use to experiment with a different formal strategy. It's as if the quick focus pull early in the film is meant to bring his audience onto the same page—to inform them of his concerns—but also to remind *himself* of the ease with which film can access this aesthetic register. Having done that, he becomes interested in whether such an affinity between film and aesthetics holds more generally or whether the experiential effect of the focus pulls is limited to that device alone.

The new technique he turns to involves camera movement. *Nouvelle vague* is full of dramatic and extended tracking shots, but one stands out in this context. It takes place in the first third of the film, during one of the many scenes in which Roger and Elena stage a variety of poses and tableaux oriented around questions of submission and domination: who controls whom, who's watching whom, and so on. The camera repeatedly tracks back and forth between the room they're in and an adjacent hallway (where servants obliquely comment on their relationship), a movement that repeatedly crosses the (impossible) barrier of the wall between them. Suddenly, during one of the movements to the right, toward Roger and Elena, Godard cuts to a stationary shot of the lake, taken from above and fairly close to the surface, with the waves moving left. Because the shot is away from the shore, the waves do not break but appear instead as a succession of lines, their movement creating a visual effect that makes it feel as if the camera

itself were continuing to move to the right. After fifteen seconds, Godard returns to the scene inside the house.

As with the focus pulls in *Soigne ta droite,* the temptation is to read this insert in thematic terms. The shot might be said to signify the indifference of nature to the human drama being enacted. Conversely, it might function as a pathetic fallacy, where the outside world responds sympathetically to the emotions of the characters. Again, I want to delay a drift into more abstract or allegorical interpretations. For now, it is sufficient to note that this shot of the water functions as the background to the work of the scene, a neutral starting point against which a subsequent shot of the water will resonate.

Several more of the back-and-forth tracking movements occur, during which new tableaux of control are presented, and then Godard inserts another shot of the water. Like the previous cutaway, this shot is taken from above with nothing but the water in the frame. At first, it looks as though Godard has simply repeated the earlier shot: the camera is motionless, but the waves move to the left in a way that creates an impression of a rightward movement of the camera. But then the camera suddenly accelerates to the right, and the waves appear to move even faster to the left. For several seconds, the camera speeds along the water, and we are caught up in the grace of the movement, then it comes to a sudden and grinding halt. After a moment's pause (figure 8), Godard slowly starts to move the camera up and to the left, tracking parallel to the lines of the waves. The effect of this movement, especially in contrast to the earlier static shot of the waves, is vertiginous. We go from speed to stillness in a moment, and then, when Godard changes the direction of the camera, we feel the movement of the camera again, but the waves, because the camera moves parallel to their line, remain absolutely still with respect to the frame. The world seems to spin on its axis; our external reference point in the shot suddenly feels unstable and fluctuating.

Godard's use of camera movement brings perception to the fore. The vertigo renders anything besides the interaction of the camera and the waves irrelevant for the time being; it's not implausible to think that, at the climax of the shot, we are less aware of the fact that we're looking at water than of the way the camera plays with a series of straight lines to produce an affective response. As with the focus pulls in *Soigne ta droite,* Godard discovers that a basic feature of the camera—in this case, its capacity to move—can be used to direct the viewer's attention to the embodied activity of perception.[47]

Shortly afterward, Godard makes the affinity between camera movements and focus pulls explicit. After several brief shots that conclude the scene in the house, he cuts to another nighttime shot of out-of-focus cars. The shot is held that way for seventeen seconds, and then a nine-second focus pull brings it into crisp focus. Because we already know how to think about the focus pull—from *Soigne ta droite* and from earlier in *Nouvelle vague*—Godard's use of it here

FIGURE 8. *Nouvelle vague*

confirms the significance of the camera's movement over the water. The two de-
vices are being used to generate a similar kind of response.

4. A MAD ENTERPRISE

Since *Nouvelle vague,* Godard has continued to employ focus pulls in his films.
In addition to appearing in *Hélas pour moi,* they are in *JLG/JLG: Autoportrait de
décembre* (1995), *For Ever Mozart, Éloge de l'amour* (*In Praise of Love,* 2001), and
Notre musique. It would seem, then, that in *Soigne ta droite* Godard discovered
something that he took to be of importance, and I've been arguing that this has
to do with the ease with which film can make certain aspects of aesthetics—
namely, a kind of visual or experiential dimension—available for viewers. In
later films, however, Godard begins to place the focus pulls more explicitly in the
service of his larger creative and intellectual ambitions, as in the way *Hélas pour
moi* uses the visual uncertainty created by the technique to highlight its larger
ontological and epistemological questions about our relation to and dependence
on the physical world.

　　Curiously, the connection between the experiential dimension of viewing and
these larger ambitions is perhaps most evident in Godard's one film since *Soigne
ta droite* that doesn't contain a focus pull: *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* In place of it,
Godard employs a different technique: filming video images off a screen in a way
that overtly emphasizes their different textures. This shift in media from film to

video makes a register of perceptual experience evident, as the focus pulls do, but Godard goes a step further and explicitly uses this experiential dimension as a central part of an effort to understand the historical and political transformations of contemporary Germany. The attempt is ambitious, and Godard actually begins by worrying about whether film is capable of it at all.

Initially, *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* looks as though it takes place in the same conceptual space as *Soigne ta droite* and *Nouvelle vague.* The film starts with a shot of a streetcar moving along an empty street, then shows the intertitle "Solitudes: un état et des variations," after which Godard cuts to a stunning shot of mist rising off a lake while cars drive by at the right edge of the frame. But *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* quickly diverges from the earlier films. Rather than showing an individual attempting to seek out a state of solitude, it gives us the beginnings of a discourse on philosophy and art. The first words we hear are a voice-over, which wonders (quoting Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*),

> Can one tell the story *[raconter]* of time, time in itself, as such and in itself? No, in truth that would be a mad enterprise—a tale *[un récit]* in which it would be said, "Time was passing, it was running out, time was following its course," and so on. No one of sound mind would ever take it for a narrative *[une narration].* It would be almost as if someone had the idea of holding a single note or a single chord for an hour, wanting to pass that off as music.[48]

In these lines, Godard seems to be referring to the kind of desire for narrative found in the opening moments of *Nouvelle vague.* But a different set of concerns is involved as well. Narrative here is not something exclusively concerned with memory, something irreducibly personal. It is compared to music, a shareable artistic form, and it also has to do with—this will become clear—the historical situation of the film itself.

Two things about this voice-over should make us pause. The first is that the remark about music conflicts with what we, and Godard, must know. Why shouldn't holding a note or chord for an hour count as music?[49] Certainly, the work of composers like Cage and Reich fits this description. I suspect, though, that Godard is not stating his own view so much as marking the difference between two accounts of music (and art more generally). One, enacted by the voice-over, is predicated on a classical conception of music that emphasizes harmony, development, and tonality; it is an account of music on traditional aesthetic terms. The other, the position against which the voice-over reacts, holds the definition and primary content of a work of art to be conceptual rather than aesthetic. These are the terms of a modernist challenge to art, terms that Godard takes up throughout the rest of the film.

The second puzzle has to do with the remarks about time. The claim that telling "the story of time, time in itself" is senseless seems to be based on something

like the following line of thought. To tell a narrative is to tell a story *in* time, to take time as the medium of the story. If we try to tell the story *of* time, we effectively place time into time—something that appears to be a contradiction or that, in the film's terms, constitutes "a mad enterprise."[50] Of course, that doesn't mean it hasn't been tried, and I take it that we are supposed to recognize Hegel as the object of these opening lines. Part of this has to do with the way that "the story of time in itself" could be a rough description of *The Phenomenology of Spirit.* But the resonance also turns on Hegel's general importance as an intellectual figure, and as a theorist of history in particular, for *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro:* his philosophical project is what is being called "mad." The opening voice-over, then, presents us with a situation in which things we seem to want to do—have a good sense of what art is, be able to tell a story about time—are thrown into doubt. Neither art nor philosophy escapes worry.

Shortly thereafter, Godard returns to Hegel and appears to endorse his ambitions (mad enterprise notwithstanding) by quoting the preface to the *Philosophy of Right.* The lines are spoken simultaneously in German and French, the languages overlapping: "When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a form of life grown old. By philosophy's grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated but only understood."[51] While the opening voice-over suggested that the Hegelian philosophical program is incoherent, here we find the opposing argument: philosophy, in fact, is what allows us to understand our world. Hegel provides one account of how this came to be in what's been labeled the "end of art" thesis.

Hegel's account is bound up with his conception of art as a cognitive mode that is part of a broader human (and social) project of self-understanding. While he sees considerations of (natural) beauty as involving only a formal dimension, he claims that genuine art gets at the real "content" of objects behind their surface appearance. Underlying this description of the role of art is a historical narrative. If art is meant "to unveil the *truth* in the form of sensuous artistic configuration,"[52] to make it public and shareable, this process does not follow the same path in every society. Partly the difference has to do with the nature of the truth being revealed. Hegel argues that art's greatest importance is within ancient Greek society, where the divine and the human were in close proximity; however, as the highest truths of later societies have become more abstract, religion and then philosophy are needed to represent them adequately. The cognitive value of art is thus pushed away from the center of social life. In the modern world, Hegel insists, "Art, considered in its highest vocation, is and remains for us a thing of the past."[53] This does not mean that art is no longer being produced, or that it does not fill an important social need. But Hegel maintains that art does not, and will not, matter in the same way.[54] The result of this historical narrative is that philosophy, over and against art and religion, emerges as the most appropriate mode of self-knowledge in the modern, bourgeois world.[55]

It's natural to think that Godard takes Hegel as a model for his own historical project. In the introduction, I noted Jameson's claim that Godard's films rise to the level of philosophy—they transcend their status as artworks—in order to provide an understanding of the world to the audience; they fulfill an essentially Hegelian project. But even as he draws on Hegel, Godard pushes against and beyond his account. As I will argue, the overall work of *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* is to effect a reversal of the Hegelian position. This happens in two stages. The first involves undoing the assumption of the kind Jameson holds: that cinema, insofar as it operates in a reflexive and historical mode, has to take a nonaesthetic form. In *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* Godard presents film as the medium best equipped to serve a project of social understanding precisely because it contains aesthetic resources that allow for a mode of presentation that differs from philosophy.

The second stage of Godard's project involves a revision of the basic terms of the Hegelian project of social self-knowledge. When Hegel says that philosophy can understand a world only when its life has "grown old" and "cannot be rejuvenated," this implies that philosophy gains diagnostic value only at the end of a historical epoch, when meaningful development or change no longer occurs. Philosophy can then provide a coherent explanation of that history, a perspective from which the lived intricacies of history make sense. By contrast, Godard sees film as engaged in a history of the complex and changing present. The twentieth century is coming to an end, and Godard argues that only cinema, the central art form of the century, is positioned to understand the historical transformations taking place. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* sets out to provide an account of how this is possible.

5. THE CONSOLATIONS OF PHILOSOPHY

Godard's argument is at once a criticism and a positive declaration of intent. To work this out, I'm going to focus on a sequence early in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* in which Godard suggests that philosophy wants to do something that it fails to accomplish and that film, precisely because of its affinity with a sensuous aesthetic dimension, is best equipped for doing. The articulation of this argument brings together the various elements dealt with in this chapter: the difficulties of public life, the vicissitudes of solitude, and the role of aesthetics in the ambitions of film. But it does so within a new set of concerns.

After the opening sequence of *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* Godard begins his first "variation" on solitude, "The Last Spy." Two investigators (Count Zelten and the unnamed narrator) search East Berlin for Lemmy Caution, whom they discover living above a hair salon. Caution is told by Zelten that the cold war has ended, that history has moved on: he is effectively asked to make sense of a new historical fact, to change the way he makes sense of the world. Godard has already quoted Hegel's pronouncement that philosophy helps us to understand a form of life only

after the fact, after it has already "grown old"; here he gives content to this asser-tion about the source of and occasion for historical understanding. Caution tries to assimilate the fall of the Wall to an older worldview: "All the same, you have to admit that it's the triumph of Marx. . . . When an idea penetrates into the masses, it becomes a material force." (Is this a paraphrase of Gramsci on ideology?) Ear-lier, Zelten dropped a bouquet of flowers onto a fallen sign labeled "Karl-Marx-Strasse," said, "Happy unbirthday," and then kicked it. Now, he expresses mild skepticism toward Caution's pronouncement. The collapse of the Soviet Union's control over Eastern Europe, Zelten suggests, concludes the major narrative of the twentieth century. Conditions have changed, and a different way of understand-ing the narrative arc of history is now required; the explanatory power of Marx-ism ends along with the possibility of actually existing socialism.

Gradually accepting that the cold war is over, Caution wonders about the years that have passed him by. "What am I to do?" he asks, and we are given an intertitle: "Ô douleur, ai-je rêvé ma vie?" (O Pain, Have I Dreamed My Life?). Zelten leaves, telling him to fend for himself, and Caution, after chasing Zelten to the door, asks a woman in the salon to bring his lunch. Then, in a peculiar yet characteristic move, Godard strays from the narrative line. Instead of following Caution as he tries to decide on a course of action, the film cuts to a shot of an elderly woman having her hair done. Over this shot, Godard plays a German pop song, almost a show tune, whose lyrics run, "When a person falls in love / His heart soars like a dove. / It doesn't really matter why, / But the sun sparkles in the sky." The song fades into the background as we hear Zelten begin to recite Hegel in German: "For philosophy to make its stamp on a culture, a break must have first occurred in the real world [so muss ein Bruch geschehen sein in der wirkli-chen Welt]. Philosophy then reconciles the corruption begun by thought. This reconciliation takes place in an ideal world, the world of the spirit into which everyone flees when the earthly world no longer satisfies him." In the first sen-tence, right on *break (Bruch),* Godard cuts to a clip of people waltzing, dressed in formal and military attire of the Nazi era;[56] the camera is just above head height. moving with and cutting between the dancing couples. But the clip is not simply inserted into *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* Godard films the image off a video screen in a way that allows us to see or sense the texture of the video image itself: the flicker of the monitor, the pixels of the screen (figure 9). Through the same means, he also varies the playback speed, generating a kind of "stuttering" effect: the clip slows down, stops, and speeds up, drawing us into the movement of the camera as well as that of the couples. After the quotation from Hegel comes to an end, Godard cuts to a shot of a study, framed from outside the door; Zelten enters and repeats a line from his previous quotation from Hegel, now speaking in French: "Philosophy then reconciles the corruption begun by thought" (La phi-losophie alors concilie la corruption commencée par la pensée).

FIGURE 9. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*

The fulcrum on which this sequence turns is the shift from the smooth flow of the film to the stuttered playback of the video footage. This videographic technique first emerges as part of Godard's formal vocabulary in *France/tour/detour/ deux/enfants* (1977), continuing in his video projects of the 1980s and culminating in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.[57] But the manipulation of the clip in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* marks its first appearance in a film.[58] The significance of the technique is further emphasized by Godard's coordination of the shift from film to video with the mention of the word *break,* as if to call attention to the formal rupture he causes within the world of the film.

The idea of the break is in fact the sequence's central analytic term, and three ways to understand it quickly suggest themselves. One involves Hegel's own account of history; the other two involve aesthetic considerations and align the shift in format with the use of focus pulls and camera movements in *Soigne ta droite* and *Nouvelle vague.* I'll start with these. The first has to do with the way the rhythm of the video clip produces a break in temporal continuity. Recall that the film's opening voice-over wonders if it's possible to tell the story of "time in itself"; later in the film, Godard returns to the topic (again quoting from Mann): "There is a difference between narration *[la narration]* and music. A piece of

music titled 'Five-Minute Waltz' will last five minutes. That's it, and nothing else matters in its relation to time. But a telling *[un récit]* of an action that lasts five minutes could be stretched into a period a thousand times longer if those five minutes were filled with an exceptional awareness. And it can seem very short even though compared with its understood duration it is very long."[59] On the basis of the distinction articulated here, one might read the video clip as following the model of narration. If, ordinarily, a shot has a continuous temporality (the model of the "five-minute waltz"), then the stuttering of the playback of the clip means that the duration of the shot is no longer identical to the diegetic time it presents. Time, in a sense, becomes a variable that can be expanded or contracted at will. And yet the model of music is present as well, highlighting a different set of formal attributes. There is rhythm here, not only in the movement of the dancers, but also in the variation of the playback, a suggestion of formal regularity that contributes to the expressive effect of the clip.

The models of music and narration are not mutually exclusive. Godard positions film between them, able to manipulate time but without the unfettered freedom of narration. By making the image dance to its own tune—in conjunction with but different from the movement of the dancers—Godard also pulls our attention to the sheer fact of that movement. The effect is to make the world of the clip embody the principles of a dance.[60] It's not just that we see dancers moving in a certain tempo, following set patterns and rhythms; time itself comes to take on the semblance of a dance, with hesitations and accelerations followed by a smooth glide at normal speed. The duet between the dancers and the "stuttered" clip makes us physically follow and respond to the image.

The second aesthetic understanding of the idea of a break has to do with the way the introduction of video constitutes a shift in medium, effecting a break in the world of the film. Godard films the clip so that we physically sense its differences from the other images: the emphasis on the lines of the monitor and the attendant flattening of space draws our attention to the surface of the image. Rather than seeing "into" that world, we are invited to focus on its appearance. We become concerned with how the image looks, with the different textures of the video format, and, most important, with the rhythm of the stuttering effect.[61]

The shift between film and video in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* thus emphasizes an experiential dimension of viewing, much as the focus pulls in *Soigne ta droite* or the camera movements in *Nouvelle vague* do. We are arrested at the moment when the shift occurs, struck by the sensuous qualities of the image before us. Unlike the two earlier films, however, *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* explicitly ties the emphasis on perceptual experience to larger historical and political concerns. In part, this happens because of the very content of the image: a Nazi-era ball, danced by men with swastikas on their uniforms. But something else is going on, emerging from the way Godard insists on correlating the shift from film to video

with the Hegelian account of a *historical* "break." For Hegel, the idea of a break is intimately tied to our ability to understand the progress of history, since only after a radical shift are we able to understand the significance of what came before.

I think Hegel is important to Godard for several reasons, but perhaps the main reason why goes unstated in the film. Francis Fukuyama's 1989 essay, "The End of History?" had just provoked a set of discussions in Europe about the historical narrative into which the decline of the Soviet Union ought to be placed.[62] Fukuyama drew heavily on Hegel to make his case, proposing that history had in fact come to an end when Hegel said it did, with Napoleon's defeat of the Prussian army in Jena in 1806; this event enabled the institutionalization of the principles of liberal democracy across Europe. Fukuyama argued that history there reached its end point, that the next two centuries were simply the process by which liberal democracy became universal—thereby ending the possibility for real historical change.

The recognition that Fukuyama, or at least the furor his essay caused, may be on Godard's mind helps explain the sequence from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* The correlation of aesthetic and historical breaks now gains traction, forming an implicit critique that uses Hegel's own terminology to undermine his explanatory power. Godard's critical project is already taking shape in the juxtaposition of the passage from Hegel's *Philosophy of History* and the pop song. The comparison turns on the lyrics. From the perspective of the person in love, the mawkish sentiment goes, the world itself is brought into accord with his or her desires: "It doesn't really matter why / But the sun sparkles in the sky." At first blush, nothing seems further from Hegel, but the juxtaposition nonetheless suggests the terms of an affinity: it is located in the way Hegel describes philosophy as residing in a space above or outside the world, obtaining a perspective that allows for the discernment of order and harmony in apparently contradictory historical phenomena. The problem, then, is not just that philosophy might arrive too late to help us understand the changes in our world. Godard suggests that philosophy, insofar as it tries to make sense of and reconcile "breaks" by fitting them into a larger explanatory narrative, betrays something of the phenomena it attempts to analyze.[63]

This point is emphasized through Godard's use of the clip of the Nazi-era dance. After all, it's not just any break that's at issue here—a moment when a contradiction in the social order emerges—but one that poses the strongest challenge to the explanatory narrative at hand: the rise to power of the Nazi Party. A Hegelian mode of treating the Nazi rupture in world history would be to move toward a higher reconciliation, toward a larger picture of history and its development; this would treat the break as a moment in the historical dialectic that eventually leads to a better social formation.[64] Indeed, Fukuyama himself, while recognizing the potential challenge to his historical narrative, nonetheless argues that the traumatic events of the twentieth century—including the two world

wars, the Holocaust, and Stalinism—function as the means by which systems other than liberal democracy were discredited.[65]

Godard's citation of the Nazi era is not simply a reflexive gesture against this position—well, what about the Nazis?—but part of an attempt to negotiate historical concerns from the perspective of the film's present. In a sense, the main anxiety present in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* does not have to do with the historical fact of the Holocaust, the demise of East Germany, or the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It has to do instead with Germany's progress toward a unified federal state, a movement that at times appeared unaware of the historical legacy of such a national (and nationalist) ambition. A number of commentators, activists, and intellectuals at the time of unification—not only within Germany but across Europe—worried that Germans believed that, by virtue of the nation having been divided into two states for over forty years, a moral debt incurred with the Holocaust had been paid off. Frank Stern, for example, quotes a 1990 pamphlet on the subject of German moral and historical responsibility, whose author writes, "By means of hard work, a feeling of responsibility and good will . . . the Germans have created the pre-requisites for the restoration of what Hitler destroyed: national unity." As Stern notes, at work here is a kind of moral calculation: "Nazi horrors and the Germans as victims after 1945 are weighed one against the other, suffering juxtaposed to suffering, an equation of victimization. In this view, the mass murder committed against the Jews of Europe has been repaid and 'recompensated'—what remains now as a task is the historical reassembling of a shattered Germany."[66] In the position Stern criticizes, we can discern a strong Hegelian influence. The logic goes something like this: the rise of the nation-state produced genocide; this led to the division of Germany, the suffering of which balanced out the earlier crimes; as a result, unification is now possible, albeit on new grounds. Call it a resolved dialectic.

Godard's emphasis on the history of German militarism and aggression places him firmly on the side of those who worried about the historical significance of the move toward unification, seeing it, rather, as a move toward *re*unification. The danger, in this view, involves a perspective from which the twentieth century fits into and is justified by a larger historical pattern. Godard's work against this sense of order involves correlating the violence he does to the image—the "break" from film to video—with violence done in history, using the former to elicit and bring out the latter. The sequence from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* in short, amounts to a refusal to let a claim to a logic of history, to a world-historical narrative, explain away the violence and suffering it contains.

At the same time, the shift from film to video goes beyond criticism. Through the emphasis on the idea of a "break" as something aesthetic as well as historical, Godard suggests an alternative to the postulate of an ideal reconciliation, an alternative to the historical framework Hegel deploys. He does this through the

texture of the film image, using the manipulations of the image—the ambiguous temporality, stuttering playback speed, and shift in media—to give an example of what it is to stay or tarry with the experience of a break and thereby to understand something about it as a kind of phenomenon. Godard, that is, uses the qualities of this *aesthetic* break to model an experience of what it is to tarry with a *historical* break without immediately abstracting to a larger pattern. If Hegelian philosophy attempts to place events within a larger historical narrative, film, precisely because of its core affinity with aesthetics—an affinity Godard develops over the course of the three films from the late 1980s and early 1990s—is able to give us a better account of how and why the break itself matters. The work of the sequence is thus to show that, through the creation of aesthetic breaks, the right kind of social, political, and historical knowledge can be achieved.[67]

The terms of this connection find additional support in the figure of the dance itself. Dance, it's important to recall, can be treated not simply as ornamental patterns but also as standing in for a vision of social order. A letter Schiller wrote contains a clear expression of this idea: "I know of no better image for the ideal of a beautiful society than a well executed English dance, composed of many complicated figures and turns. . . . Everything fits so skillfully, yet so spontaneously, that everyone seems to be following his own lead, without ever getting in anyone's way. Such a dance is the perfect symbol of one's own individually asserted freedom as well as of one's respect for the freedom of the other."[68] This is clearly not the image of the dance in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*. Rather than harmony and play, a kind of formalized beauty, we have stuttered playback; rather than a distanced perspective, overseeing the patterns formed by the dancers as a collective, we are immersed in the visual breakdown of their individual movements. What was, in the diegetic world of the clip, a rhythmic and graceful movement is made into something distinctly messier: the patterns are broken down, disrupted by internal forces. Godard's manipulation of the video clip undermines a political ideal through aesthetic means. And so, we might think, it should be. The dance takes place under the aegis of a repressive state; we can take Godard to be arguing that the means for representing this world should be different from those that express Schiller's aesthetic and political ideal. Godard undermines an already undermined vision of politics.

By this point, we are in a better position to understand the terms of Godard's Hegelian/anti-Hegelian argument. When Godard cites Hegel, he does so with the intention of calling up the terms of his historico-philosophical analysis which he then manipulates to show the danger in attempting to press historical breaks into rational and teleological narratives. It's not just that we can't understand the Nazi regime properly unless we retain the experience of its status as a historical break. Godard implies that the content of that break makes explicit something that extends to all historical breaks, in particular the pressing questions

of a post-Wall Europe, and that aesthetic form and experience can be the model for historical knowledge.

This approach recurs throughout *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* Indeed, we need to look only a little further into the film to find another variation. As Zelten continues to read from Hegel, this time in both French and German, Godard cuts to a series of clips staged against the quotation. The brief sequence runs as follows:

> Philosophy begins by the destruction of the real world. *[Cut to a clip of artillery firing at night: only the gun flashes are visible, though we hear sounds of distant guns. Then a clip of deportations.]* Philosophy makes its appearance when *[cut to a clip from Lang's* Metropolis, *where Maria is surprised by a noise in the catacombs and spins around]* public life is no longer satisfying and ceases to interest people and when citizens *[cut to a clip from Fassbinder's* Lili Marlene, *where she and a Nazi official mount a large staircase to meet Hitler; a Nazi flag is prominent in the background]* no longer take part in the running of the state.

The choice of images here is not trivial (though it is not entirely surprising). Each clip shows a world that refers, explicitly or implicitly, to a moment when the historical present was treated as breaking sharply from its past: World War I, 1920s industrial poverty and quasi-socialist utopias, and World War II.[69] Godard again contrasts philosophy's desire to resolve contradictions or "breaks"—to place them into a coherent narrative, as Hegel does by employing the device of the "cunning of reason"—with the way film can stay with and emphasize the experience of that rupture. In *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* film is presented as the best way to think about the changes taking place in Europe at the end of the twentieth century, as a medium that contains a unique and powerful set of tools for the task of historical analysis.

6. THE CLASSICS ALWAYS WORK

The terms on which Godard works through the relation between an account of history and the resources of aesthetics will be elaborated and developed throughout the rest of this book. Before getting into that, I want to look at two worries for understanding Godard's project as one of treating film, and its affinity with aesthetics, as a mode of historical knowledge. First, by taking the Hegelian project to stand in for philosophy—and for using a tradition of German idealism to define the terms of aesthetics—I may have ignored other philosophical intertexts in these films that serve different, and perhaps more important, functions. Second, film already had chances to function in this role, but its inability to do so, particularly with respect to the Holocaust, suggests that it lacks the resources necessary for such a project. The latter is Godard's own worry; the former is one that has emerged in critical responses to his films.

Godard's version of the relation of film to philosophy goes as follows: "It's evident that movies are capable of thinking in a better way than writing and philosophy, but this was very quickly forgotten."[70] Before we assume we know what it is that film can do that philosophy cannot, what resources it has for "thinking in a better way," we need to answer a question that has been lurking throughout this chapter: What is Godard's conception of philosophy such that film can and should be differentiated from it?

Hegel's interest in the end of history and the role of philosophy certainly fits aspects of Godard's work, and the references to his work in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* suggest his importance. But, we might think, given the look and feel of the films themselves (stylistic virtuosity, nonlinear narrative structure, interest in surfaces, compulsive citational practices, and concern with aesthetics), Godard should really be associated with a different philosophical group. After all, one of the primary ambitions of a range of twentieth-century philosophers—from Wittgenstein, Benjamin, and Heidegger to Barthes, Foucault, Deleuze, and Derrida— was to introduce just such an aesthetic dimension into philosophy.

Critical writing on Godard over the past twenty years has frequently tried to explain his work by reference to this cluster of thinkers. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* has been often equated with Benjamin's *Arcades Project,* and multiple efforts have drawn on Deleuze and other contemporary French thinkers. The desire to understand Godard in this way is hardly surprising. Not only is there a shared appreciation of the importance of aesthetic considerations to the work of philosophy; the connection, at least in the French context, is fairly direct. Since Godard's career is roughly coextensive with postwar French thought, he must have known about its various trends, and those who lived and wrote during this period were themselves certainly interested in Godard. Deleuze is a prominent example: not only did he write an article on *Six fois deux* (1977), but Godard figures prominently in his major two-volume work on film. (Even on the last page, Deleuze is still positioning his argument with respect to Godard.) For reasons like these, some critics have argued that Godard's late films constitute a fairly direct response to these movements and that he simply is a postmodern filmmaker.[71]

While there are strong affinities here, the ease with which an equation is often made tends to obscure a more complicated relation. After all, Godard himself appears fairly indifferent to these thinkers and the schools of thought they represent. In fact, identifying any quotation from Godard's French contemporaries in his films is a difficult task. Given the sheer volume of quotations that litter his work, this absence should at the very least strike us as surprising.[72]

It's certainly possible to argue that this tells us nothing about Godard's "real" views: he might repress these thinkers precisely because they are the closest and most significant influences (a version of Bloom's theory of the anxiety of influence). Still, even if this were the case, we would need to account for Godard's

avoidance of his postmodern contemporaries. They simply are not his interlocutors, not the texts his films draw on, and this is important for understanding what he takes himself to be doing. What needs to be accounted for—and what many approaches to Godard miss—is the way he exhibits a traditional or classical orientation toward European culture, reproaching Deleuze, for example, for "writing very badly."[73] Jean-Louis Leutrat writes,

> This predilection for "classical" writing (from what point of view is it possible to say that Deleuze writes badly?), accompanied by a less significant preference for traditional diction, draws our attention to an aspect of Godard's personality that we might have been led to neglect: his taste for "correct" language. His explicit reference in *Le dernier mot* to the seventeenth-century grammarian Vaugelas is revealing as well as amusing: "I am going away, or I go away, since both one and the other is or are grammatically correct, and is said, or are said."[74]

In *Nouvelle vague,* a character appreciatively remarks on the stability of the French language, noting that another's bad diction can do nothing to spoil its purity. And in *Prénom Carmen,* Godard, playing a parody of himself, remarks, "No matter where and no matter when, the classics always work."

Hegel's prominence in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* and my own emphasis on his account of philosophy, should thus seem less odd. He exemplifies a particular kind of philosophy—systematic, oriented toward a truthful propositional description of the world—that sees itself occupying an important social position. If we take seriously Godard's claim that film can think in a better way than philosophy, an obvious response to that will focus on a sensuous or aesthetic dimension. The contrast here is not with Deleuze or Benjamin; they are not the figures who define philosophy for Godard. Instead, he articulates a set of resources that find their resonance in relation to a more traditional conception of philosophy, a conception for which Hegel serves as an exemplary representative.

7. *TU N'A RIEN VU À HIROSHIMA*

The second worry for understanding Godard's project in the way I've been proposing is historical rather than theoretical, and it permeates Godard's work throughout these years. The worry is especially prominent in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* in which Godard argues that cinema, at the height of its popularity, was given a chance to help audiences understand and respond to world-historical events; it could have made a public aware of the Holocaust as it was happening and perhaps brought about some good. Cinema, however, failed to do this and in this failure betrayed, perhaps once and for all, its obligation to provide an understanding of the world. Perhaps it was never capable of this task in the first place.

Godard's discussions of cinema's relation to the extermination camps emerge in the context of two cultural discourses. The first, most famously articulated by Adorno, is oriented toward culture as a whole: if Western culture was such that it could lead to the camps—or, in a less extreme formulation, if it did not have the resources to prevent them—then it must have an internal fault. The promise of an enlightened, liberal humanism was shown to be bankrupt, a standard example of which is SS guards listening to Beethoven while performing their duties. As a result, to resume prewar culture was to ignore the horror of the intervening years, to ignore that the very content of "how things were" was the problem in the first place. And yet to reject that culture was to refuse resources that opposed the ideology of the camps and thereby continue to show humanitarian culture to be impossible. For Adorno, both alternatives threaten a reversion to barbarism.[75] He describes this situation as a paradox: "I have no wish to soften the saying that to write lyric poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric . . . the question of whether any art now has a right to exist. . . . [But] literature must resist this verdict, in other words, be such that its mere existence after Auschwitz is not a surrender to cynicism."[76] In *Aesthetic Theory,* Adorno responds to this dilemma by advocating what he calls negative or black art: art that acknowledges the horror by refusing to affirm any given order, art that is always negating.[77]

The second discourse, more concerned with visual art, challenges the very status and validity of images to represent the Holocaust. Since images are always about "this or that" particular thing or event, they can never adequately encompass the scope of what happened.[78] This position has been advocated most forcefully by Claude Lanzmann, following his refusal in *Shoah* (1985) to show any historical footage of the camps on the grounds that it would necessarily misrepresent them. Lanzmann's position, whatever its merits, can lead to a dilemma about cultural production. Since we live in a world of images and these images are used for purposes of social self-knowledge, it seems irresponsible simply to cede control over their power.[79] And yet how are we to make images in a way that does not betray what they are of? Adorno's paradox returns.

Godard's response to these aporias is to turn them into practical rather than skeptical problems.[80] He repeatedly revises the terms of the debate, moving away from the question of whether one should make films that engage the Holocaust at all and toward the question of what lessons can be learned for filmmaking from the history of cinema's failed engagement with the Holocaust. In this, he isolates two distinct moments of failure.[81] The first is that cinema failed to show the mass murder on its screens as it was happening, that it failed to document the atrocities. The second is that cinema, understood as a more general social institution, failed to recognize that it had actually *foretold* the camps on its screens before and during the war. Godard cites the rounding up of the ghetto inhabitants in

Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940), the references to "Concentration Camp Er-hardt" in Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be* (1942), and especially the hunt sequence in Renoir's *La règle du jeu* (*The Rules of the Game,* 1939); the slaughter of rabbits anticipates not only the shooting of André Jurieu but also, Godard thinks, the mass murder in Europe. The claim is that, had people paid attention to images that were appearing on screens, they could have prevented the horrors that followed.[82]

The analytic energy that results is only partly one of excoriation. Godard fre-quently uses cinema's historical failure as a way to ask a series of questions about what cinema was, what it can be, and what it is—that is, the resources cinema contains as an art, a technology, and an institution for understanding the world around us.

Much of this work finds its culmination in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* the subject of the second half of this book, but it is present in equal force throughout Go-dard's films of the late 1980s and early 1990s. I have argued in this chapter that Godard develops formal strategies that emphasize a mode of experience corre-lated with aesthetics and then uses these strategies to think through historical concerns. The focus pulls and the breaks in media serve as an emblem for the larger project of these films, which is the work aesthetics does within and for his films. These strategies thus lay the foundations for the more systematic and ex-pansive work Godard does with images, sounds, and texts, work I take up in the chapters to come.

Nature and Its Discontents

1. BORN OF THE SPIRIT

Godard's reputation in the 1960s was built in part on the claim of being one of the great filmmakers of urban locales, especially Paris. The genre-infused films in the early part of the decade—from *À bout de souffle* and *Bande à part* to *Made in U.S.A.* (1966), even *Une femme est une femme*—are all oriented around and have their narratives defined by, the contours of the city in which they take place. *Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* goes a step further by placing the city explicitly within the film's title: *elle* refers not just to the central character but also to "la region Parisienne." Despite the prominence of urban environments in Godard's films, however, nature has always had an important role. His characters may live in the city, but they often want to flee to the countryside. *Bande à part* ends with Arthur and Odile on a boat to Brazil, where they will discover the wonders of the rain forest and the "croc-odile." In *Le mépris* and *Pierrot le fou,* the narrative is staged as an explicit movement from urban to pastoral settings: the world of nature is associated with the Mediterranean, far from major cities. In *À bout de souffle,* Michel and Patricia don't actually get to Italy, but it's where they, especially Michel, want to go in order to flee the demands and dangers of Paris.

Something about the status of nature in Godard's films changes in the early 1980s, starting with his return to feature filmmaking in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)* and continuing through his more recent work. This change is most visible in the way nature is placed into the films. The films of the 1960s deploy nature in a narrative context: Ferdinand and Marianne escape to an island in the South of France because they are on the run; Paul and Camille go to Capri to take part in

Jeremy Prokosch's adaptation of the *Odyssey;* the woman in *Une histoire d'eau* (1961) passes through the flooded countryside on her way to Paris. By contrast, Godard's later films are more generally suffused with shots of nature. Images of the sky, of waves, of trees, of the sun and the moon, and of fields of grass billowing in the wind appear with striking frequency in the midst of sequences; indeed, this is one of the most recognizable authorial signatures in these films. Rather than fitting into a larger narrative frame, these images are generally without any motivating context, radically breaking the flow of the film. As a result, making sense of them can be hard. It might be plausible for a discussion of philosophy and theology in *Je vous salue, Marie* to be interrupted with shots of celestial bodies, but why is a scene at a gas station interwoven with shots of reeds waving back and forth? Why does Godard cut from a scene at a mental hospital in *Prénom Carmen* to a shot of waves coming into the shore at a beach, a location that will not be given any orienting context for half the film? What are all the vaguely symbolic shots of the sun setting over a lake doing in *Soigne ta droite?*

Critics have tended to treat these images of nature, in the absence of diegetic motivation, as more or less independent from the rest of the film, a topic all their own. In practice, this has meant conceiving their significance according to a range of familiar associations within Western culture. Generally, this has taken one of two paths. Robert Stam, for example, argues for seeing nature in *Nouvelle vague* as creating a kind of "dazzling play-space" for the spectator's imagination, while Yosefa Loshitzky reads the centrality of images of nature in the film's plot as illustrating Godard's advocacy of a natural theology.[1] These interpretations are not distinct from one another so much as part of a longstanding binary in a history of the appreciation of nature. Novalis nicely summarizes this: "At one extreme the sentiment of nature becomes a jocose fancy, a banquet, while at the other it develops into the most devout religion, giving to a whole life direction, principle, meaning."[2]

Loshitzky has given the most extended treatment of the status and significance of nature in Godard's films of the 1980s, arguing that his interest in images of nature coincides with his real-life move to Switzerland and away from the city, and thus away from the location of his more overtly political films.[3] A powerful assumption is at work here: only a film with an urban setting can be concerned with contemporary political questions; the contemporary world exists only as the urban world. If Godard turns away from the city, then, he effectively turns away from political engagement.[4] On this basis, Loshitzky links the images of nature that arise from this turn to a more general spiritual interest— "metaphysics, if not mysticism"—culminating in what she describes as a series of films based on categories of Christian theology.[5]

Godard's interest in nature and natural beauty, however, does not take place in a vacuum, or even within a cinematic inheritance alone, but emerges as well

from a tradition of philosophical aesthetics. Turning to debates on these topics prominent in German idealism and its aftermath, we'll be able to better understand not only the terms of Godard's use of images of nature in his late films but also the stakes involved in that use.

Since Hegel's *Aesthetics,* the role of nature and natural beauty in aesthetics and aesthetic theory has been systematically downplayed and denigrated. This was not always the case. Kant argues that natural beauty is the paradigm case for matters of aesthetics, and for judgments of taste in particular. With art, he thinks, we care too much about the thing itself—about the value or skill of a painting or the objects it represents—to be able to achieve disinterested judgments. Natural objects, on the other hand, are examples of objects of judgment that stand outside our motivated interests. It's not that Kant ignores artistic beauty or the importance of fine arts more generally. Rather, he maps the role and importance of art onto natural beauty: "Fine art must have the *look* of nature even though we are conscious of it as art"; and, "In [dealing with] a product of fine art we must become conscious that it is art rather than nature, and yet the purposiveness in its form must seem as free from all constraint of chosen rules as if it were a product of mere nature."[6] Fine art becomes valuable as an object of a genuine judgment of taste when it is made such that our experience of it is like that of natural phenomena (even though we never forget that we are looking at something made).

Hegel breaks with Kant precisely over the subordination of artistic beauty to natural beauty. While Hegel acknowledges that "beauty begins as the beauty of nature," he argues that "the beauty of art is *higher* than nature."[7] The problem with natural beauty is that it is limited to what he calls "the deficiencies of immediate reality." Because we aren't able to grasp immediately the interior or spiritual state of natural objects (i.e., plants or nonhuman animals), we are left to the perception and apprehension of the outer form. That is, we remain at the level of "abstract form" in our judgments, viewing objects in the world without an awareness of their internal or spiritual condition.[8] Art, by contrast, exposes the inner condition of (natural) objects, raising them to a level on which "the external correspond[s] with its concept."[9] Rather than trying to look like nature, art must pass through—must overcome—the limitations of natural beauty to achieve a higher resolution. Hegel writes, "Art liberates the true content of phenomena from the pure appearance and deception of this bad, transitory world, and gives them a higher actuality, born of the spirit."[10] The idea that art reveals the content or "spirit" of the object, and thereby aids our understanding of the world, guides the development of Hegel's aesthetics. Art matters because it is first and foremost a mode of cognition.

The terms on which Hegel dismisses natural beauty became established as the dominant mode in aesthetics and aesthetic theory. Part of this is due to intellectual

history and the prominence of Hegel's work across the nineteenth century. It also involves the way nature itself became historically occluded, replaced by urban environments and, within the art world, by painters who no longer saw their task as one of going out into the natural world. In light of these changes, when Adorno takes up the relation between natural beauty and artistic beauty in *Aesthetic Theory,* he begins with the following observation: "Since Schelling, whose aesthetics is entitled the *Philosophy of Art,* aesthetic interest has centered on artworks. Natural beauty, which was still the occasion of the most penetrating insights in the *Critique of Judgment,* is now scarcely even a topic of theory."[11] Despite Hegel's dismissal, natural beauty does not in fact disappear in aesthetics. Natural beauty, Adorno continues, was not "dialectically transcended, both negated and maintained on a higher plane, but, rather, . . . it was repressed." This distinction is important. Where the Hegelian position holds that natural beauty was replaced by a superior or higher term, Adorno argues that natural beauty may have been actively denied and rejected but that it was by no means superseded. It is still present, hidden yet recoverable by the appropriate techniques of analysis or artistic production. For Adorno, such a project of recovery is of central political (as well as aesthetic) importance.

Godard, I believe, embarks on precisely this sort of project in his films of the late 1980s and early 1990s, a project I will draw out over the next two chapters. I will take up *Soigne ta droite* and *Nouvelle vague* in this chapter, before turning in chapter 3 to a different (though intimately related) approach in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* My focus will be on two large arguments. The first, which mainly has to do with questions of iconography, is that these films treat nature not as divorced from matters of history and politics but as thoroughly caught up in them, and caught up in a range of different ways. The second, which deals more with questions of method, develops from a sense that the way critics have thought about nature in Godard's late work is mistaken. I will argue that nature, rather than serving as an object to which meaning is applied, a specifiable and localized topic, plays an active role within the films themselves, working to create meaning. Bringing these two arguments together, I hope to show that, in *Soigne ta droite, Nouvelle vague,* and *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* nature (and natural beauty as well) is a central analytic tool in Godard's larger ambitions and arguments, opening up a range of insights and investigations that are not only aesthetic but also political and historical.

2. WHIRLED ASUNDER

At a basic level, the images of nature in Godard's films of the late 1980s and early 1990s work off a template developed in his films from earlier in the 1980s. This point has been grasped in general (if largely implicit) terms. But the way in which

FIGURE 10. *Prénom Carmen* (1983)

the images of nature in Godard's earlier films have been understood has led to a failure to recognize the specific ways in which nature is used in the films under consideration here. As a result, a reexamination of the use of nature in the films of the early 1980s will give us better tools with which to work on the later films.

Most discussions of images of nature in Godard's films of the early 1980s hold that they are used to gain access to and produce the effect of the sublime. The opening of *Prénom Carmen* can serve as an example of this. The film begins with a voice-over monologue set against a shifting background, starting with a shot of cars going down a highway at night while a train crosses on tracks above. It feels like an establishing shot, something that orients us within a setting and guides our comprehension of the action.[12] This is, presumably, the world the film will inhabit, and so we expect that the sequence will continue with an exploration of it. Instead, Godard cuts to the credits—the shot of cars will never be placed within the film's narrative—over which we hear the sound of gulls and waves, and a voice (Carmen's) says, "It's in me, it's in you; it makes terrible waves." The words and sounds motivate a cut to a beach, where we look out over a lake as waves break onto the shore (figure 10). Although the setting of the film initially appeared to be the urban world of modernity, it quickly moves into nature; it's a

radical shift in location and, like many images of nature in these late films, is apparently without narrative motivation.

One way to think about the role of nature here is as generally destabilizing the presumption of a stable background, using it instead as a flexible variable within the overall aesthetic, an autonomous agent behind character-driven events.[13] But that's not quite right: the shots of cars and waves are not random images, as in the backgrounds of Krazy Kat cartoons, but rather two sides of a comparison, linked through a shared trope of endless progression. Each shot begins, as it were, in media res and ends similarly: the series have been going on before we see them and will continue after we've left.[14] In effect, Godard uses the shot of waves to inflect the way we see the shot of the cars. And the terms of this comparison revolve around the sublime.

The most common version of the sublime, given by Kant, is associated with objects of great size: pyramids, mountains, oceans, and the like. The idea is that our ability to grasp a phenomenon, to represent it to ourselves in a single sensible intuition, is refused by the sheer immensity or magnitude of what we have to grasp. Reason demands totality, but our imagination is unable to apprehend successfully the entirety of what's before us. Kant writes, "If a [thing] is excessive for the imagination (and the imagination is driven to [such excess] as it apprehends [the thing] in intuition), then [the thing] is, as it were, an abyss in which the imagination is afraid to lose itself."[15] The sublime can also be occasioned by a series of objects extending in a potentially infinite progression, as in the cars and waves in the opening of *Prénom Carmen*. The central point is that we are unable to take in, within a certain limited time (an immediate perception), the full scope of the object (or objects) in a way that satisfies the demands of reason. The sublime is a powerful feeling of coming up against something sufficiently great, either physically or conceptually, that makes us feel physically and mentally imperiled. As Kant puts it, "Nature's might makes us, considered as natural beings, recognize our physical impotence."[16] The result is a loss of our ability to organize and control the world around us.

The next few shots in *Prénom Carmen* follow the terms of the sublime. Carmen's voice continues in a fragmented monologue over the waves, concluding with, "I have to run; see you later," followed by the noise of a phone receiver being hung up. These sounds place a limit on the endless succession of cars and waves, stopping the move to the sublime by invoking a mundane phone call. The waves and cars are, for the moment, just ordinary waves and cars. But then Godard cuts to a stunning shot of clouds in the sky, somewhat obscuring the sun and lit with a bluish tint as if in day-for-night shooting. Such a presentation of the sky is a familiar trope to indicate an experience of awe.[17] Visually, it recalls Rubens's nocturnal landscapes and the German romantic paintings of Caspar David Friedrich and Arnold Böcklin: images of mystery and a site of fantasy. In this vein,

Marc Cerisuelo describes Godard's sky as at the "limit of the presented world," of what can be represented, of what we can grasp.[18] This shot of the sky, we might say, is almost physically overwhelming; it operates in the mode of the sublime.

Drawing on this kind of sequence, Cerisuelo argues that *Passion, Prénom Carmen,* and *Je vous salue, Marie* form a "trilogy of the sublime."[19] His reading follows a dominant trend in discussions of the sublime, especially in France during the 1980s. One of the main claims in this literature is that the sublime is occasioned by images that are not "coded" and so do not allow for normal modes of interpretation. Thus, Lyotard describes the sublime as part of a "negative aesthetics," saying that it "denies the imagination the power of forms, and denies nature the power to immediately affect thinking with forms."[20] He brings out an implication of Kant's account of the sublime: the feeling of awe does not emerge upon reflection about or careful consideration of the formal structure of the object, but rather in the immediate failure of the imagination to represent successfully the object to the understanding as a whole. The experience of the sublime is thus an occasion for the destabilization of the self.[21] (Kant himself is adamant that this is only the *first* moment in the logic of the sublime, to be followed by the recognition that we can comprehend in reason the object or series that surpassed our imagination; the result is a more powerful affirmation of our supersensible capacities.)

The dynamic of the sublime has historically generated problems for representational artistic media.[22] Because artworks are limited in size and scale, they have been taken to be incapable of overwhelming the imagination and so of generating the experience of the sublime. Kant asserts that it is conceptually impossible for art to do this, arguing that the sublime can be occasioned only by natural objects such as "shapeless mountain masses piled on one another in wild disarray, with their pyramids of ice, or the gloomy raging sea"—phenomena which can easily be imagined as destructive of the self.[23] Kant's ban, however, has often been treated as a challenge. Lyotard provides one formulation of this: "Is it possible, and how would it be possible, to testify to the absolute by means of artistic and literary presentations, which are always dependent on forms?"[24] Indeed, almost as soon as Kant made his argument, artists became interested in exploring the question of how artworks could be made to generate an experience of the sublime, how the unrepresentable could be used for artistic purposes. The paintings of Friedrich and Böcklin can be read as sustained attempts to evoke the sublime, along with much German romantic artistic production. Turner's vast canvases are another case in point, as is Barnett Newman's *Vir Heroicus Sublimus* (1950–51) and other abstract expressionist paintings (e.g., those of Rothko).

Cerisuelo argues that Godard's films of the early 1980s participate in the project of bringing the sublime into the orbit of art. Faced with the Kantian injunction that "the absolute is not presentable,"[25] Godard is trying to figure out a way

around it. The central concern of the "trilogy of the sublime," Cerisuelo says, is the way it attempts the "presentation of the unpresentable" *(presentation de l'imprésentable).* Godard uses images that generate the sublime to evoke ideas in the viewer that cannot be directly shown in the film, ideas that exceed the very possibility of representation. It is an attempt to figure out "how to show that which cannot be shown (the absolute, the infinite, the invisible)," to get the viewer to experience the sensation of being confronted with something that exceeds his or her capacity to grasp it.[26]

The reading of *Prénom Carmen* as aiming to generate an experience on par with the sublime seems to find confirmation within the film. Over the shot of the sky, Carmen says, "She's the girl who should not be called Carmen," a line that suggests a loss of self. Speaking of herself in the third person, Carmen declares that her name does not fit her, that she has the wrong identity. She is not who her name denotes her to be, and so she is set adrift, unmoored without a coherent, stable, or recognizable self. Carmen declares herself to be inhabiting a world organized according to the experience of the sublime.

But Cerisuelo, as well as the critical consensus that has emerged from his work, makes a basic error. Placing Godard in line with a tradition of attempts to generate the sublime through artistic means may be tempting, but doing so obscures the specific work *Prénom Carmen* does with the images of nature. Godard is not trying to create a genuine experience of the sublime for the viewer; the shots of the waves are not meant literally to overwhelm. The work they do is located instead at the level of iconography, the way images carry a set of associations.

Turning to iconography creates a subtle shift in how we treat images of nature in Godard's films, but it's a crucial one. The emphasis now is not so much on an experience a viewer has or is meant to have—in which case the film fails if the viewer does not have it—as on the way meanings that have historically attended a type of image are brought into a film, where they can be used for various purposes, for other and new ends. The opening of *Prénom Carmen,* with its comparison of waves and cars, is instructive here. For Godard, cars have always been exemplary of modernity; this goes back to *À bout de souffle* and culminates in *Week-end*'s picture of the end of civilization as an interminable traffic jam. But when an affinity is drawn between the waves and the cars by way of a *shared iconography,* something different emerges. An iconography associated with the sublime—the image of an endless series of waves—takes the form of an intellectually productive analytic tool, generating a context of meaning that establishes the terms on which to understand the previous shot of the cars. Godard, in other words, draws on images that have an aesthetic history of the sublime in order to describe the experience of modernity. Modernity, then, is the new instantiation of the paradigmatic case of an overwhelming experience; we are unable to grasp

it through a single intuition and are therefore overwhelmed by it. With the comparison of waves and cars, the technological object par excellence, and by extension modernity itself, is presented on the terms of the natural sublime.

To be sure, this is not an exactly original argument about the experience of modern life: that modernity can be overwhelming, destabilizing to our sense of self, is a commonplace of early twentieth-century cultural criticism. (Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin are two of the more well-known figures who have asserted this.) Virginia Woolf, for example, uses an image of the surging sea overwhelming a swimmer to evoke the experience of the modern city.[27] What matters here is *method,* the way Godard operates through a careful use of an iconography in order to work with meanings attached to an aesthetic mode. The images of nature bear the historical association of the experience of the sublime (even though they may not produce the effect itself) and so can be made available for uses within the film.

3. BACK TO ROUGH GROUND!

Godard's employment of a visual iconography has an important consequence: it allows us to track the shifts in his larger aesthetic concerns by looking at changes in the images of nature he uses. Indeed, a specific change during the late 1980s reveals a sustained move away from an engagement with the tradition of the sublime. Starting with *Soigne ta droite,* Godard takes up and reworks images of nature he used earlier to invoke the experience of the sublime, transforming them into a different aesthetic mode, one that is best described as the beautiful. These iconographic changes go along with a changing interest in history and politics; the images of nature simultaneously track and motivate a move from articulating an encounter with supraindividual categories (such as "modernity") to a more complex engagement with mundane, lived historical reality.

One of the curious features of Godard's films from the early 1980s is that most begin with images of the sky. *Passion,* for example, is primarily concerned with the intersections of work and art, developed through comparisons of labor at a factory and the effort involved in making a film, one that restages great Western paintings as *tableaux vivants.* And yet it starts with the sky, the camera pointing more or less straight up, with dark clouds (almost like smoke) to the right and wisps of white clouds to the left. The contrails of a plane extend up and to the left from the lower right of the frame. The camera smoothly swivels left, keeping the thin contrails roughly in the lower center of the frame, and comes across an expanse of white cloud. The movement of the camera then becomes more erratic, at times moving up and down and at other times remaining still; the plane, however, is constant in its inexorable path across the sky. Godard suddenly inserts a quick shot of a woman pushing a cart in a factory and then returns to the sky,

this time without the plane: a blue expanse broken only intermittently by white puffs of clouds. The camera moves to the right—the opposite direction from the first shot—and then, after another brief cutaway to a shot of a man driving in a car while a woman on a bike holds on to its window, the camera begins to accelerate rapidly across the sky. It moves quickly past darker areas of cloud, finds the plane, still moving in the same direction, and comes to a halt. Another cutaway shot intrudes, this time of a hotel owner and her husband getting ready to go out, before we go back to the sky, where the camera follows the movement of the plane and gradually drops lower and slows down to reveal a tree at the very bottom of the frame.

The opening of *Passion* has received a fair amount of attention, partly because of its virtuosity, but also because Godard himself shot the footage of the sky.[28] But the opening is by no means unique. The other films Godard made in this period—*Sauve qui peut (la vie), Prénom Carmen,* and *Je vous salue, Marie*—all include prominent shots of the sky in their opening sequences, and in each case the shots employ the iconography of the sublime. These images of nature stand above and against the shots of mundane activity that are interspersed with them.

This changes in *Soigne ta droite.* The first shot of the film is of a forest slowly emerging from a dense bank of fog, the camera looking down to the earth from an aerial perspective, as if perched on a helicopter or slowly moving plane and gliding above and over the trees. As the sequence continues, the film's credits are intercut with additional shots of nature taken from the air. We see a quaint town nestled among green fields and rows of trees, then a closer view of trees (in sunlight this time) that reveals their different colors: trees with green, yellow, red leaves go by, blurred slightly from the speed of the camera. A last shot starts with plowed fields, furrows visible in the brown earth, then moves over a small grove of trees to the bank of a body of water. The camera starts to travel over the water, beginning to lose sight of the land, and then Godard cuts to the final set of credits. Throughout this sequence, a voice-over recounts the story about the Idiot's desire to withdraw from the world, his failure to do so, and his eventual recall from solitude to make a film. As in *Prénom Carmen,* Godard does not place these opening images within the world of the film; they provide a frame for the film without really being part of it.

The openings of *Passion* and *Soigne ta droite* employ, on the surface at least, a similar structure. Each suggests some narrative development to which we are being hurriedly introduced and that the action of the narrative is connected to (situated in, inflected by) the images of nature. But where *Passion* uses shots of the sky to set off its narrative development, *Soigne ta droite* employs shots of the earth. It's a neat iconographic reversal: *Passion* has shots of the sky taken from ground level, *Soigne ta droite* has shots of the earth taken from above. This reversal is confirmed by the final title of *Soigne ta droite*'s opening sequence, the film's

subtitle: "Une place sur la terre." The significance of this line is not so much in what it says as in what it doesn't. The Lord's Prayer, as it is spoken in French, concludes, "Sur la terre comme au ciel." When Godard shows the first part of the phrase while leaving out the second part (at least at this point in the film), he signals that the film will be emphatically about this world, concerned about the earth and life on it.[29]

This opening of *Soigne ta droite,* I take it, is explicitly meant to dissociate the film from the aesthetic mode that dominates Godard's films earlier in the decade. The blues and whites of those films, associated with images of sky and waves, are here replaced by browns and greens, more earthy tones. Where the shots of the sky had a tendency toward a stark purity, the shots of the earth generate a quiet messiness: the profusion of colors and objects blocks any tendency toward abstraction or the absolute. It's this world, not the heavenly one, that matters.

Godard develops the new iconography in various ways throughout *Soigne ta droite.* One version is his repeated use of elements of architecture (windows and railings, in particular) to frame images of nature. These frames within the mise-en-scène organize and mediate the view of the natural world, preventing the simple contemplation of and absorption in a spectacle of pure nature. Indeed, Godard often employs a rhetorical device of sorts, showing the iconography of pure or pristine nature and then making it explicit that our access to nature is only from the perspective of ordinary, human activities.

Take the motif of waves central to the iconography of the sublime in Godard's films from the early 1980s. Though waves are present in *Soigne ta droite,* they are generally shot through a window in a house by a lake. A typical instance of this involves a repeated shot of the setting sun hanging low over the waters, casting an orange glow. It's a stunning image, and it's easy to lose oneself in contemplation. It's also easy to miss a subtle but significant complication in the shot. Godard does not simply show the beach on its own but provides a view of it as *framed* by the doors and the balcony (figure 11). These pieces of architecture form a barrier of human construction that mediates our access to the lake. We are given, in other words, a view of the water emphasizing that the shot was taken at a particular historical moment: a time when this kind of architecture was popular, when leisure was available, and when people took vacations in houses by the beach.

The sequences that take place aboard an airplane extend Godard's use of internal frames to undo the iconography of the sublime. A peculiar feature of *Soigne ta droite* is that, despite its emphasis on the rhetoric of the earth, a lot of the film takes place on and around an airplane. In *Passion,* a plane was set off against the empty sky, a small object with a fragile trace—the contrails that fade away—that draws attention to the immeasurably vast expanse of space surrounding it. The connection between planes and the sublime is also apparent in *Je vous salue,*

FIGURE 11. *Soigne ta droite*

Marie, in which an early shot shows the sun, glowing in the sky, crossed by the plane that brings Gabriel to Mary. The role of the plane as a kind of celestial transport is given a more secular, if no less mysterious, reading later in the film when a philosopher speculates that human life originated from extraterrestrial beings who arrived on interstellar airplanes.

Soigne ta droite initially evokes this presentation of airplanes. Early in the film, as the plane takes off and the passengers begin to talk among themselves, the pilot walks up and down the aisle, reciting from a book. He intones, "Hail to thee, ancient ocean" *(Je te salue, vieil océan)*—words the passengers chant back to him—then, "Tell me if the Prince of Darkness dwells in you." The lines he speaks are from Lautréamont's *Maldoror,* the text beloved by the surrealists, in which the ocean figures as an eternal, quasi-religious entity used to set off the vicissitudes of human failings.[30] Godard's incorporation of Lautréamont in a call-and-response structure, a paradigmatic religious and incantatory mode, contributes to a sense of the mystical and sublime.

The words spoken by the pilot may be serious in content, but the tone of the scene as a whole is heavily ironic. We never see the ocean, never get to gaze into its depths when the phrases are intoned. Instead, we remain in the slightly ab-

surd world of the passengers (who jump over the seats and throw food at one another) and the pilot (who reads a book on methods of suicide). Moreover, Godard places the call-and-response scenario that generates the appeal to the "ancient" ocean in one of the exemplary twentieth-century technologies. At the very least, the appeal to nature has to be seen as a response to that technology: we long for unmediated nature only in a thoroughly industrialized, mechanized, and mediated society.

The deflationary context that undercuts Lautréamont's incantatory rhetoric follows Godard's primary use of the plane, as he repeatedly emphasizes its literal function as a mode of transportation. One of the prominent (though unstated) motifs in *Soigne ta droite* is how people get from one place to another. The Individual uses trains and his own locomotive powers, while the Idiot prefers cars and planes; Godard even stages La Fontaine's "The Ant and the Grasshopper" around the need for an upper-class couple in a sports car to get directions to Paris. The context of transportation allows Godard to move the trope of the airplane away from the realm of myth and toward more ordinary activities. In one case, shots of the sky interrupt a burlesque encounter between the Individual and the Man and are interwoven with the intertitle "Une place sur la terre," thus immediately associating the sky with its opposite, bringing it down to earth, so to speak. But the more sustained engagement with the motif of the sky comes with the start of the narrative thread of the airplane journey, when the Idiot is traveling to deliver his film. As we hear the sound of a jet engine warming up, Godard introduces a shot in which the camera looks straight up and pans across a cloud formation. (The contrails of a plane are visible, again evoking the opening of *Passion*.) A cut moves to a shot inside the cockpit, looking over the shoulder of the pilot, with the windows blank from the bright light of the sun. After a few seconds, a voice over the radio says, "Flight 5220, come down three thousand feet," and there is a cut back to clouds in the sky (this time without contrails) as the camera pans left, tilts down, then left and down again, as if to mimic the view from the plane as it descends. This brief sequence sets the pattern for how images of the sky are presented throughout the rest of the film. When we see the sky, it is in the context of (either preceded or followed by) shots having to do with air travel. The sky, in other words, is framed, placed within a decidedly human and terrestrial context.

The iconographic shift in *Soigne ta droite* finds a home in a longer tradition of moves that go from the sublime to the beautiful, from the abstract to the concrete. Wittgenstein, for example, draws a contrast between "a tendency to sublime the logic of our language"—producing a model of language removed from all contexts of actual use—and what he calls "rough ground," or the embeddedness of language in our daily lives.[31] More contemporaneous to Godard is the "return to beauty" in philosophical aesthetics, rejecting postmodern antirepresentational

tendencies (and the attendant antihumanism) in favor of the pleasure, harmony, and even equality associated with beauty.[32] Perhaps closest in spirit to Godard's changing treatment of nature, however, is Rilke's discussion of beauty in *Duino Elegies*. In *Prénom Carmen*, Godard places Rilke's lines "beauty is nothing / but the beginning of terror, which we are just able to endure" at the end of the film, in a context of violence and terrorism.[33] These words gesture toward the sublime, toward considerations of the absolute, and help define the film's emotional tenor. But Rilke does not sustain that mood. His traveler comes down from the mountains to the valley, from the heavens to the earth: "Praise this world to the angel, not the unsayable one, / you can't impress *him* with glorious emotion . . . / So show him / something simple which, formed over generations, / lives as our own, near our hand and within our gaze. / Tell him of Things."[34] Rilke's emphasis on the historical world—"formed over generations"—in contrast with the earlier rhetoric of the sublime delineates the aesthetic shift undertaken by Godard in *Soigne ta droite*.

The new iconography—shots of lakes, trees, and fields as opposed to the sky—coupled with Godard's insistence on frames, suggests a set of concerns that T. J. Clark has labeled "ground level." Clark's focus is on a particular tradition of painting, across eras and nations, that expresses a basic set of interests:

> For the vast majority of painters, . . . ground level in painting does not greatly matter. . . . the place on the ground where people are planted and how they are planted exactly seem not greatly relevant. . . . Very few painters see that their art can . . . show the business of bodily raising and supporting, and even articulate what that act of elevation means—what resistances it works against, what constraints it acknowledges, and above all what lowness (what ground bass *[sic]* of materiality) it depends on.[35]

Clark argues that this way of treating the relation between figures and ground, which he understands to be a way of thematizing the motif of the earth, is correlated with a specific type of political concern. He writes, "Painters who do see this [way of depicting figures] are likely to understand that all of the physical terms here are also metaphorical."[36] The tradition of painting at ground level is organized around a care for and interest in the lived particularity of everyday life.

I think such a ground-level aesthetic permeates *Soigne ta droite*, but its appearance is difficult to discern. It's not sufficient just to note the presence of images of the ground, though they are certainly important. The film works to connect the iconographic shift to a broader thematic argument.

A place to start is with Godard's penchant for slapstick, a mode that depends on the physical expression of bodies for comedic purposes. Though slapstick is most evident in his films of the *nouvelle vague* period, as in *Une femme est une femme* or *Bande à part*, it is still present, if less overt, in his later films. Right after

the opening sequence of *Soigne ta droite,* a scene in a parking garage has Godard giving a performance of physical comedy—he stumbles around while attempting to get into a car before nimbly diving in through the window as it pulls away—in a way that evokes and pays tribute to his love for comedians like Jacques Tati and Jerry Lewis.[37] The Tati whom Godard most explicitly evokes, however, is not the familiar figure of M. Hulot from *Mon oncle* (1958) or *Playtime* (1967), and the issues of anonymity, nostalgia, and modernity that character is used to generate, but the earlier, more physically robust persona. Indeed, the title of Godard's film itself refers to an early Tati comedy: *Soigne ton gauche* (Keep Your Left Up, René Clément, 1936). What Godard likes in slapstick is the axiom of physicality Clark describes: the understanding that bodies that inhabit space are subject to the physical laws of the universe.[38]

This kind of physicality carries over into Godard's films in the early 1980s. In *Prénom Carmen,* Godard plays a parody of himself, a failed filmmaker now living in a psychiatric institution. We first see him in a bathrobe, tapping on the window with the flat of his hand. The camera pans with him as he moves across the room to the right, striking various objects: bed, closet, chair, and typewriter. He moves back to the left, hitting his chest and head this time and finally the bed again. There is a cut to a close-up of a page in the typewriter as Godard haphazardly bangs out the words *Mal vu* (Badly seen). Although Godard plays the scene for laughs, working in the mode of slapstick, it has a deeper resonance as well. The phrase he types out, *"Mal vu,"* refers to the title of Samuel Beckett's *Mal vu, mal dit,* a short novella primarily concerned with the complicated ways we inhabit the physical world.[39] But the actual prose Godard's actions evoke is the extended description of Mr. Knott moving through his room in *Watt.* There, Beckett writes, "Here he stood. Here he sat. Here he knelt. Here he lay. Here he moved, to and fro, from the door to the window, from the window to the door; from the window to the door, from the door to the window; from the fire to the bed, from the bed to the fire; from the bed to the fire, from the fire to the bed; from the door to the fire, from the fire to the door; from the fire to the door, from the door to the fire."[40] And so on. Godard uses the references to Beckett to emphasize the tactility and materiality of the world, a sense of the mundane objects that compose the world. This emphasis is at once aesthetic and ethical.

Beckett, however, isn't the only reference guiding the scene at the institution, perhaps not even the primary one. Godard's movement around the room is more hesitant and haphazard than Beckett's insistence on a repetitive intensity. It's as if Godard wants to reassure himself of the existence of the world in all its various forms, a problem with which Beckett is unconcerned. (The extended description in *Watt* concludes, "The room was furnished solidly and with taste"; such a statement feels out of place as a description of Godard's actions.) We might think of Godard as exhibiting a moment of (skeptical) doubt, yet instead of looking to

confirm the existence of the world through sight—the "badly seen" has something to do with this—he uses touch. It's an impulse that suggests Boswell's account of Samuel Johnson's "refutation" of skepticism: "After we came out of the church, we stood talking for some time together of Bishop Berkeley's ingenious sophistry to prove the non-existence of matter, and that every thing in the universe is merely ideal. I observed, that though we are satisfied his doctrine is not true, it is impossible to refute it. I never shall forget the alacrity with which Johnson answered, striking his foot with mighty force against a large stone, till he rebounded from it, 'I refute it *thus.*' "[41] Are the objects in the room solid and real? How do we tell? Godard's answer to the possibility of doubt is to tap.

Prénom Carmen, though, does not elevate such ground-level impulses into a full-fledged aesthetic commitment. The scene in the institution already belies such a principle, treating the mundane world with a degree of suspicion. The character Godard plays, a formerly successful filmmaker now trying to hide from the world, is an example of this. He is not Godard himself, the director of *Prénom Carmen,* but neither can the character be thoroughly divorced from the actor: it matters that it is Godard who plays Uncle Jean.[42] In this context, "Mal vu" can be understood to refer to the act of filmmaking itself, to the way *Prénom Carmen* is put together. The scene does more than show Uncle Jean wandering about his room and finding that, because things are badly seen, security comes with touching. It's also a declaration about the nature of the film, an avowal that something is wrong in the way things are being shown, in the way Godard (as the maker of the movie) sees the world. Something beyond the mere physical world will be needed. This ambivalence about, or distrust of, the physical world runs throughout the film, as Godard juxtaposes moments of ground-level concerns with more metaphysical speculations: "Why do women/men exist?" or "She's the girl who shouldn't be called Carmen," or "What is it that comes before the name?" These earlier films employ but do not sustain a ground-level project.

4. DIRTY HANDS

It's important to be clear about the terms at stake. A basic opposition might suggest itself: the mode of the beautiful is concerned with history, the mode of the sublime with larger abstractions. Indeed, such a thought seems to be behind claims that Godard's films of the early 1980s are oriented toward concerns of metaphysics, mysticism, and spirituality, and is familiar in discourses concerning the sublime. Lyotard, for example, uses the sublime in a project to "represent the unrepresentable," forming the basis of what he will describe as a "negative" aesthetic. The idea that the sublime refuses an engagement with history finds a pure expression in David Nye's claim that though objects that produce an experience of the sublime tend to change over time, the experience of the sublime itself extracts the viewer

from history. Mediating and contextual frameworks are simply overwhelmed by the power of the encounter, leaving "observers too deeply moved to reflect on the historicity of their experience. Sublimity seems not a social construction but a unique and precious encounter with reality."[43] In this way, we might think that Godard's films of the early 1980s use images of nature to transform or inflect images of otherwise historical, human entities (buildings, cars, trains, planes).

On this way of thinking, the emphasis on framing in *Soigne ta droite* refuses this view of nature, forcing us to see nature through a frame at once literal (the beach house, the plane) and figural (history, technology). Indeed, such framing works to deny that such a thing as pure or pristine nature exists at all. If Lyotard insists, "No object of coded nature is sublime,"[44] then the images of nature in *Soigne ta droite* are operating on a different modality. The sky is not something unknowable, absolute, or awe-inspiring; it is merely something through which we travel on a regular basis and which bears the marks of our habitual passage. In *Soigne ta droite*'s move from the sublime to the beautiful, nature becomes inextricably intertwined with history.

But this way of phrasing the relation between the sublime and the beautiful is misplaced. In Godard's late films, it's not that the beautiful deals with history while the sublime does not. Each aesthetic mode deals with history; it's just that they do so in different ways, and with different sets of concerns.

Let's go back to the opening of *Prénom Carmen,* to the final line of the scene when Carmen says, "She's the girl who should not be called Carmen." Earlier I suggested that this could be read as an indication of a loss of self along the lines of the sublime. That's not quite right. If Carmen declares that her sense of self is at risk, she identifies the source of this danger as having to do with her name. She implies that naming brings with it destiny, that being called "Carmen" dooms her to the fate of the literary figure of Carmen: she is being swept away by an identity that has been thrust upon her, condemned by something outside herself. Recall the question that she asks throughout the film and that gives the film its title: "What is it that comes before the name?" Each time she asks it, Joseph responds, "The first name" *(le prénom),* an answer she angrily rejects. Carmen's response seems directed at Joseph's inability to recognize that what she wants is not an answer to the literal question but a way of getting outside the narrative enforced by the history and meaning attached to her name. Another example: When Carmen says, in the first lines of the film, "It's in me; it's in you. It makes terrible waves," she furnishes the terms of the comparison between cars and waves in the following shots. Looked at from the perspective of her later remark, however, the idea of the sublime seems to describe the status of history itself: it's *this* story, the story of *Carmen,* that's present, unwilled inside us, and that structures our actions.

Throughout his late work Godard shows individuals caught up in traditions, echoing the forms of older patterns. He shows them conscious of this fact, as in

Carmen's acknowledgment of her destiny. And he shows them unconscious of it, as in the way, in episode 1A of *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* he makes Elizabeth Taylor's arm in *A Place in the Sun* (George Stevens, 1951) correspond to Mary Magdalene's gesture in Giotto's *Noli me tangere.* Or in *À bout de souffle,* where he has Patricia assume poses that echo the framed Renoir painting of a girl that hangs in her apartment: perhaps without realizing it, she joins a pictorial tradition.[45]

Godard, then, does not eschew history in the mode of the sublime so much as he articulates a particular way of relating to it. In this model, history is outside individuals, something in which they can be caught up and swept away. To this end, he quotes the opening lines of Foucault's inaugural lecture at the Collège de France at the beginning of episode 4A of *Histoire(s) du cinéma:* "I should have preferred to become aware that a nameless voice was already speaking long before me, so that I should only have needed to join in, to continue the sentence it had started and lodge myself, without really being noticed, in its interstices. . . . I should have liked there to be a voice behind me which had begun to speak a very long time before, doubling in advance everything I am going to say."[46] Foucault expresses a fantasy of joining with a history of voices, a tradition that could guide his actions even as he performs them. It's something outside him, in which he is caught up—in which he has no choice but to be caught up—simply by performing a set of actions.

From this perspective, we can see the importance of treating Godard's engagement with nature in terms of iconography. In negotiating the status of history and tradition, and the way they inhere in the actions of individuals, Godard links the respective iconographies of the sublime and the beautiful to competing conceptions of politics and history. This is complicated work, and the effort to connect these registers is evident in one scene in *Soigne ta droite* in particular: the conversation on the train about two-thirds of the way through the film. At a basic level, the scene assigns a political valence to the iconographies of the sky and the earth, the sublime and the beautiful, the terms of which emerge in the discussion over the moral justification for revolutionary political action. One militant invokes a Marxist-inflected world-historical perspective on violent actions; the other, a perspective attuned to the effects of such actions on real, concrete individuals. The correlation of the iconographies of nature with these political models enables Godard to do two things: he can use the terms of the political arguments to justify the change in his treatment of nature, and he can, because the association between nature and politics is recursive, employ changing images of nature for purposes of political argument. The scene amounts to one of his most sustained and careful uses of film to think through larger questions of politics and history

The six-minute scene begins with an intertitle, "Une comme au ciel *[sic].*" This intertitle thus evokes the iconography of the sublime at the scene's outset, implic-

itly connecting the phrase to the part of the Lord's Prayer that emphasizes a spiritual and unworldly life—and eliminating the reference to the earth in the film's earlier use of the phrase. The intertitle is placed amid several shots of urban and rural landscapes speeding by, almost a blur seen through the window of a train. (We can see a slight reflection of the interior of a compartment.) This is followed by a close-up of a solitary hand in handcuffs, locked to the top of the window and framed against the blurred countryside. The terms of political discussion soon emerge. "Do you think they will kill me?" a voice asks, presumably belonging to the handcuffed man, to which another voice responds, "My job is not to think." It becomes clear fairly quickly that both men are involved with the Communist Party (or an equivalent organization). The prisoner, who is in fact the character we know as "the Individual," is being taken to the border, where he will be handed over to another group of men and shot; it is the job of the older man to escort him. Pleadingly, the Individual says, "Comrade," but the other replies, "Fascist!" and accuses him of being responsible for the deaths of other party members (because of his inability to speak French like a true Frenchman).[47] Yet moments of comradeship do exist: the older man clasps the Individual's handcuffed hand, and their talk often turns to memories of happier times (protosurrealist games of creating images or guessing the author of a line of poetry). As the conversation goes on, the Individual asks to be let go and is rebuffed ("I have no choice") and is described as a defeatist and a "threat to the movement," to which he replies, "All I know is, we have to tell people the truth, since they already know it." A voice-over begins to weave quasi-metaphysical speculations into their conversation (e.g., "Did evil still exist?"). The scene comes to a head with an extended speech by the older militant, in which he attempts to justify his role as guard: "But it's also true that all this talk is futile. History is always right. You and I may err; never history. It's bigger than us, than millions of us. History has no scruples, never hesitates. It shakes off the slime and the corpses it has gathered. It knows where it's going." The Individual responds, "There's suffering."

Two features of the scene make for difficulties. First, the narrative it suggests—one of political subversion, revolution, and betrayal—is found nowhere else in *Soigne ta droite,* and so we have little information to help us understand the political debates at stake. Second, the scene is constructed out of a wide range of references (literary, philosophical, historical, political), which makes it hard to get a handle on the way Godard brings up and works through them.

At a basic level, the scene is a detailed reworking of the discussion on the train in *La chinoise,* where Véronique (Anne Wiazemsky), a student militant, and Francis Jeanson, an older activist, debate the value of revolutionary terrorism. Véronique argues for the importance of using student revolts and violence as a "trial run" for the real thing, while Jeanson sets out a more measured, humanist

view: revolutions, especially when lives are at stake, are not matters to be taken lightly or treated as practice. He accuses her of moral indifference toward people in general, even toward the people she purports to be helping—an indifference she justifies by appealing to the political value, in the objective and long-term historical sense, of the actions she is proposing. Like *Soigne ta droite, La chinoise* takes up the topic of revolutionary parties and the consequences of revolutionary actions. Each film gives us a figure committed to the idea that political actions are justified by their ends, espousing a kind of "world-historical Marxism," while their interlocutor puts forward a (humanist) position that worries about the consequences of revolutionary actions for those who will be caught up in its violence.

There are, however, significant differences between the films. One is the reversal of age: in *La chinoise,* the younger militant puts forward a stringent advocacy of revolutionary violence, while the older one has that role in the later film. More important is the films' respective historical situations. *La chinoise* is oriented around plans, possibilities, even experimentation; it is made at a moment when revolution and radical change seem possible, even imminent; the debate is how to bring it about. Twenty years later, *Soigne ta droite* shows two people talking about what has already happened. While Godard's political views in *La chinoise* are debatable (and were very much debated), by the end of the 1980s it is clear that he thinks the possibility for genuine revolution has faded or failed; perhaps even the hope of the just world it offered has been lost. The older generation is now the group holding the stringent positions about political necessity.

Godard negotiates these political debates through the formal construction of the scene. In *La chinoise,* the conversation is mainly composed of a medium shot of Véronique and Jeanson, largely uninterrupted by camera movements or cuts. They simply talk to each other, the world passing by outside their window; they are sealed off from it, as it were. In *Soigne ta droite,* by contrast, few shots last more than several seconds, and the sound-image relation is more intricate: medium shots are interspersed with close-ups, commentary is provided in voice-over, and intertitles and shots from other parts of the film are inserted. Perhaps the scene's most striking feature, however, is the recurrent motif of hands. Mostly, we see the Individual's hand, handcuffed to the railing above the train window, but sometimes the hands of the older militant enter the frame as well (figure 12). Such shots occur close to a dozen times and are without obvious narrative motivation. The Individual is not trying to escape, so we don't need to see—as we do in the openings of Bresson's *Un condamné à mort s'est échappé* (*A Man Escaped,* 1956) or Melville's *Le cercle rouge* (*The Red Circle,* 1970)—the subtle movements by which he removes the cuffs. The motif is also new to the film.

The sheer number of times that hands appear in Godard's late films and videos is startling. *Nouvelle vague,* Godard's next feature film, is basically structured around the motif of hands: shots of hands grasping each other, or failing to

FIGURE 12. *Soigne ta droite*

do so, allegorically track the possibility for mutual acknowledgment between Roger/Richard and Elena. Their first meeting is marked by the clasping of his hand in hers after he has been struck and injured by a truck, an image that evokes Michelangelo's depiction of the creation of Adam in the Sistine Chapel. "Oh, miracle of empty hands!" Elena says, effectively bringing Roger to life. By contrast, the scene where she lets him drown is defined by a shot of his empty hand struggling to stay above the water, and the reversal of this action at the conclusion of the film has him clasping her outstretched hand. In *JLG/JLG,* Godard gives hands a reflexive dimension when he hires a blind editor who uses her hands to mark the rhythms (the physical length) of the footage. Similarly, in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* hands are a central metaphor for the construction of Godard's work: what he describes, following Denis de Rougemont, as a form of "thinking with one's hands" *(penser avec les mains).*[48]

   Histoire(s) du cinéma, however, treats the motif of hands as having to do not only with film form and construction—the physical activity of hands—but with politics as well. Seated at his editing table, Godard places his hands over a copy of Sartre's play *Les mains sales (Dirty Hands).* It's not a throwaway reference, and it returns at an important moment in episode 2B when he claims that, because

F. W. Murnau and Karl Freund invented the lights that would later be used at Nuremberg for the Nazi rally, they bear responsibility for that use. At the end of the speech, he shows himself seated at his desk: he writes a note on a piece of paper, mutters, "Les mains sales," then lifts his hands up and examines their front and back. It's a moment that suggests a dark aspect to the trope of hands. Murnau and Freund were neither Nazis nor Nazi sympathizers, but Godard suggests that this doesn't make them innocent of crimes: filmmakers bear responsibility for the political use of their craft by others. And if their hands are dirty, his own may be as well.

Sartre's play, the governing association of these discussions, takes up the moral questions facing politically engaged individuals trying to effect historical change. Its central scene of moral crisis involves an argument between the political leader Hoederer and the intellectual-turned-party-member Hugo about whether a just and open society can be achieved only by just and open means. Responding to Hugo's question, "Why should you fight for the liberation of men, if you think no more of them than to stuff their heads with falsehoods?" Hoederer says, "I'll lie when I must, and I have contempt for no one. . . . We shall not abolish lying by refusing to tell lies, but by using every means at hand to abolish classes. . . . All means are good when they're effective." Hoederer then derides Hugo's purity and innocence:

> How you cling to your purity, young man! How afraid you are to soil your hands! All right, stay pure! What good will it do? Why did you join us? Purity is an idea for a yogi or a monk. You intellectuals and bourgeois anarchists use it as a pretext for doing nothing. To do nothing, to remain motionless, arms at your sides, wearing kid gloves. Well, I have dirty hands. Right up to the elbows! I've plunged them in filth and blood. But what do you hope? Do you think you can govern innocently?[49]

Hoederer's outburst is a classic statement of the problem of "dirty hands," the dilemma political actors face over the necessity of committing morally wrong actions (lying, bribing, even murder) in order to bring about a greater public and collective good.[50]

In that case, when Godard looks at his own hands and calls them "dirty" in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 2B, is he placing himself in the same lineage as Hoederer? Is he suggesting that he is guilty of the kind of moral compromises that Hoederer claims to be necessary to political honesty? Is it a judgment of his political actions (say, from the late 1960s) as a part of revolutionary organizations?

In fact, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* considers the problem of dirty hands in two different modes. One is the Sartrean, existential version about personal action and responsibility. The other is a version defined by a Marxist-Hegelian understanding of history. After all, Godard's claim that the lights Murnau and Freund developed were used to illuminate Nazi spectacles does not involve the kind of moral

ambiguity Sartre describes: they did not compromise their moral integrity in order to bring about a greater good, nor did they intend for their technology to be used by the Nazis. The problem lies outside the domain of action and intention altogether, placed instead in the course of history. Murnau and Freund are effectively responsible, on this view, for the consequences of their actions, the irresponsible use of their work by others. They are morally compromised by events outside their control.

This context helps give content to the political debates at stake in the train scene in *Soigne ta droite*. Not only do references to and quotations from Sartre's play occur throughout the scene, but Godard gives the problem of dirty hands a precise historical setting by drawing on a debate that took place within the French Left in the aftermath of World War II. In that era, a number of leading figures wrote on topics ranging from the (moral and political) status of assassination and terrorism to the role of the individual in revolutionary politics. (Merleau-Ponty's *Humanism and Terror* [1947], Sartre's *Dirty Hands* [1948], and Camus's *The Just Assassins* [1949] are the best known.) This trend was sparked largely by the publication of Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* in a French translation.[51] Although available in English in 1940, its French release was delayed until December 1945, when it coincided with discussions about the political legitimacy of morally troubling acts by the Soviet Union in the 1930s: especially show trials, purges, and the Hitler-Stalin pact. (In France as elsewhere, *Darkness at Noon* led a number of militants and intellectuals to abandon the Communist Party in favor of political isolation or other left-wing groups.) But the French debate triggered by Koestler's book was about more than the legacy of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party. Also at issue was French collaboration with the Nazis, including (but by no means limited to) the Vichy regime, along with the summary execution of thousands in the wake of the liberation. The postwar French disenchantment with political action, then, had as much to do with the role of the French government in World War II and afterward as it did with the "God that failed."[52]

As he so often does when he evokes a historical context, Godard picks and chooses among the various sources. The issue of French collaboration emerges immediately following the train scene in *Soigne ta droite*. A crowd of people clustered behind barbed-wire suggests a concentration camp, while mentions of "Klaus Barbie" and "Hotel Terminus" refer to the legacy of French occupation and collaboration. The communist question is also evoked: the Individual calls the other man "Comrade," and they speak in the vocabulary of professional Marxists. Similarly, statements by the older militant seem drawn from a central meditation in *Darkness at Noon*: "History knows no scruples and no hesitation, inert and unerring, she flows towards her goal. At every bend in her course she leaves the mud which she carries and the corpses of the drowned. History knows

her way. She makes no mistakes."[53] Others, like his remark that the truth is full of errors, recall Merleau-Ponty's discussion of dirty hands, in which we find claims like, "In politics, one does not have the right to make errors," along with wholesale criticisms of Koestler: "To govern, it has been said, is to foresee, and the politician cannot excuse himself for what he has not foreseen. Yet, there is always the unforeseeable. There is the tragedy."[54]

More generally, the problem of dirty hands in *Soigne ta droite* alternates between Marxist and existentialist models. Alongside references to historical logic, we have statements like the Individual's response to the older militant: "My mind may forget [the political errors we made], but not my body." Asked to explain himself more clearly, he replies, "There's suffering." This is a different register from Koestler and Merleau-Ponty, less interested in justifying historical actions by reliance on an interpretation of world history than in the pain of the people caught up in their effects. To buttress this position, Godard cites Sartre and Camus, both of whom focus on the moral dilemmas facing individuals trying to effect historical change and on the impact their actions have on other people. The older militant's declaration, "I have no imagination," is a quote from Camus's "rank-and-file" member of the underground cell who strives to kill the tsar and his family.[55] And the Individual's phrase, "We have to tell people the truth," recalls Hugo's protestation to Hoederer in Sartre's *Les mains sales.* In neither case do the references match up perfectly: the Individual, unlike Hugo, does not declare himself to be an innocent unaware (or in denial) of the reality of human suffering. But the associations are there, and it matters that they are.

It is important here to remember that having dirty hands is not necessarily a dilemma to be avoided, a problem we have to evade. As Michael Walzer notes (following Weber), we *want* political actors to know that their commission of morally dubious acts is a problem, even though they may have overriding reasons stemming from the broader polis.[56] The tension that the problem of dirty hands brings to light is not between the morally pure and the morally compromised. It is between those who believe they are not morally culpable if their actions align with the broader movement of history (the position of world-historical Marxism) or a given political good and those who acknowledge the existence of moral dilemmas. The debate, in short, is not about the problem of dirty hands but about the question of whether one can escape that problem altogether.

Godard's originality, and his insight, is to place this complex genealogy of political action and moral responsibility at the heart of the film's work on matters of aesthetics. We can see this in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* in which he associates the political problem of dirty hands with questions of film form and production. Immediately after the claim that Murnau and Freund's lighting experiments indirectly helped the staging of the Nuremberg rally, there is an intertitle, "Penser avec les mains," which brings Godard's own filmmaking practice under the

scope of moral judgment. His examination of his hands, then, counts as asking the question of what he's responsible for, of what has made his own hands dirty. Is he responsible, for example, for the revolutionary excesses Véronique proposes in *La chinoise*, which were enacted for real by students in the following year? For the casual violence and misogyny in his films? For his explicit commitment to Maoism, in spite of all the warnings? For his political tourism in the Middle East, which he already scrutinized in *Ici et ailleurs?* This examination is a way, not least, of making it explicit that questions of film style have moral and ethical weight, perhaps a development of his well-known remark: "Tracking shots are matters of morality."[57]

The train scene in *Soigne ta droite* maps this political and moral debate—the debate Godard retroactively claims for his own work in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*—onto the aesthetic shift from the sublime to the beautiful. By tying an aesthetic undertaking to a particular moral and political debate, Godard gives a sense of the deeper stakes involved in the images of nature.

This work begins with the scene's first intertitle. "Une place" sets up the expectation that the phrase "sur la terre" will soon follow, as it has done throughout the film, and indeed Godard cuts to several shots of trees racing by, a visual reminder of the trope of the earth. But then he goes against the anticipated pattern by inserting the phrase "comme au ciel" into the sequence. Emphasizing this change, a new shot out the train window highlights the sky above the houses and trees. Rather than locating the conversation that will follow on the earth and the mundane world, the realm of the ordinary and the beautiful, Godard places it under the sign of the sky (more specifically, heaven), the iconography associated with the sublime across his work from the previous decade.

Over the course of the scene, Godard systematically matches this visual iconography with the account of political action (and its relation to history) put forward by the older militant. After his remark, "History is always right," Godard cuts again to an intertitle, "Une place," then to a shot of the Individual's face, slumped in dejection, then to the rest of the phrase, "comme au ciel." It's an explicit connection between a particular political position—world-historical Marxism—and the iconography of the sublime. The contrast comes quickly. After the older militant's line, "It [history] knows where it's going," Godard inserts the film's key phrase, "sur la terre," marking a shift from the sky to the earth, from the sublime to the beautiful. He confirms this with a series of landscapes that dwell on the earth without being drawn to the sky. The correlated moral position now follows. Asked if he remembers that the truth is full of errors, the Individual invokes the register of bodily memory, eventually uttering, "There's suffering." Are we meant to think that the Individual has undergone torture, that the consequence of large-scale historical calculations is the suffering of individuals, and so perhaps that the error lies in obliviousness to this? That he

cannot forget this fact because of the bodily memory of pain? That would suggest something like a Marxist version of Kafka's penal colony. Or is it that the Individual was himself one of the torturers, that he colluded with the practice of inflicting pain for political reasons? (In the world of the penal colony, these are not exactly separate positions.)

As the scene comes to a close, with the older militant sitting down alongside the Individual as they reach the border, Godard cuts to a shot of the pilot of the airplane. The pilot again intones lines from Lautréamont, concluding as always with the phrase, "Je te salue, vieil océan." It's a moment that explicitly connects the scene on the train, and with it the problem of dirty hands, to the earlier treatment of images of nature in *Soigne ta droite:* the evocation of the register of the sublime and its eventual undercutting by more mundane, worldly concerns.

The scene's formal argument, while wide-ranging, is thus fairly (and perhaps surprisingly) schematic. Godard presents a picture of a certain kind of historical calculation and labels it a dangerous model of politics, removed from the morally complex and ambiguous details of the world. He associates this political vision with the sublime, an aesthetic iconography he spends much of *Soigne ta droite* attempting to undermine. What links this particular correlation of aesthetics and politics, apparently, is their association with the annihilation of the individual, whether in an overwhelming aesthetic experience, the cold calculations of revolution, or the logic of history—what Sartre described as dissolving the individual in a bath of sulfuric acid.[58] In its place, Godard turns to the earthbound beautiful ("Praise *this* world to the angel," Rilke says), and so comes down fairly securely on the side of the inescapability of the problem of dirty hands: the fact that political actions inevitably leave the agent morally compromised, even when they're committed with the best intentions (and for the best outcomes). The Individual reminds the older militant that he has to take (moral) responsibility for the suffering caused by his pursuit of world-historical goals, that he cannot evade them by pointing to the arc of history as a justification for crimes. It's the same question Godard asks of himself when he returns to this topic in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* examining his own hands and wondering about the extent to which, and the way in which, they are dirty.

The work of the train scene, then, is to ground the shift from sky to earth, from the sublime to the beautiful, in something more than personal preference or matters of taste. Godard bases this shift on competing conceptions of politics and on an account of moral agency and the idea of history. In doing so, he allows us, as viewers of the film, to read the images of nature in terms of the political arguments being made. The train scene functions as a scene of instruction, of pedagogy. Later in the film, in the scene with the barbed wire discussed in chapter 1, the shifting focus between the sky and the wire can be understood as showing the dangers of thinking that an escape from the conflicts and compromises

of the world is possible. We can also read the politics of this iconography retroactively: the pilot's recitation of Lautréamont is no longer something quaint and out of touch, since the detachment from the world and location away from the earth stand for dangerous political models.

A final point about the train scene. Immediately after the Individual's remark about suffering, there is a shot of Catherine Ringer, the singer of Les Rita Mitsouko, looking straight at the camera. It's a striking image: Does her look implicate the viewer in the stakes of the political debate? Does the poignancy of the shot relate to a look of vulnerability? Will she be one of those who suffer? Earlier, when the older militant said, "You and I may err, never history," Godard cut to two shots of the duo rehearsing: they play a single keyboard and then are seen in the midst of recording. This pair of shots gives us, on the one hand, an image of the people left out of the calculations of the older militant—left out in terms of their specificity as individuals—and, on the other, a model of what it means for two people to take pleasure in their work and in each other's company. In these shots, Godard gives content to the political view associated with the aesthetic modality of the beautiful.

5. NEW WAVES?

The image of Les Rita Mitsouko at the end of the train scene in *Soigne ta droite* continues two longstanding interests from across Godard's career. One has to do with music: starting with *À bout de souffle,* music frequently stands in for a kind of unalloyed seriousness. In that film, Michel's love for Mozart's clarinet concerto suggests, almost for the first time, that he has genuine depth to his character, that there is something more to him than an accumulation of generic models. The presence of Beethoven's late quartets in films such as *Une femme mariée, Deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle,* and *Prénom Carmen* similarly establishes a reservoir of high culture in the compromised modern world. Godard likewise treats the figure of the musician as representing a privileged activity, a genuine seriousness or integrity. In *Week-end,* a lone pianist rehearsing a Mozart sonata is set apart from the ravages of the world around him, a triple-360-degree pan walling off the courtyard space from modern corruption and decadence. Elsewhere—in *One Plus One* (1968) and *Prénom Carmen,* for example—scenes of rehearsal are examples of collaborative activity based on democratic foundations.

The second interest involves the figure of the couple. Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit note that many of Godard's films revolve around forms of coupling: between two people, between the present and the past, between different genres, or between the human and the natural.[59] While this motif is present throughout his career, *Nouvelle vague* in particular is structured around a basic form of twoness. It's as if the film started from the image of Les Rita Mitsouko—similar to the way

Godard talked about *À bout de souffle* as starting from the final image of Prem-inger's *Bonjour Tristesse*—to explore what Silverman and Farocki describe as the situation of "the heterosexual couple at the end of the twentieth century."[60]

The role of the couple in *Nouvelle vague* nevertheless raises a worry. Godard's earlier interest in the figure of the couple was often placed in conversation with the broader historical and political world. In *Pierrot le fou,* the promise of ro-mantic love held out by the couple is not so much a retreat from as a protest against the world around them, the sameness and conformity it demands in all aspects of life. Even *Je vous salue, Marie,* no matter how theological its topic may be, mounts an affront to the traditional and conservative dogma of the Catholic Church; Godard's depiction of the relationship between Marie and Joseph con-stitutes a challenge to the authority of theological tradition. *Nouvelle vague* seems different in this respect. Rather than using the idea of the couple to think about broader topics, the narrative of the film appears to stage a retreat *from* the world *to* the couple, seeing in the interpersonal dynamic between Roger and Elena an end rather than a means for the analysis of different situations.

This kind of worry is further amplified by the images of nature present throughout *Nouvelle vague* and by Godard's self-conscious interest in what seems to be a fairly traditional form of beauty. Combined with exquisite studies of different kinds of light across a range of surfaces, it suggests an interest in pic-torial composition of equal importance to, if taking a different form from, the study of paintings that structures *Passion.* Critics have been suspicious of the sensuous beauty of these images and the visual pleasure they so easily afford. In an acerbic dismissal of the film on its American release, Vincent Canby wrote, "Photographed in Switzerland in (it seems) late summer and early fall, *Nouvelle vague* is as pretty as a feature-length lipstick commercial. If you can't get to Ver-mont, you may want to see *Nouvelle vague* just to admire its autumn foliage. There's not much else to occupy the mind or the eye."[61] Once the idea of nature is taken to be distinct from the urban and industrial world—the world in which the film was made—it's an easy step to treat Godard's interest in nature as tanta-mount to an escapist retreat from political and historical reality, a vacation by means of cinema.

Certain moments in *Nouvelle vague* do lend themselves to such a reading. Take a line spoken by a woman in the villa early in the film, uttered in response to the confusion caused by Elena's affair with Roger. She calls out, "What shall I do?" and Elena's assistant, Raoul, hurrying out of the room, yells back, "Admire nature!" This exchange recalls—is meant to recall, I think—a scene in *Pierrot le fou,* when Anna Karina, bored to death in the midst of her island retreat with Jean-Paul Belmondo, wanders by the sea while repeatedly complaining: "What shall I do? I don't know what to do." Belmondo tells her to look at the natural world around her, to admire it—advice she dismisses as far removed from her

own fantasies of inhabiting a gangster movie. In such moments, *Pierrot le fou* makes a sharp distinction between the natural and the urban, and Raoul's response in *Nouvelle vague* also seems to offer the beauty of nature as a way for his partner to stave off boredom (the position Canby advocates for the viewer of the film itself). Nature is there (only) for our disinterested pleasure: removed from human events, from narrative itself, it absorbs the viewer in almost purely formal contemplation.[62]

Although nature and history form a familiar opposition, I think the straightforward contrast that critics have seen between them in *Nouvelle vague,* along with the various ways this contrast has been described, amounts to a significant misreading. This is not a topic that can be avoided; an account of what Godard is doing with nature has to be central to any reading of the film. More than in Godard's other work from this era, images of nature suffuse *Nouvelle vague,* not as moments of contemplation or counterpoint but as background and setting, part of the fabric of the world of the film. Indeed, the sheer omnipresence of the images of nature makes it hard to assign a specific function to them.

We can start by taking up a question implicit in the film's title: in what sense is the film meant to be understood as a "new wave"? The title is certainly a reference to the cinematic movement, but which elements in the film have to do with it is unclear, perhaps with the exception of Alain Delon in the lead role. Moreover, Godard makes the metaphor of the wave curiously literal. As we saw in the discussion of *Prénom Carmen,* one feature of waves that interests Godard is that another wave will always follow the one currently coming toward the shore, so a wave is neither fully distinct from what came before it or an end to a series. Another way to put this is that no wave is ever absolutely new or wholly individuated; it is part of a larger, even an infinite, progression. If we bring these meanings together and apply this model to the *nouvelle vague,* we will emphasize the place of that movement within a larger cinematic history. The *nouvelle vague* was a new force, to be sure, but it was also an innovation that built on the history of the cinema, and it was then succeeded by other movements. That is, Truffaut, Godard, and others both drew on a cinematic heritage (Renoir, Hitchcock, Hawks, Rossellini, etc.) and served in turn as inspirations for others (Glauber Rocha, Suzuki, Penn, Forman, Sganzerla, etc.). Implicit in all this is a basic question: For something to be new, does it have to be entirely original, a new kind of thing? Or is it enough to be the most recent iteration of a deeper pattern?

It's this ambiguity about the status of the new that *Nouvelle vague* takes up, and it does so on terms explicitly drawn from nature. The most prominent example involves the presence of temporal rhythms based on natural cycles, in which the "new" and the "wave" in the title come up against one another. We find this tension immediately after the opening sequence of the film (a sequence discussed in chapter 1), when the gardener reflects, "We've had no time to discover,

like a lamp just lighted, the chestnut tree in blossom or a few splashes of bright ochre strewn among the jade-green shoots of wheat." These words, oriented around the annual cycle of the seasons and the rhythm of growth and decay, place the gardener in tension with the opening words spoken of the film: "But I wanted this to be a narrative." Godard creates a contrast between two temporal orders, linear and cyclical, and pegs them to the categories of history and nature.

Midway through *Nouvelle vague,* an important transitional section occurs. After Roger drowns, a series of images empty of narrative content follows. A title appears, "Solo cello and voice," which describes the audio component of the next sequence—Elena recites several stanzas from Dante's *Purgatorio* while we hear the solo cello of David Darling's "Far Away Lights"—and is followed by a shot of a yellow and green field seen through trees under the cover of a gray sky. A car drives by on a road; as it winds its way out of sight, Godard cuts to a shot of the lake from above. A tree is on the right edge of the frame, the swiftly moving water on the surface of the lake dimly reflecting the dull sky. A cut leads to a shot of waves pounding the shore, the effect of a storm blowing in. Godard then shows a road slick with water, over which the gardener says, "It's still winter"—a title reads, in English, "The Long Goodbye"—"but a few pale rays shine through the mist." Godard cuts to another shot of water, moving more slowly this time, and the gardener continues, "and at dusk, a gray cloud is outlined in fire"—a shot of tree branches stirring in the wind—"This token of light, this timid annunciation, we will forget in the rain"—a close-up of rippling water—"and deception of March."

The sequence is filled with melancholy, apparently occupying the time between the gloom of December and the coming of spring in March, when the narrative will begin again as Roger, or someone who looks identical to him, suddenly (re)appears. There's a curious tension here. Death exemplifies a historical event: it cannot be taken back or undone, cannot be reversed or repeated. But the sequence, through the gardener's words, is placed within the framework of what Mircea Eliade describes as "cyclical time, periodically regenerating itself *ad infinitum,*" or, more simply, "the cyclical regeneration of time."[63] The narrative of *Nouvelle vague,* rather than progressing from one event to another, even from beginning to end, develops through the rhythm of natural cycles. And so Roger returns as Richard in the spring. More precisely, Roger returns as Richard *because* it is the spring, because that's when everything comes alive again: the film obeys the deeper pattern of the natural world. Still, the order of natural cycles is not simple. The gardener talks about the "deception of March," and *Nouvelle vague* worries over but never answers the question of whether Roger really does come back to life. This ambivalence is encapsulated both in the intertitle seen when Roger/Richard returns—"Je est un autre"—and in the final line of the film when he says that he is "the same, but different."

In the tensions between time and narrative, between history and cycles, we can discern three ways in which *Nouvelle vague* uses images of nature. The first has to do with narrative: how nature is deployed within the arc of the film (how it mediates or inflects the actions of characters, for example) and the position it occupies within the larger world being shown. The second has to do with framing: the way Godard, following the aesthetic strategy in *Soigne ta droite,* works to enclose nature within a human and historical frame. The third concerns the idea of nature itself: what it is and the extent to which it is, or is not, caught up within a historical context. The difficulty of *Nouvelle vague,* and so the task for the rest of this chapter, is in tracking how these all work together, separate themselves, and build on one another. This intersection is where the most troubling aspects of *Nouvelle vague* emerge, those that suggest a wholesale withdrawal from the historical world. But it is also where, I will argue, the most sustained engagement with history and politics resides: Godard enacts a turn to nature to rethink and reconceive an approach to the historical world in which nature (along with its appeals) is embedded. The terms of this argument will take some work to get out, and the discussion that follows is not meant to arrive at a single finished position, an ultimate or final view of the role of nature in the film. Rather, I will work through some of the possibilities—aesthetic, ethical, political—its uses of nature have to offer.

6. *ET IN ARCADIA EGO*

Thematically, *Nouvelle vague* and *Soigne ta droite* share a great deal, especially their use of an iconography of the beautiful. The drowning in the lake notwithstanding, *Nouvelle vague* does not show a natural world that is threatening to a sense of self, at least not on the terms of the sublime. Rather than images of wild or pure nature, we are repeatedly placed within a world that is of human creation. The grounds of the villa, in which much of the action takes place, function as a garden, even a landscape; the natural world is marked and shaped by human activity. There's even a similar "ground-level" orientation: Morrey reports that Roland Amstutz (who plays the gardener in *Nouvelle vague*) "found his voice different to how it sounds in other films, 'deeper, more serious, more grounded,' and he suggests that this earthiness to his voice cannot be divorced from his role as gardener." Amstutz "tells how he worked on his voice with Godard, who gave clear instructions as to how to stand, 'planted solidly on the ground.'"[64] Like *Soigne ta droite, Nouvelle vague* systematically reorients Godard's vision of nature toward the earth and the human world.

Perhaps the most prominent affinity between the two films has to do with the presence of frames in shots of nature that emphasize a human and historical mediation. It's a project that starts in *Nouvelle vague*'s opening shot. A tree in the

foreground dominates the left part of the shot, and under its arching branches a field spreads out to the right in speckled sunlight; a pair of horses, tinged almost blue by the light, are grazing in patches. It codes like an image of pure nature, untouched by human hands; Silverman and Farocki argue that it places the film world outside any "human-centered system."[65] From this starting point, however, Godard evinces a systematic effort to place the natural world within in a human frame. The changing presentation of the horses over the course of the film is one example. When we next see them, a red line runs horizontally across the center of the frame, which turns out to be a fence circumscribing their pasture. Later, during an extended discussion between Roger and Elena, the horses are being rubbed down by the gardener; they are now shown as cared for, domestic animals. Our final view of them comes when Elena retreats to a smaller house, fleeing from the demands Richard places on her; we quickly realize that she is staying next to a barn and are then shown the horses resting comfortably inside. From a position as pure and untouched nature, outside any human care, the horses are eventually situated in an indoor environment. They are within the human world, not outside it.

In *Soigne ta droite,* this sort of shift in the iconography of nature—from pristine to framed, sublime to beautiful—suffices to change the role of nature from its use in Godard's films from earlier in the decade and to revise the political and historical arguments they contain. In *Nouvelle vague,* nature is directly connected to the film's narrative in a way that's absent from the films of the previous decade. This produces a set of problems within the mode of the beautiful, but it also allows Godard to develop new resources for the film's critical project.

An early scene in *Nouvelle vague* shows how images of nature are given narrative significance. After we're introduced to Elena and her household, Godard cuts to a landscape. Green fields spread out over rolling hills, almost in the way that Poussin's landscapes tend to construct a visual path leading into the distance (see his *Landscape with a Man Washing His Feet at a Fountain* [1648] and *Landscape with the Body of Phocion Carried out of Athens* [1648]). The shot is overtly organized for a viewer: the recession of rolling hills into the distance means that we are given a way to move our gaze into the depths of the image. This view of the landscape is "framed" in the sense that Heidegger gives the word: we are not in it but standing outside it; we can look *at* it, through it.[66] The camera slowly tracks to the right, and a winding road becomes visible at the edge of the frame; a man standing by the side of the road looks as though he's attempting to hitch a ride, while a big-rig truck emerges in the far background, a sports car trailing behind and flashing its lights (figure 13). As the camera continues to move to the right, the vehicles go out of sight behind a hill, and the man picks up his suitcase and walks on, advancing toward the camera.

FIGURE 13. *Nouvelle vague*

Something surprising now happens. After a cut, the trunk of a tree, sharply in focus, suddenly appears in the very near right foreground, hiding the man walking on the road. Godard then cuts to a black screen with a title, "Incipit Lamentatio," over which we hear the harsh sounds of a car horn, repeated insistently. A cut shows the tree now on the left edge of the frame, the road located to the right (has the shot continued during the time in which the title is shown? is this a new shot?), and the man hurries toward the tree to avoid the truck speeding by; he runs in the reverse direction of the movement of the camera. A quick shot of the tree's branches, taken from below and framed so that the sunlight intermittently shines through, is followed by a shot of the man cowering against the tree's trunk. A sudden cut then shows the tree in the extreme foreground, but now at the right edge of the frame again. The camera tracks left, and we discover that we're 180 degrees from the previous shot; the road is now to the left, and, as the camera moves left and begins to pivot around the tree trunk, the truck and car rush close by on the road. The truck hurtles on, but the car skids to a halt as Elena stops to care for the wounded man (Roger).

At one level, this scene dramatizes modern technology's intrusion into the natural world of the film. *Nouvelle vague* begins in a rural setting, in the countryside, with images of tranquility: horses grazing, reeds blowing in the wind, trees arranged in a glade. Even the household suggests a rural mode, despite gestures toward the world of international finance, with the prominence of the

country villa and the central role of the gardener. But the modern world shatters the tranquil order. The visual harmony of the landscape is broken by the rush of the truck and the sound of its horn as it bears down on Roger.

The scene does something else as well. Roger is struck by a truck, then finds shelter under a tree: Godard immediately places modernity into a *narrative* relation with nature, and in so doing generates a moral valence for each world. The modern world is dangerous, even deadly, and is contrasted with the sanctuary offered by the tree. As *Nouvelle vague* develops, this contrast becomes central to the film's narrative. Starting in the world of modern industry, it articulates a series of problems, not only personal but financial and political as well: about the stock market, for example, or state intervention in financial affairs. *Nouvelle vague* then effects a move to the rural countryside, where, at Elena's villa, these public and private problems will be discussed, debated, and eventually resolved.

One of the few scenes not set in the countryside shows how this works. After Roger and Elena meet and their hands clasp against the backdrop of a sloping countryside, Godard cuts to two quick focus pulls of lights of cars driving on a highway at night (see chapter 1). It's another overt contrast of modernity with nature, and it leads to a scene in the factory of Torlato-Favrini Enterprises, Elena's company, a scene that takes place, we soon learn, several months later. The bulk of this scene is made up of two extended tracking shots, in which the central conflicts of the film, social as well as personal, are introduced. The first lasts just short of two minutes. The camera follows Roger as he walks to the right, looking glumly at the floor, and passes groups of people talking about the state of contemporary finance and politics. Two men walk by as he comes to a halt, and the camera picks them up as they discuss the role of the state—its "profound immorality"—in fostering utopian aspirations on the part of the masses. They exit the frame, and the camera stops with a man and a woman talking about personal issues, the relation between love and a sense of self, and business matters. As these two move to the left, the camera follows them, eventually returning to Roger as the woman greets him pointedly, suggesting that her prior conversation about love concerned him: by introducing a personal element, a distraction, Roger has complicated business affairs. A voice-over now relates several lines about the interactions between men and women in love (e.g., "Women love love; men love solitude") as Elena walks into the frame, kisses Roger, and says that she'll only be five minutes longer. She leaves the frame, and he turns around to look morosely at the camera. An older man enters to ask him what he's doing, and Roger replies, "Arousing pity." This remark leads to a kind of contrapuntal duet between the older man, who speaks about love, and the off-screen voices of the minister and the CEO.[67]

A cut to Elena and the minister initiates the second part of the scene. While he discusses his prior acquaintance with her father, she maintains a distracted

air, repeatedly looking back toward Roger. The camera tracks left as they walk and discuss the current competition between Torlato-Favrini Enterprises and Japanese companies. Passing a group of people talking about financial payments, she stops at a machine and glances at a newspaper. (The paper is *La Repubblica,* a left-leaning Italian daily newspaper founded in 1976, sold to Silvio Berlusconi in 1990 [the year *Nouvelle vague* was released] and since reacquired by a left-wing group.) Roger approaches her from the background, emerging from behind the group of executives. He says, "So you don't put your trust in me, but in love," to which Elena replies, looking up from the paper, "It doesn't die, it's people who die. It goes away"—she kisses him on the cheek—"if we're not good enough." She walks past him toward the background, following the group that has left in that direction. Roger stops her by calling out, "We can't withdraw from others' lives and yet remain ourselves"; Elena replies, "I'm not holding you," and turns to continue walking away.

The scene articulates the film's basic narrative structure. The conversations between the members of the corporate world bring up questions about class relations and the ongoing process of globalization, with the attendant competition between international companies. At the same time, the difficulties between Roger and Elena begin to emerge: Can she let him into all facets of her life, public as well as private? (This is one way to understand his question of whether she trusts him or their love.) Is Roger content with being a passive companion, ignored and mocked by those she works with? How important are they to each other? The scene suggests that the two kinds of problems are connected: the status of the personal relations between Roger and Elena depends in part on their respective relations to the financial and industrial situation that surrounds them, and the success of Torlato-Favrini Enterprises will be determined by whether Roger and Elena can successfully negotiate their relationship. (The interweaving of the personal and the financial continues in the second part of the film, when Richard starts to run the company in place of Elena.)[68]

In a coda to the factory scene, Godard provides an indication of how *Nouvelle vague* goes about resolving these issues. The coda begins with an intertitle, "De Rerum Natura," the name of Lucretius's great work, after which the style of the film changes markedly. The first two shots of the scene were extended tracking shots, the camera gliding to frame figures alternately in medium and long distances. In the coda, Godard now employs a series of stationary close-ups. He begins with a machine moving back and forth as it cuts metal, water being sprayed on it to cool it down (our first sense of any productive activity in the factory), then a shot of Elena staring into the background: the machine from the previous shot is in her line of sight, slightly out of focus. Suddenly, we hear a whispered "Elena" in voice-over, and Godard cuts to a close up of a man's hands, a pencil sharpener in one and a pencil in the other; he begins to sharpen the pencil. A cut in the midst

of this action takes us to the countryside: a tree at the left of the frame covers much of the image, with a field of wheat visible under the arch made by its branches. A voice is heard: "Mr. Secretary, we're at the start of the affair" *(au départ de la matière);* this seems to be the concluding remark from the scene at the factory, though it could also be an unlocated voice-over. At this point Roger becomes visible, emerging behind the wheat at the center of the frame and moving toward the left foreground. In voice-over, he says, "I say 'me,' but I could say 'a man,' any man." Elena's voice enters as a response, reprising her earlier speech, this time in Italian: "They say love dies, but it's not true. It doesn't die; it deserts you." The sound of car horns is now heard. After remaining with the shot of the tree and the wheat for several more seconds, Godard cuts to two cars outside a fence, waiting for Roger to open the gate to let them in, which he quickly does. Soon the members of Torlato-Favrini Enterprises will arrive at Elena's villa to discuss business strategy and to watch the drama between her and Roger play out.

The coda is organized around a move from the factory to the countryside, from the urban to the rural, and from the industrial to the natural. At the beginning of this transition, the intertitle "De Rerum Natura" suggested a concern with the nature of things, their essence. But it also suggested the idea of *natural* things, even that natural things may be central to the nature of things in *Nouvelle vague.* With one exception, a scene at an airport, the film never returns to the urban and modern world, nor does it leave the villa and the surrounding countryside. Thus, with the CEO's voice-over, "Mr. Secretary, we're at the start of the affair," Godard is describing the move to the country as a move toward basics, toward both nature and the nature of things. The CEO's remark, while ostensibly about business concerns, also resonates with the personal affairs of Roger and Elena. It's heard as being about love, and in this way brings the personal and the financial together.[69] All this fairly explicitly suggests that only in the countryside can the dramatic problems, both economic and personal, be resolved.

Described this way, the narrative structure of *Nouvelle vague* follows the mode or genre of the pastoral, in which the bad world of the city is contrasted with the natural goodness of the countryside.[70] The urban, industrial scene of capitalism is depicted as rife with corruption, greed, and moral failings. It is where the problems that threaten the happiness of the couple, the problems that motivate the drama of the film, emerge and become articulated. Godard gives an explicit example of this moral bankruptcy toward the end of the film, when Richard tells the CEO that Della Street (named after Perry Mason's secretary) has been exchanged for a Goya portrait: in the world of business, people are no more and no less than commodities floating on a market. (Humans and artworks can be exchanged: each has a price.)[71] Against this corrupt society, Godard pits the natural world of the countryside: a rural sanctuary set apart from the ravages of

capitalism, where there is time for the characters to work through the intricate details of human relationships. Following the terms of the pastoral, the narrative restages and eventually resolves in the countryside the problems that emerged within the urban world.

Because the pastoral emphasizes nonurban environments and older, more traditional ways of life, the production of this genre in urban and industrial (frequently capitalist) societies is often understood to exhibit a nostalgic longing for simpler times.[72] Resolving contemporary social contradictions in a rural idyll, the pastoral leads us (falsely) to believe that our own problems are less intractable and difficult than they actually are. It treats class conflict, for example, either as a natural state of affairs to which we ought to reconcile ourselves or as a superficial difference that obscures deeper (more "essentially" human) affinities.[73] When critics argue that *Nouvelle vague* privileges a vision of nature in contrast with the contemporary world, they have something like this version of the pastoral in mind.

Although *Nouvelle vague* does follow the contours of the pastoral, it engages this tradition in complex and surprising ways. It's as if the film has to pass through the temptation of an uncomplicated retreat to nature in order to discover different resources there, resources that come from a tradition of an artistic engagement with nature and that can be used for thinking about the contemporary, historical world. In a sense, Godard provides his own version of Adorno's turn to natural beauty in *Aesthetic Theory:* if there are dangers associated with a renewed interest in nature, there are also genuine possibilities that can be exploited for new ends.

7. WE MUST CULTIVATE OUR GARDEN

Where traditional forms of the pastoral depend on a strict opposition between urban and rural, city and country, revisionist critics (Leo Marx, William Empson, and Raymond Williams are notable in this regard) have argued that the second term in the opposition does not have to be synonymous with a lack of complexity or with a withdrawal from history. Often, the discussion turns on the narrative integration of nature and history, whether a given author sees the natural world as something distinct from historical processes or as necessarily caught up in changes that are happening in the human world. The best, "complex" versions of the pastoral do the latter. What's at stake here, at least for Godard, is the very idea of nature, whether it has meaning in itself or only through its historical context. It's a question, that is, not simply of the narrative role of images of nature but of what the concept of nature amounts to, at least within the world of *Nouvelle vague.*

One strand of this inquiry involves reworking the idea of nature through the motif of the garden. A central reference in the film is the final line of Voltaire's

Candide: "We must cultivate our garden." Voltaire's point is that, in the absence of engaging with world-historical events—that is, once we no longer think our actions can substantively alter the course of history—the best recourse is to focus on self-improvement, on the cultivation of one's self. (It's a maxim to which Godard returns in *Notre musique:* While watering his plants at home, he hears on a speakerphone about the death of an Israeli activist for the cause of peace. Withdrawn from the kind of action the woman attempts, he tends only to his own affairs.) The prominence of the figure of the gardener in *Nouvelle vague* and the repeated shots of gardens make the reference inescapable. Godard looks to have retreated to the purely personal, to the details of the relationship between two people.[74]

Voltaire's imperative is primarily metaphorical, oriented around the project of *self*-cultivation. Godard, by contrast, makes it curiously literal: the imperative is to work on, change, and cultivate the natural world around us—to cultivate our gardens. We see this in the repeated images of beds of flowers, carefully trimmed trees, groomed hedges, and closely cropped lawns of grass. The film marks them as indications of human care, labor, and investment in the appearance of the natural landscape. Reliteralized, Voltaire's maxim becomes a guiding principle for Godard's presentation of nature.

The importance of the motif of the garden for *Nouvelle vague* has not gone unnoticed. When it's been discussed, though, the argument has tended to be, as Loshitzky puts it, that "the biblical edenic associations of the garden emphasize the religious utopian dimensions of nature."[75] What this formulation ignores, and what is central to the film, is the figure of the gardener. There is, after all, no gardener in Eden. Indeed, a basic principle of Edenic utopias is that no labor is involved in the production of food,[76] and so one of the things to which Adam and Eve are condemned in their expulsion from Eden is the necessity of surviving by means of physical exertion: "Thou shalt eat the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread. . . . Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken" (Genesis 3:18, 23). Thus, when Godard places the figure of the gardener at the heart of the film—on a tractor no less!—he makes it explicit that the nature we see is as it is because someone *works* on it, that the world around the villa looks the way it does (that is, looks "natural") because human labor is involved in producing it as a landscape.[77] We're in a different place from utopia.

Godard stages the entrance of the gardener to highlight this point. The film opens, as we've seen, with images of a natural world apparently deprived of human presence. Delon's accompanying voice-over, weaving between those images and the austerity of the black-and-white credits, emphasizes this feeling: "I barely hear, from time to time, the earth's soft moan, one ripple breaking the surface. I

am content with the shade of a single poplar, tall behind me in its mourning." (If the tree is in mourning, how utopian can this world be?) To be sure, human presence is not entirely absent. We see an image of a fist being enclosed in a hand and hear the sound of a car driving by—as well as Delon's voice—but these are signs that are placed onto, rather than within, a backdrop of nature. Nature is a comforting, constant presence against which human actions define themselves; it is barely noticeable, only "one ripple breaking the surface" of our awareness. Quickly, the tenor of the scene changes. As music swells during the sequence— Dino Saluzzi's "Winter" from *Andina* (1988)—a subtly discordant sound can be heard behind it. The volume of this sound rises until it dominates the music, and we are able to recognize it as an engine. Godard then cuts to a shot of the tractor driving up a paved path and coming to a halt; the gardener gets down from it, turns off the engine, lifts a rake from it, and begins to sweep the path. Still sweeping, he walks to the left and around the front of the tractor, the camera following him, and recites lines that mourn our lack of time to notice the changing of the seasons as they play across the natural world. A car pulls up, and a woman tells him that "Madame" is leaving and that he needs to hurry; another black screen with credits appears, and we hear the sound of a telephone ringing. The pastoral world turns out not to be isolated from the modern world.[78]

The prominence given to the figure of the gardener raises a question of whether he is meant to be a stand-in or surrogate for Godard. This would not be a new strategy, and a number of critics have heard Godard's voice in the gardener's poetic and philosophical musings. Farocki, for example, points to an utterance like "What is grass before it has been given a name?" as indicative of the film's general interest in nature as it was prior to human interference, before it was named.[79] In this view, the gardener stands at once inside and outside the film, both a character and an authorial voice. But this is far too simplistic. Not only is there a general problem in assuming that *any* character simply represents Godard's own views, even when that character is played by Godard himself, but such a reading of the gardener's musings mistakes their intent. "What is it that comes before the name *[le nom]?*" Carmen asked in *Prénom Carmen.* The answer is not an account of prelinguistic being, a delineation of the conditions of pure presence: it's "the first name" *(le prénom),* with all the historical baggage that comes with being Carmen. If the gardener's speech refers, as I think it does, to that repeated question and answer, then, following the parallel, his words suggest that there is no essence of nature outside human engagement with it. At least not for us.

This doesn't mean there's no affinity between the gardener and Godard, but it takes place on different terms. Both are figures whose work maintains the world of the film: the gardener does this *in* the diegesis, Godard does it *on* the diegesis. The very activity of making a film is thus described as a form of tending to a garden, as

if the film itself were a garden, cared for by a solitary person but available for all, a product that is experienced as natural but is in fact a human creation. Indeed, Godard has even called himself a "gardener of the cinema."[80]

All this suggests that nature in *Nouvelle vague* is to be understood as *cultivated* nature, saturated by human activity and marked by historical processes. It is, in other words, a landscape, in particular, a culturally defined landscape.[81] In the world of *Nouvelle vague,* at least in this context, there is no ideal past to return to, no natural haven untouched by the human to be found. As a result, Godard can look to nature to discover the effects and traces of the historical transformations that have taken place in the world around it. (Here I mean to invoke Adorno's analysis of the intersection of nature and history, in which nature is seen to be a repository of historical activities that have passed over or through it: "Engraved as their expression is history."[82] *Nouvelle vague* doesn't give the precise details of this formation—a task undertaken by *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*—but does set out the broader framework for such an analysis.)

This account of nature changes important features of the pastoral tradition on which Godard draws. Take the implicit progression from alienation to reconciliation that accompanies the move from city to country. In the exchanges between Raoul and his partner briefly discussed above, Godard evokes the idea of the human construction of nature and uses it to push against the traditional narrative arc of the pastoral. The exchanges are structured around the woman's repeated question: "What shall I do?" The first time she asks this, Raoul says, "Admire nature!" But when she repeats her question twice more in the film, he gives different answers: "Admire architecture," and then "Admire the décor." The first exchange comes as they arrive at the villa, and Raoul is wandering through the gardens; the second is inside the house, a few minutes later, as various characters are moving about; the third comes after Roger has returned as Richard, and the household and board members are struggling to deal with the new situation. I take it that these remarks are meant to be seen as having an internal connection, especially since their appearance coincides with major narrative moments of the film.

If Raoul's initial response, "Admire nature!" suggests a formalist account of nature, the subsequent presence of architecture in the series introduces something different: the idea of a built environment, that nature is not eternal and unchanging but created. The role of décor, the third term in the series, is then a curious addition. One way to read it would be to follow Kant's insistence that décor (and the attendant aesthetics of ornament and the arabesque) is analogous to natural beauty in its refusal of conceptual content.[83] But décor is more an indicator of the artificial and the place of artifice within a strictly human context. If architecture introduces the idea of nature as a built environment, décor suggests that nothing is natural.

Raoul's answers to the woman, then, move from the natural to the artificial: she is to admire the natural world around her (the garden), then the fine architec-

ture of the villa, and finally the confining décor of the room where they discuss the fate of the company in whispers. The pair is increasingly enclosed in a human environment, more and more estranged from an ideal of a pure nature. Note how this progression is at odds with a pastoral narrative, which should tend toward a natural order of things; the final reconciliation is supposed to be achieved by moving away from the realm of artifice and into nature. The exchanges between Raoul and the woman suggest that *Nouvelle vague* does not shed artifice so much as embrace it.[84]

Godard stages the resurrection of Roger (as Richard) in a similar way, at once evoking and undoing a movement in the direction of the natural. Initially, Richard seems like a natural creation: the first glimpse of his (re)appearance is of his reflection in a pond, suggesting that he comes out of nature, that nature itself gives birth to him. (Is the idea that he emerges from the water into which Roger disappeared?) But the character that nature gives birth to is the epitome of an industrialist, concerned with corporate acquisitions: in exchange for staying quiet about Roger's death, he wants control over an entire company. (Is this a moral economy, uncorrupted by the modern world?) We also do not get a sense that the relations between Richard and Elena are better than those between Roger and Elena. If anything, they're worse: a fairly decent, if unambitious person has been replaced by a figure whose drive demolishes Elena, rendering a powerful woman almost entirely passive. (Is this the "natural order of things" the pastoral is supposed to bring about?)

Into this confusion, Godard inserts a reference to Marx. We hear a character named Dorothy Parker remark off-screen, "You pay a price for being good, as you do for being bad." Godard cuts to a shot of her, leaning on a windowsill, a bulky paperback in her hand—a French translation of a collection of gothic novels.[85] Off-screen, Yvonne says that Richard is after one of Elena's companies, and Dorothy, leafing through the book, finds a slim pamphlet inside: "*Éloge du crime,*" she reads. Chided for a socially inappropriate comment, she responds: "It's not me. It's Karl Marx." Her attribution changes the meaning of the words. Rather than a tribute to crime, as if following the lines of the gangster genre, the words suggest that crime is a natural state of affairs under capitalism. What Richard is doing—trying to gain control of the financial enterprise by less than legal and moral means—is not something out of the ordinary but a normal way of going about things. Marx, after all, locates the origins of capital ("primitive accumulation") in the forceful taking of land from its original owners.

Roger's return as an industrialist goes wrong in another way. The pastoral shift from city to country is supposed to be about resolving public problems in a private setting, a place where social and economic concerns can be worked through on the basis of private and personal relations. As a result, understanding how to relate to one another within a limited social sphere will "naturally"

provide the solution to the larger difficulties. But *Nouvelle vague* gives us a situation in which the withdrawal to the private generates a rabidly public person (Richard) who destroys the private sphere entirely. Personal relations, relations of real intimacy, can no longer be formed outside the impositions of the relations of production that define social life. Richard brings these relations of production into the private realm. He treats Elena, for example, as an object—one among many—that he strives to possess, a dismissal of human uniqueness that he acts out by trading Della Street for a Goya painting. The return of Roger as Richard, then, is not so much a revelatory or redemptive experience as a dangerous one. His emergence out of nature is part of the antipastoral move developed within *Nouvelle vague:* nature produces its own antithesis.

8. A LONG, STRANGE ROAD

Following this line of interpretation, we could understand *Nouvelle vague* as the continuation of an essentially Marxist project. An obvious connection has to do with the theme of work. Along with the quasi-authorial figure of the gardener, other characters are also defined by their relation to work: the young servant learning how to perform her duties,[86] the various members of Elena's company planning financial takeovers, and so on. We might think, then, that Godard is interested in simultaneously showing the enjoyment of the spectacle of nature and the figures whose work makes possible the life of the country villa. Gilberto Perez's superb description articulates this position: the film, he argues, "disallows the complacency both of those who would simply enjoy beauty without looking into the conditions that make for it, and of those who would simply dismiss it as the plaything of a privileged few without recognizing its capacity to transcend and even subvert their claim to ownership."[87]

A less obvious but deeper affinity with a Marxist project has to do with the film's treatment of nature. After all, while certain Marxist approaches hold that the natural constitutes a sphere entirely separate from the human, the dominant position is oriented by a belief in their intersection. In one version, human society constitutes a kind of "second nature" that stands over and above the natural world.[88] Our society and institutions are, or have become, our nature, appearing to us not as social but as natural formations, and so the task of criticism is to reveal them as human constructions; because they are not inevitable, they can be unmade. At the same time, there is an argument that nature itself—first nature—is already socially determined. As Steven Vogel puts it, "The 'natural' world and the social one are not distinguishable."[89] First and second nature are mutually constituting, the social and the natural reciprocally defining each other. Marx's own version of this runs as follows: "*Society* is the consummated oneness in substance of man and nature—the true resurrection of nature—the

naturalism of man and the humanism of nature both brought to fulfillment."[90] If the natural world is created by human activity, and the human world is seen as natural, then the two spheres cannot be separated from each other.

An example of this is Raymond Williams's criticism of the pastoral tradition as making a given social order seem natural. He writes, "People have often said 'the city' when they meant capitalism or bureaucracy or centralized power, while 'the country' is more often associated with a natural or moral economy that transcends the capitalist mode of production." Williams notes that this view operates in isolation from an understanding of history: "Take first the idealization of a 'natural' or 'moral' economy on which so many have relied, as a contrast to the thrusting ruthlessness of the new capitalism. There was very little that was moral or natural about it."[91] He goes on to describe the historical creation of a market economy that is able to pass itself off as natural, an argument that simultaneously serves to unveil the ideology of the dominant society (showing the social order that the pastoral helps maintain) and to describe the deeper (economic and historical) mechanisms at work.

Such an approach seems promising for thinking about *Nouvelle vague,* and it fits familiar accounts of Godard's earlier political ambitions. But it misses the mark in at least one significant way. In *Nouvelle vague,* the attempt to show nature to be the result of human activity is more or less devoid of concrete history. Godard does not give an account of how this particular image of the landscape came to be. Instead, he takes a different path, initially setting out an almost abstract version of a social critique of nature and then, at the very end of the film, reworking the status of the film's natural world as if to undo the entire project of interweaving nature and history.

Perhaps the issue is that the Marxist account of the social construction of nature is not the only version of this position. References to Marxism are oddly absent from *Nouvelle vague* in a way that's not true for Godard's other films of this time. In its place, he evokes other intellectual traditions committed to the interrelation of nature and society. A key figure here is Lucretius, to whom Godard refers at several crucial points.[92] These references generally occur when the film moves from factory to countryside, from the social to the natural—moments when a Marxist interjection would seem appropriate. When the initial transition away from the factory occurs, for example, it's marked by the presence of the intertitle "De Rerum Natura." The reference to Lucretius's work seems knowing. Despite its passages about the wonder with which we behold natural phenomena, the primary mood of the book is one of materialist investigation: What is it that makes things the way they are? How did they come to be? How do they work? When Lucretius dwells on the appearance of the "pure and undimmed lustre of the sky," for example, it is during a discussion of the manner by which awe-inspiring phenomena later become the subject of investigations, and thereby

merely one thing among others.[93] The human world, too, falls under this analysis: the origin of language and the development of social forms are discussed in terms of the physical conditions that would have made them possible. For Lucretius, natural history and human history are part of the same process, made up of the same material stuff. This equation becomes especially clear in his attempt to discern the age of the earth, its natural history, by means of human artifacts: we know the earth has been around longer than people, because we can see the crumbling of human structures while the natural world remains intact.[94]

Two other references to Lucretius underline his importance for *Nouvelle vague.* The first is when Godard repeats the title in French, "Sur la nature des choses," a shift in language that functions as a kind of appropriation, a way of making Lucretius's text Godard's own (transposing it into his language, his time). The second is subtler and more significant. In the opening moments of the film, Godard shows several images of nature; one is of reeds lining the edge of a pond, bending in the wind. Its appearance as a conventional image of nature belies its depth. Early in *De Rerum Natura,* Lucretius tries to establish the existence of atoms: elements of matter, smaller than we can see, that have physical effects in the world. His central example is the wind: "Sometimes scouring plains with hurricane force it strews them with huge trees and batters mountain peaks with blasts that hew down forests. . . . There must be invisible particles of wind that sweep sea, that sweep land, that sweep the clouds in the sky, swooping upon them and whirling them along in a headlong hurricane. In the way they flow and the havoc they spread they are no different from a torrential flood of water."[95] Lucretius later deploys an image of reeds in the wind to make a similar point. It's an argument—the world is made up of smaller, invisible, yet thoroughly material elements—on which he erects an entire system, a system that takes in both natural and human worlds. The visual reference to *De Rerum Natura* in *Nouvelle vague* suggests that, at the moment when the film looks most like it's setting out a picture of nature as something fully divorced from the human, it is already moving toward their integration.

The point is not that we have to decide between the materialisms of Marx and Lucretius, or any of the other models of nature at play in *Nouvelle vague.* Rather, it's that the film works through a range of approaches. If Godard invokes several doctrines of the social construction of nature as a way to unsettle the teleology of the pastoral narrative, he does not stay with any one of them.

The ambivalence about the relation of nature to narrative and about the use to which Godard puts images of nature finds expression at the end of the film. There, Roger/Richard and Elena finally meet each other as equals, and she recites in voice-over a passage from Dante's *Purgatorio* that suggests their interdependence: "I . . . came closer to my faithful companion, / and how would I have made my way without him? / Who would have taken me up the mountain?"[96] If one

persons leads, it is for the benefit of the other. Elena says to Roger/Richard, "I'll lead" (or, "I'll drive") (C'est moi qui conduis!), but then gets into the passenger's seat.[97] They are now able, in other words, to inhabit various roles without having those roles entirely define them, an achievement that has eluded them throughout the film. Elena and Lennox are equals, in business as in love. Contrary to what we've seen, the private world apparently can transform the public world; the couple provides a model for the larger political and economic world.

If this appears curiously faithful to the pastoral—the resolution of personal difficulties enabling a reconfiguration of the social world—the means by which it is achieved undermines the utopian claim. Reconciliation, and with it equality, comes about not through personal interactions (the difficulty of genuine acknowledgment, one might say) but rather through what the film presents as a series of "miracles." Recall that *Nouvelle vague* begins with Elena describing her saving of Roger as miraculous: "Oh, miracle of empty hands!" she says as their hands meet. The "miracles" become increasingly theological. There is an evocation of baptism, as Roger and then Elena are dunked under the water. There is resurrection: Roger is reborn as Richard, and Elena is reborn in the final moments as the assertive self she possessed in the beginning of the film. Even the final result of equality—what gets us away from the cycle of drownings, the repeated scenes of domination and submission—seems to constitute, as Farocki notes, "a miraculous escape."[98]

Miracles pose a problem for the pastoral. The pastoral narrative involves a reconciliation that is fundamentally human: against the distinctions that society (artificially) imposes—class, birth, race, and so forth—characters discover their essential commonality, and the universal "human" status triumphs over everything else. By contrast, miracles work outside the realm of the humanly or naturally possible. (As Hume puts it, "Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happen in the common course of nature.")[99] They cannot be consciously achieved or won; they simply happen to a person, imposed from the outside, and they bring with them a sense of obligation or duty.[100] Rather than going *back* to nature, miracles go *beyond* it. The presence of miracles in *Nouvelle vague,* along with the suggestion that they are the only way to escape the destructive cycle the film shows, undercuts its pastoral promise.

Through this move against the pastoral, Godard develops an aesthetic program out of the miraculous. Take the (ethical) miracle in the final reconciliation of Elena and Roger/Richard. It's a moment accented by the climactic shot of the film, which occurs after Richard and Elena return from their boating excursion (where the drowning has *not* been replayed). Lasting almost two minutes, the shot begins with the camera tracking to the right: moving out from behind a tree and then down and across the face of a gully, it quickly straightens into a more horizontal movement, showing the lake while moving across a hill overlooking the

water. The stone dock comes into view below, and we notice Richard, clothed in a red robe, running up from the shore on a stone path. (On the soundtrack, Elena recites Dante's *Inferno* in Italian to say that, for the first time, someone escaped alive.)[101] Still continuing to move horizontally, the camera tilts slightly upward to arrive at a long shot of Elena standing on an embankment (at roughly the same height as the camera), drying her hair. Richard says, "Don't look back," as he arrives on her level and follows her when she turns to walk toward the right.[102] Both are now moving in the same direction and speed as the camera, which follows them, still moving horizontally, as they traverse the embankment and go down into the gully. As they descend, the camera, now above them again, pivots so that they seem to be walking up the frame, into the distance. We see the villa in the background, lying directly in their path.

At this moment, the camera executes an extraordinary gesture, quickly moving up and to the right, rising up behind a tree. It's the first time in the film that the camera has left the ground. With Richard and Elena partly obscured by branches, the camera slows down, moving slightly upward and gently drawing back, before Godard cuts to an intertitle, "Amor Omnia Vincit," suggesting that a full reconciliation has happened. Style and narrative come together. The tree that the camera has been ascending is in the left foreground, dark in the shadow; on the right side of the frame and in the middle distance hang the leafy branches of another tree in the sunlight; running out from the middle distance to the villa in the background (the villa faces the camera, creating a horizontal wall that precludes further sight into the distance) is a sunlit field that Richard and Elena jog across (figure 14). We've needed a miracle to resolve the conflict between the two characters (the lines from Dante imply as much). That a miracle has occurred is signaled, perhaps is actually created, by the ascension of the camera, moving upward to assume control of the view. The camera's movement suggests that it is no longer bound to a human (or natural) perspective.

Godard's use of the miraculous to inflect the ethical and the aesthetic follows a pattern that goes back to his films of the early 1980s. Not surprisingly, the most developed version comes in *Je vous salue, Marie,* a film that takes up two interwoven narratives: the story of the virgin birth and the mundane problems Joseph has in his relationship with Marie. Toward the end of the film, when Marie is about to give birth, Godard cuts to a series of shots of the natural world: reeds blowing in the wind, waves crashing onto shore, the emergence of animals from the ground. As in *Nouvelle vague,* these images of nature evoke the temporality of the seasons, the cyclical pattern of the natural world. Here, they also set off the miraculous status of the virgin birth. If Hume says, "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature," Godard shows the virgin birth as violating the normal, natural order of things. Godard now introduces three distinct sounds: a child crying, a donkey braying, and then a curious line by Joseph, "Oh, Marie, what a long,

FIGURE 14. *Nouvelle vague*

strange road I had to take to reach you." In the context of the child's cries, the sound of the donkey seems like a simple enough reference to Christ's birth in a stable. The words Joseph speaks, however, come from the end of Bresson's *Pickpocket* (1959), when Michel speaks them to Jeanne as she visits him in jail. In that case, the donkey might then be Balthazar (himself a Christ surrogate), and so the miracle at issue would be less about the intrusion of the supernatural into the natural than about the possibility of two people coming together.

Godard thus uses a break in the natural order of the world to mark a genuine reconciliation between two individuals: religious concepts are given secular purposes. (He notes, "This extraordinary couple helps us to discover the depths of feelings in a meeting between an ordinary man and an ordinary woman.")[103] Again, there's an ambiguity in the reconciliation, an implication that it is possible only through the intrusion of the supernatural. It's not clear in *Je vous salue, Marie* if reconciliation can be sustained outside this one moment of grace; the point of the film's coda, as I understand it, is to suggest the difficulty of sustaining new forms of relationships. Joseph and Marie leave their moment of grace and fall into a bickering pattern of conventional domestic relationships ("Now what's wrong?" she asks).

If *Nouvelle vague* takes up the structure of the miraculous from *Je vous salue, Marie,* it is displaced from the overtly divine. Rather than the intrusion of the supernatural into the natural, Godard locates the source of miracles in the natural world itself. We see this in the final shot, in the way both the characters and

the camera arise out of the natural world (the ocean, the ground) to assume hitherto impossible perspectives. We see it also in the resurrection of Roger, his rebirth as Richard, staged so that he is seen in a reflection in the pond, as if he came out of it. And we see it finally in the emblematic image of the film, when Roger/Richard finally grasps Elena's hand as it rises up from underneath the water, thereby undoing the pattern of deadly repetition on which the film has operated, and so—as Kierkegaard might put it—finally allowing their love.

To be sure, the location of the miraculous in the natural has its own genealogy—what Northrop Frye, discussing Shakespeare's plays, calls the "green world," spaces that contain the possibility of magical and miraculous transformations.[104] In *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* the green world provides a kind of regulative function that allows the social world of Athens to develop and maintain a certain element of harmony. It's outside the city that Bottom is transformed into an ass, a transformation that results in his adoration by Titania and subsequent return to the performance of *Pyramus and Thisbe.* (In the genre that Cavell labels "comedies of remarriage," scenes of reconciliation are frequently staged in the green world of "Connecticut.")[105] These natural settings provide spaces in which transformations of the self (both internal and external) can take place, eventually allowing the characters to discover their companions (again) as worthwhile partners. In nature, miracles—of life, of art—are possible.

9. FUTURE GENERATIONS

Miracles may not be incompatible with the natural world in *Nouvelle vague,* but tensions are nonetheless present. It's amid these tensions that we come back to the question of history. Part of what Godard does, I take it, is to rediscover the power of nature in relation to the historical present, to use what Adorno describes as the "spell" of first nature: located in the past but lingering in our imaginations. Adorno writes, "Authentic artworks . . . have consistently felt the urge, as if in need of a breath of fresh air, to step outside of themselves. Since identity is not to be their last word, they have sought consolation in first nature."[106] This ambition does not entail the avoidance or eschewal of history. But, rather than showing nature to be framed by historical factors, Godard places them into a dynamic relation; the resources of pure nature are used to draw out and make visible the historical framework of the film.

Some of this work involves a context not explicitly present in the film itself. *Nouvelle vague* was made—conceived, shot, and edited—during the late 1980s, when actually existing socialism was beginning to crumble. However limited, however morally and politically compromised, Eastern Europe nonetheless represented the vestiges of a Marxist ideology put into practice. But the hope of the alternative it represented was waning, something Godard would have recog-

nized. (His references to Solidarity in *Passion* are an early example of this.) We can understand *Nouvelle vague,* then, to be searching for a mode of criticism that can survive the vanishing of political support from the world around it, that can retain the force of the Marxist legacy.

The terms of this project emerge in a speech we hear several times over the course of the film, mostly through the CEO's failed efforts to get it out. His first attempt comes in an early scene at the villa. Godard cuts to a shot of trees by the shores of the lake, the bank rising diagonally from the bottom center of the frame to the middle right; small waves on the lake coming gently into shore are visible through the trees. The leaves tremble in the breeze; the sunlight flickers off the lake. The CEO speaks in voice-over: "We can take as defunct society as we know it. Future ages will recall it only as a charming moment in history." An intertitle appears, "Ein, zwei, drei—die Kunst ist frei" (One, Two, Three—Art Is Free).[107] The CEO continues, "They'll say . . . ," and then is interrupted by a conversation between a journalist and Dorothy Parker. Godard returns to the speech at the end of a later scene in which the young servant is yelled at for not properly serving wine to guests. (She responds by quoting Schiller on the ability to serve someone while hating them—the definition of duty, she notes.) The CEO says, as if picking up from when he was interrupted ten minutes earlier, "They'll say . . ." Godard cuts to a shot of Elena standing at the border of a field of corn (which bisects the frame horizontally), tending to some of the stalks, and the CEO continues: "They'll say, 'It was the time when there were rich and poor.'"—Godard shows a shot of the older servant cleaning the windows of the house—"'Fortresses to take, heights to scale. Treasures well enough guarded to preserve their appeal. Luck was in business.'"

The final iteration of the speech occurs toward the end of the film, just before the climactic scene when Richard decides not to let Elena drown. There is a medium close-up of the gardener, who wonders aloud whether the grass is within or outside him, and, if the latter, what it is without a name. Godard gives us an intertitle, "Your Humble Servant," possibly an answer to the question. We now finally hear the CEO's full speech, from start to finish, but this time spoken by the gardener: "Soon certain social conventions—habitual attitudes, customs, principles—will vanish. We can take as defunct society as we know it. Future ages will recall it only as a charming moment in history. They'll say . . . they'll say: 'It was the time when there were rich and poor, fortresses to take, heights to scale, treasures well enough guarded to preserve their appeal. Luck was in business.'" All this is over shots of nature: the gentle hills rolling down to the lake, the patterns of the water as it swirls by the shore, a rustic house nestled among trees, a window framed against sunlight.

Why does the CEO have trouble getting the speech out? Why is the speech cut off before it's finished? Part of the answer is formal. By repeatedly refusing to allow

the CEO to finish his speech, Godard draws attention to it. He makes the speech noticeable within the overall flow of the film, thereby marking it as significant, something to which we should listen with care. But the gardener has no such problems. "Let me speak!" he demands, shortly before he begins to talk. Perhaps it has to do with his proximity to nature, a relation to the natural world the CEO doesn't possess. But images of nature also accompanied the CEO's earlier attempts to deliver the speech; what is his relation to these images such that they inhibited his speech? To a certain extent, this can be explained by reference to the qualitative differences between the images of nature that accompany the gardener and the ones that accompany the CEO. When the CEO speaks, nature is shown as something cared for, arranged and organized by human activity (Elena trimming the stalks, for example). The shots associated with the gardener, by contrast, show nature apparently outside human interference. And this accords with the way the interplay of word and image positions nature as a counterpoint to historical forms. The images of nature serve as a reminder that something came before the onset of capitalism, that the economic and social order at issue in the film—late twentieth-century life under capitalism—is itself only one stage in a longer history. "Soon certain social conventions . . . will vanish"; "It was the time when there were rich and poor": these refer to historically transitory phenomena, defined against an unchanging natural order that persists across specific societies and relations of production. (Recall Lucretius's argument for the age of the natural world.) If first nature is historically occluded by the onset of modern societies, its appearance here effectively gives a historical framework to second nature: capitalist societies emerged as a specific historical occurrence, and so they will pass away. Nature remains.

The speech also provides another temporal frame, different from this ecological perspective: "Future ages will recall it only as a charming moment in history." The choice of words is curious, suggesting a future nostalgia for the historical present. Why would a society where there were rich and poor, where there were fortresses to take, be charming? Perhaps the future view of the present is from the perspective of a utopia, where the existence of rich and poor is seen as quaint, a charming relic, or a version of the precapitalist ideal that inflects many left-wing utopias imagined under the conditions of modernity. Utopias, though, are not exactly in the future but rather in the future conditional: a time that doesn't precisely reside within history.[108] They reside as well in a static state, removed from the vagaries of historical transformations, and the speech gives a picture of the current society as one that's still open to change (good or bad). "Luck was in business" (Le hasard était de la partie), they say, adapting Mallarmé's poetics of chance to the project of late capitalism. Is the idea that capitalism is governed by luck, its success a matter of contingency (and therefore its dominance possibly reversible)? Could luck be in business for those striving to change society? The

world of 1990 may not be ideal (there are, after all, still rich and poor), but it is not immutable, a situation that—as we learn from the perspective of the future—could easily change.

It's in the world of *Nouvelle vague*'s uncertain future that *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* released one year later, finds itself. At one moment early in the film, Zelten tosses a bouquet of flowers onto a fallen sign for "Karl-Marx-Strasse," remarks, "Happy unbirthday," and then kicks the sign. Later, Caution makes an almost despairing argument that the fall of the Berlin Wall actually represents the triumph of Marx, because it proves that an idea—any idea—that takes root among the masses gains a material force. What *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* does in this situation, including a return to a Marxist tradition, is the subject of the next chapter.

Nouvelle vague has its own project. In it, Godard develops a way to think about the intersection of nature and society that can survive the death of Marxism; the speech of the CEO and the gardener, the way it simultaneously informs and is informed by the images of nature underneath it, is one example of this. It's not just that society is seen as historically transitory, but that a certain image of nature—first *or* second nature—becomes historically defined. By placing these images of nature under the gardener's speech, Godard marks them as belonging to the present society. We might say, for example, that only in a society in which an excess of money and leisure is concentrated in a particular social group does nature tend to be regarded as something entirely separate from the historical world. Only in the midst of a capitalist world does the desire for a return to pristine nature emerge. Godard, in effect, is giving nature a historical index: the presentation of nature as unmarked by human activity belongs to the historical present, to a time that both the CEO and the gardener tell us will fade away in the future. In the absence of Marxism and the attendant possibilities of historical transformation it carried, we can only hope to recognize the interpersonal miracles around us. This is the tenuous promise held out by *Nouvelle vague*'s natural world.

Politics by Other Means

In the previous chapter, I argued that *Soigne ta droite* and *Nouvelle vague* explicitly move away from the treatment of nature in Godard's films of the early 1980s. Against an aesthetic based on the sublime, Godard gives a normative argument in *Soigne ta droite* for a move to the register of the beautiful, the mundane, and the ordinary. With *Nouvelle vague,* Godard uses the trope of the garden to show the natural world as inextricably caught up in the human and the historical; at the same time, he situates the category of the miraculous within the natural world as a way to suggest the possibilities (and limitations) of political and historical transformations. In these two films, nature is at the heart of Godard's reflections on aesthetics, and at the heart of the films themselves, as he returns to an older aesthetic tradition while underscoring nature's passage through the realms of art and history.

Certain moments in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* look like a direct continuation of the treatment of nature in the two previous films. The film opens with a shot of a trolley moving down a city street, followed by a car, as we hear the wail of a siren. After an intertitle, "Solitudes: un état et des variations," Godard cuts to a shot of mist slowly rising from pools of water. The sun barely shines through in the background; a row of trees is at the right edge of the frame. No trace of human habitation appears, a feeling of isolation accentuated by the title preceding the shot. But then we notice something curious. Beneath the row of trees, we can make out a line of cars driving by, their headlights turned on in the dull light. It's nothing like the destructive and death-dealing appearance of cars in the opening of *Nouvelle vague*—or in *Week-end,* for that matter—but it serves to remind us that nature does not exist outside the context of human activity (at least not in Europe).

Allemagne 90 neuf zéro, though, will take this insight further, working to explore the specific histories found within the natural world and the role cinema can play in revealing them. Godard, that is, not only shows how history enters into and is recorded in nature; he also provides the tools by which an audience can learn to read, understand, and (perhaps) act on the basis of the concrete manifestations of nature's historical transformations. As such, historically inscribed nature takes on a central role in Godard's critical cinematic pedagogy at the end of twentieth century. If there is still a sense in which "beauty concerns education and is the highest aim of art,"[1] *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* aims for the aesthetic education of the viewer through an exploration of images of nature in and through film.

1. DARK SATANIC MILLS

Godard's project finds its most thorough articulation in a scene in the middle of the film. In the course of his journey across Germany, Caution comes across several giant machines engaged in a strip-mining operation inside a wide valley. (This was a familiar image following the opening up of East Germany, when a catalogue of environmental devastation suddenly became visible to the West.) The scene that follows contains Godard's most complex and sustained account of the interrelation of nature and history, as he brings the full resources of his cinematic arsenal to bear, liberally deploying references, allusions, and quotations, along with images of nature and industry. Since I'll be returning to this scene throughout the chapter, it's worth having a good sense of how it is put together.

Caution has been in Weimar, visiting Goethe's house with Charlotte Kestner, then returns to Berlin and the ubiquitous rubble that defines the post-Wall life of the city. The transition to the strip-mining scene is foreshadowed by an aural cue; indeed, the transitions in the scene are largely done with sound. Over a shot of a copy of Grimmelhausen's *Adventures of Simplicissimus* (1668, the story of a fool caught up in a war) lying amid the rubble, a faint sound is audible. The sound quickly grows and becomes recognizable as a mechanical roar, which will soon be pegged to the machines. Here, it goes unexplained, as if it were an unknown cause behind the strange image of an early instance of German literature abandoned within contemporary ruins. The sound carries over the cut to the next shot, in which Caution is shown from behind, silhouetted against the tower of a building, then gradually fades out. Godard cuts to a brief sequence that shows Caution inside what looks to be an abandoned church (perhaps the same building we just saw). At the conclusion of the sequence, Caution remarks, "And if we make the loved women into such divinity, it is religion put into practice," at which point Godard cuts to an intertitle, "Finis Germaniae"—the roar begins again—and then to a shot of a woman in a hard hat.[2]

The scene of the strip-mining machines effectively begins with this cut. It's a curious transition, since the film moves between places that have little to do with one another.[3] The woman in a hard hat is shown in a medium close-up, facing us but with her body angled away from the camera. Far below her, we can see a wide, flat valley stretching out into the distance, moving from the bottom left of the frame to the top right; its sides have been artificially flattened into severe diagonals. This is what the strip-mining machines do. One of them can be seen in the shot, located on the valley's floor and eating away at the sides; the woman, presumably, is involved in its operation. After a few seconds, Godard cuts to a new shot, the valley still in view but the camera now located slightly lower down, as if on the top of one of the embankments created by the construction; the artificial nature of the slopes going into the valley is now fully apparent. In the foreground, coming down the hillside on the right and moving out across the floor of the valley, is the shadow of a machine. Three other machines can be seen at various distances within the shot, their sounds audible on the soundtrack. Another cut brings us to a closer shot of one of them, steel girders and a control booth filling the frame. The woman from the earlier shot is still visible but now looks small when framed against the machine. Over this shot, we can hear a voice amplified over a loudspeaker (although the words are indistinct), while music, Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler,* begins to build. The choice of this music is not trivial: Hindemith's symphony concerns the life of the painter Grünewald, an aural reference that foreshadows the painter's importance for the rest of the scene.

First, however, Godard inserts a close-up of part of a page from Kafka's *The Castle.* After several seconds, he then cuts to a shot on the valley floor: rail tracks lead from the bottom right of the frame into the left distance, while, in the middle ground, one of the giant machines sits on the tracks, its conveyor of buckets depositing rubble onto a mound at the right of the frame. Caution enters the shot, walking parallel to the tracks and toward the machine (figure 15). After several more seconds, Godard cuts to an intertitle, "Les dragons," and then explicitly brings Grünewald into the scene. He cuts to a detail of one of the beasts from Grünewald's *Temptation of St. Anthony,* part of the Isenheim altarpiece (1515), then to another intertitle, "De notre vie." In so doing, he links the machines stripping away the sides of the valley to the monsters in Grünewald's painting; the machines count as dragons for us, entities we've elevated beyond mere physical beings.

The central section of the scene now begins with a stunning shot from the top of the valley, an image bathed in an ethereal light that dims the color of the green grass; the sun is shining through fog or mist, and Caution is walking along a plateau by the side of the valley, moving from left to right. The control tower of one of the machines is visible beside him, rising out of the depths in the background; we can see the edge of the plateau above the valley's sides winding its

FIGURE 15. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*

way into the distance. As Caution walks, the camera pans with him until the edge of the plateau is a horizontal line across the frame, bringing into view the giant scoops tearing the earth out of the top of the valley. Their size dwarfs the scale of the shot, an image of frightening destruction. Caution stops and turns to face them. He pauses, standing silently while the machine moves on its path (another is visible on the valley floor, cutting into the opposite side), and eventually exits the frame, leaving the machine to work its way slowly and methodically across the edge. Godard cuts to an intertitle, "Variation 3: Alle Drachen unseres Lebens" (All the Dragons of Our Lives), which reinforces the association of Grünewald's painting and the machines.

The presence of these allusions allows us to read the strip-mining machines in light of an allusion in the previous scene. When Caution went to Weimar and stopped in Goethe's house, *Faust* emerged as an important reference. After a woman's off-screen voice quotes from the Gretchen tragedy, Caution says, evoking the prologue of Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal,* "I am Faust, and I am your double" (Je suis Faust, et je suis ton semblable). There, it seemed as though Caution was declaring his affinity to Faust as an old man grown weary of life. But the strip-mining scene, following quickly on the scene at Goethe's house, suggests

that a different part of *Faust* is at issue: the reclamation of land from the sea at the end of the second part. With the sound of "pick and shovel, clink and strike," Mephistopheles' minions "Drained and walled the ocean bed,/Shrank the sea's entrenched dominions,/To be masters in her stead."[4] I will return to this Faustian resonance later in the chapter; for now, it is sufficient to note that its presence ensures that the scene is understood to be as much about German culture as it is about the landscape, as well as about the way culture, nature, and history go together.

The scene continues with a shot of Caution sitting on a pile of discarded tires (some from cars, others large enough to be from tractors) in a sparse field with a windmill in the distance. He says, in voice-over, "The dragons in our lives are only princesses who are waiting for us to act with beauty and courage" (Les dragons de notre vie ne sont que des princesses qui attendent de nous voir beaux et courageux), an almost exact quotation from Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet*.[5] Caution remains motionless for a few seconds, his breath visible in the cold air, before reaching down to pull his suitcase onto his lap. He opens it, and Godard cuts to the contents of the case; prominently displayed are the torn halves of Tamara de Lempicka's *Young Girl in a Green Dress* (1930), earlier used as a proof of identity in his exchange with Zelten in the hair salon. There, Caution identified the painting as representing his own past. ("But what's become of her?" he asks Zelten.) Godard here inserts an audio clip from one of Constantine's mid-1950s films that made him a French B-movie action star as Lemmy Caution, thereby confirming the painting as having to do with Caution's (and Constantine's) past life.

Another aural cut introduces a new element. We hear the sound of a car trying to start, along with the lighter noise of footsteps, and then Godard cuts to a shot of a man pushing a blue Trabi along a road, moving from the middle-right of the frame toward the lower left.[6] A windmill is behind him in the middle distance, a cluster of low buildings around it; telephone wires run at the top of the frame. The man pushes the car from behind, then, as it starts rolling, runs around to enter the driver's seat in a failed attempt to start it. A man on horseback carrying a lance and wearing armor now enters the frame at the rear of the car and advances along the road. Clearly, we are meant to recognize the horseman as Don Quixote, and thus the man pushing the Trabi must be Sancho Panza. As if the armor and lance weren't enough, the presence of a windmill in the shot constitutes an iconographic homage to the structures with which Quixote is most famously associated.[7]

Caution enters the frame a moment later, walking in from the opposite direction. He asks (in English): "Hey, you, which way is the West?" Sancho answers (in Spanish): "One wonders about the man" (Se pregunta al señor), as if to say that the question makes little sense in such a context. As Sancho goes to push the car again, Caution walks up to Quixote and repeats his question (figure 16). The

FIGURE 16. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*

Trabi is pushed out of the frame (again, it fails to start), and Godard cuts to a medium shot of Quixote. Caution says again, "Hey, you," and Quixote replies (in German), "Perhaps the dragons in our lives are only princesses who are waiting for us to act with beauty and courage," repeating the line from Rilke that Caution quoted earlier.[8] We hear the Trabi finally start up off-screen, and Quixote lowers his lance. Godard cuts to a close-up of Caution's face in profile on the right side of the frame with a windmill out of focus behind him; a combination of the horse's hooves and the car's engine can be heard. Caution says, in voice-over, "All the terrifying things may merely be helpless things who are waiting for us to help them," and then Godard cuts to a shot of the road leading off into the distance, with one of the strip-mining machines rising up from the horizon. Sancho is driving the car slowly down the road, Quixote cantering after it.

Godard now presents a contemporary version of tilting at windmills. After Quixote and Sancho recede into the distance, Godard cuts to a closer shot of a machine looming up from under the horizon, its scoops still taking earth away. The Trabi has apparently broken down again, and Sancho is pushing the car along the grassy plateau toward the machine. The hooves of the horse can be heard, and Quixote gallops into the frame, overtaking the Trabi and rushing toward the

machine with his lance lowered. We don't see the conclusion of this action. In-
stead, a cut takes us to Caution, standing alone on flat ground; the machine is in
the middle distance, angled downward beneath the horizon. Is it wounded? Dy-
ing? Or rising defiantly out of the depths? (Are such zoomorphic descriptions
appropriate?) Standing in the right half of the frame and looking off to the left,
Caution turns to face the machine, gives what looks like a shrug of resignation,
then slowly turns back to the left and walks out of the frame.

A short coda follows. An intertitle appears, "De Profundis Clamavi" (From the
Depths I Cried),[9] over which Caution remarks, "Suddenly, I remembered that it
was Mozart's birthday." Godard cuts to a shot of a desolate area that has been
stripped of all vegetation, electrical poles and dirt roads roughly cut into a hill-
side. A sign says that Vienna is four hundred kilometers to the right, and two dogs
run through the frame in that direction. Music starts up again, a tentative sound,
and Godard cuts to a shot of Caution walking away through a field, a windmill
visible in the background. As he moves through a flock of sheep, several dogs herd
them, and music begins to swell. Godard concludes with a series of intertitles:
"Chemins / qui ne mènent / nulle part" (Roads / That Lead / Nowhere).[10]

2. ANY SPACE WHATEVER

The strip-mining scene is in many ways representative of Godard's late work as a
whole. It combines striking visual power, an overwhelming sense of loneliness and
solitude, and an apparently endless proliferation of references to European culture
(both high and low). It's also representative of the difficulty faced in getting a
handle on this work, as it generates a certain amount of confusion for a viewer.
Where are we? What's going on? How do we make sense of all these fragments?
How do images and texts interact? There is a temptation to remain at this level, to
think, as Morrey puts it, that the scene is exemplary of Godard's "resistance . . . to
producing fixed and easily intelligible images of Germany past and present . . . a
deep sense of suspicion at the kind of end-of-history discourse that was gathering
around the capitalist triumph."[11] But it is a mistake to stay there. The confusion and
ambiguity are by no means incidental to the work of the scene, but there are in fact
cues that give us a good indication of how we should think about it.

One of the scene's major puzzles concerns the references it employs. It's a fa-
miliar problem in late Godard: characters from other texts appear in the midst of
his films, and viewers are asked to simultaneously identify them and grasp their
purpose for the scene into which they are placed. Often, when Godard places a
character into his films, it's with overt reference to that character's original
source. Charlotte Kestner is an example of this in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro:* her
entrance is explicitly announced ("Yesterday, I was Dora; but today I'm Lotte
Kestner"), and she is wearing period clothing that ties her to the novel(s) from

which she is taken. Emily Brontë and Saint-Just in *Week-end* are earlier examples. But the textual referent of Quixote and Sancho is less stable. While Sancho speaks Spanish, Quixote speaks German; while Quixote rides a horse and is dressed in armor, Sancho drives an East German car and is dressed accordingly. We might say, then, that Sancho is modern but based in his country of origin, while Quixote remains in the past but has become German.

The fact that it is Quixote and Sancho who undergo these transformations should not surprise us. In addition to the normal kinds of change that occurs in the poetic practices of allusion, revision, and echoing, dislocations are central to the figure of Quixote. He was already out of place and time when he appeared in Cervantes's novel, his adventures the result of fantasies caused by out-of-date books. Moreover, as Nabokov notes, the very geography of Cervantes's novel makes little sense: "The author avoids descriptions that would be particular and might be verified. It is quite impossible to follow these rambles in central Spain across four or six provinces." Nabokov argues that the way Quixote and Sancho remain unfixed in space and time within Cervantes's novel is what has allowed their extraordinary afterlife in other literary and artistic environments: "Launched together in the world, all the highways are theirs."[12] Confusion is endemic not only to the characters but to their afterlife as well.

Jeffrey Skoller has argued that similar geographic and historical discontinuities are central to *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* These discontinuities, he claims, illustrate Godard's deep indebtedness to a strand of neorealism interested in anonymous spaces and empty times, indicated by the explicit citation of Rossellini's *Germany Year Zero:* "Godard resurrects Lemmy Caution as a vehicle for exploration just as Rossellini created Edmund, a German youth who wanders through the bombed-out rubble of a defeated Berlin. In both films, the narratives are simple, schematic, and at times nonexistent. Both . . . show Berlin as a deterritorialized world of signifiers of events that have happened in the place through which the wanderer has just passed."[13] The strip-mining scene appears to illustrate this feature; it shows a world out of joint, one that no longer has its traditional, historically defined meanings.

Skoller's reading is based in part on a narrative shift in the film. Caution has just come from East Berlin and Weimar, where he visited scenes of German history and culture. (Despite Skoller's insistence to the contrary, Godard does show a number of recognizable locations replete with historical meaning.) Now Caution is alone in the middle of a field, located somewhere in Germany (approximately four hundred kilometers from Vienna, as we know) and surrounded by piles of historical detritus: the stack of tires, the broken-down Trabi, the amalgam of windmills and modern machinery, and so forth. Godard began the transition from Weimar to the scene of the strip-mining machines with the title "Finis Germaniae," suggesting a situation after the end of the nation—after the end, that is, of a history

within which it was possible to locate ourselves. The closing titles, "Roads / That Lead / Nowhere," emphasize a similar sentiment. Caution is in no place in particular, a location not in sync with contemporary political and historical events: the scene contains a wasteland populated by the remnants of history.

To buttress this reading, Skoller draws on Deleuze's argument that films made immediately after World War II saw an increasing evacuation of narrative content from spaces—their potential for housing action—in favor of the exploration of (largely anonymous) physical places. Deleuze writes, "Why is the Second World War taken as a break? The fact is that, in Europe, the post-war period has greatly increased the situations which we no longer know how to react to, in spaces we no longer know how to describe. These were 'any spaces whatever', deserted but inhabited, disused warehouses, waste ground, cities in the course of demolition or reconstruction."[14] Deleuze is generally taken to mean that postwar cinema, especially neorealism, arose in a world whose meaning was no longer given, could no longer be taken for granted. But there is another implication as well: films were suddenly required to create meaning anew, to build the foundation of a new world from the ashes of the old.[15] In that case, the project of a postwar cinema engaged with contemporary concerns was to reveal or create—which, depends on the film—the significance of social and geographic spaces.

This line of thought helps us define the project of the strip-mining scene. While the confusion the scene generates is primarily caused by the deployment of a series of references amid seemingly anonymous spaces, its natural landscapes compensate for this by articulating a more precise orientation. Although these landscapes may look like they're out of time and place—filled with ambiguous structures and rubble, instances of Deleuze's "any-place-whatevers"—Godard is careful to give them historical markers. We may not recognize them as we do the Brandenburg Gate or the homes of famous artists (Goethe, Schiller, Lizst) elsewhere in the film. But that doesn't mean the spaces are simply indeterminate: Godard shows landscapes that are historically specific and specifiable.

Recall that, in *Soigne ta droite* and *Nouvelle vague,* Godard was interested in presenting the natural world as framed and permeated by human and historical concerns. We might be tempted to see the strip-mining machines in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* in a similar fashion. They work to shape the natural landscape according to human demands, an emblem of Godard's interest in working against a "pure" or "pristine" nature. But an important change has taken place: the nature that's being altered is not first but second nature. The plains above the valley are unnaturally flat, and the shape of the valley itself is artificially geometrical (a perfect trapezoid) even before is it cut into. Godard shows a landscape that has *already* been worked over by the process of industrialization.

Godard is here taking advantage of a basic fact about the German landscape: little about it is authentically "natural." David Blackbourn, for example, argues

that the very concept of first nature as applied to the German landscape is inherently misleading: "There was no true wilderness in Germany; there were only historical landscapes that had been more or less intensively used by humans for their own changing purposes."[16] The landscapes we now read as "natural" are only one moment in a longer history of transformations. Take the image of carefully ordered fields and windmills. What looks like an image of simple human habitation in a natural setting, and what has at times been treated as the "natural" look of the German countryside, is in fact the result of a specific historical transformation of a prior landscape defined by swamps and bogs.[17] And this dark, swampy world in turn is another image of the "natural state" of Germany, following Tacitus's description: "The land may vary a certain amount in its appearance, but in general it either bristles with forests or festers with marshes" (a description that ignored work being done by the Romans).[18] But this world no longer exists; it's no longer even perceived to have existed. In the late eighteenth century, a massive project began that transformed the swamps and bogs into a habitat fit for agricultural exploitation. The older landscape receded into the past. As W. G. Sebald puts it, writing about Grünewald and his time, "Peer ahead sharply, / there you see in the graying of nightfall / the distant windmills turn. / The forest recedes, truly, / so far that one cannot tell / where it once lay."[19] First nature is now only a memory, something out of time.[20]

In the strip-mining scene, Godard provides a range of landscapes that show various stages of cultivation, but he leaves out the primordial German landscape, the landscape before it was marked by human activity. Godard certainly knows of this world: the second shot of the film contains swamps and bogs, ponds amid dark clumps of grass and earth, and steam rising from the water. So his decision to avoid such images in the strip-mining scene suggests that his interest is in landscapes insofar as they emerge out of human activity. (Indeed, he is already moving away from primordial nature in that early shot: next to the swamp are cars driving by.)

Godard, then, is not setting out a two-term comparison between first and second nature but rather showing the transformations that have taken place within second nature itself. The final shot of the strip-mining scene, where Caution walks through the flock of sheep, is an image of the world that the fields and windmills will replace. Blackbourn notes that the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century witnessed a transition to farming, where "land went under the plough and sheep were relegated to the margins."[21] Eventually, this process cleared the way for an agricultural economy, an ideal we find in Goethe's description of Faust's reclamation project: "Lush fall then to man and cattle yields / Swift crops and comforts from the maiden fields, / New homesteads near the trusty buttress-face / Walled by a bold and horny-handed race. . . . Such teeming would I see upon this land, / On acres free among free people stand."[22] The work of the strip-mining machines on the contemporary German landscape

thus takes place within a particular historical framework. When Godard shows landscapes from earlier times, they're placed under the sign of the transformations taking place in the present. The implication is not only that these older landscapes are the result of human activity but that they will themselves be superseded; indeed, they already have been. The scene provides an archaeology of the German landscape at the end of the twentieth century, attuned at once to the history of nature and to the history of our encounters with the forces that transform the natural world.

This historical framework contains one more element: the presence of the windmills, archetypal nature-transforming machines that turn wind into power. Inevitably, their meaning is inflected here by the figure of Quixote. Windmills were a new technology in the landscape of early seventeenth-century Spain—Nabokov nicely calls them a "new-fangled contraption"[23]—and Quixote's comical and absurd attack can be understood in part as a response to a technological phenomenon that is strange and terrifying. In that case, the scene might suggest that the strip-mining machines have the status for us that the windmills had for Quixote. What kind of things they are, or what purpose they have, is not entirely obvious, and the appropriate response to them is by no means evident. Will they, too, pass away?

From these discussions, we can see the problem with Skoller's reading of the scene. He moves too easily into the register of allegory, treating the activity of the strip-mining machines as "historical practice itself. [Each machine] tears away stratified layers of earth, each one a different period of time, keeping the substratum that is of value to the needs of the historian and discarding the detritus that seems insignificant."[24] Certainly, Skoller is right about the way the machines uncover older historical layers and also about the way they stand in for the work of the film itself. But in stressing this reflexive component, he misses the actual work they do. The machines are brutally literal entities, their activity emphatically physical. Rather than simply residing in an abstract domain of cinematic reflexivity, Godard shows the strip-mining machines at work changing the valley again into something new.

3. POLITICAL LANDSCAPES

To a certain extent, Godard's effort to interweave history with the changing status of the natural landscape fits a broader cinematic tendency of the time. Rosalind Galt has argued that a number of European films from the late 1980s and early 1990s—such as *Mediterraneo* (Gabriele Salvatores, 1991), *Underground* (Emir Kusterica, 1995), and *Zentropa* (Lars von Trier, 1991)—privilege natural landscapes in their efforts to think through a national past. At a time of political uncertainty, namely, the realignment of power in Europe in the aftermath of the

Soviet Union, landscapes came to be directly associated with the political history of a nation. They were treated as "nationally charged spaces," the location of the history of the particular nation and national tradition.[25]

Galt's account of these films draws on what Martin Warnke describes as a "political landscape." The idea is that, if everything we see in the natural world is in fact made, behind this making can be found a reason or rationale: "Even the simplest topographical features are the results of political decisions."[26] By remaking landscapes, ruling political groups mark the land as their own, both literally (the drawing of territorial lines) and symbolically (the creation of national iconographies in nature). They use nature to ground claims to political legitimacy on a natural order, appealing to a kind of "moral authority" in nature.[27] Such appeals help to naturalize the political state, making it a "second nature."

Allemagne 90 neuf zéro is clearly indebted to this line of thinking, an affinity Godard elsewhere indicates by his fondness for saying that the French word for country *(pays)* is contained within the word for landscape *(paysage),* linking nature and nation in a way that follows Warnke's arguments.[28] Indeed, the content of the strip-mining scene shows how a national history plays out across a series of natural landscapes. But Godard's film has important differences from Warnke's position. A nation, after all, contains many different histories, many different myths. And rather than selecting one as a paradigmatic account, *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* suggests that each history implies a different kind of landscape. Godard works to provide different models for conceiving the interactions between nature and history and for understanding the possible forms of intertwinement between them.

The first model concerns the presence of history within the landscape. When Caution travels to Weimar with Charlotte Kestner, he crosses a bridge that takes him to Goethe's house, and also to an earlier century. The scene starts with roadsides without vegetation, fields in the middle distance, and houses in the background, nestled back against a hill. In a second shot, however, the natural imagery follows the temporal shift from the twentieth to the eighteenth century. The roadsides are now covered with grass, and traces of human habitation are no longer readily visible in the landscape. Godard seems to be giving the appearance of nature a historical index—this is the natural world of the eighteenth century—even while indications of more recent human activity are present. Stapled to a tree to the right of a bridge, for example, we can see a yellow diamond sign, placed there to tell passersby that they can walk across the bridge. It's a reminder (as happens throughout *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*) that the film is firmly set in the late twentieth century, even if it shows an earlier period in history; we have access to that older history only through the framework of the present.

A second model of landscape might be called "political" in Warnke's sense, because it reveals the way nature is marked by explicitly political forces. For example, during one of the scenes in which Zelten and his companion discuss

German history and politics, an off-screen voice exclaims, "There is only one Germany!" and then, "Oh, Germany!" Caution begins to recite the first stanza of one of the most famous *Volkslieder,* or folk songs: "Morgenrot, Morgenrot" (Dawn's light, dawn's light).[29] There is a cut to a shot of Caution walking along the icy surface of the shores of a pond surrounded by trees, the sun's light glowing in the background. It's an image that evokes the opening words of the song and with it a sense of nostalgia for a landscape that may never have existed—an idealized creation of the very *Volkslieder* that purport to celebrate it. The shot shows not just the light of dawn, a sunrise over a wooded sanctuary, but also the landscape of the *Volk* itself, an image of what it means to be a "German" landscape. The political resonance is starkly nationalist and reactionary: "Morgenrot, Morgenrot" was a conservative cavalry song in the early part of the nineteenth century and continued to be adopted by conservative movements into the twentieth century.[30] Godard further emphasizes the political violence latent within this landscape by inserting, immediately after the shot, a clip from Eisenstein's *Alexander Nevsky* (1939), a film that explicitly deals with a tradition of German nationalism and its militaristic ambitions, made at a time when those ambitions seemed all too real.[31]

A third model of landscape in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* is better described as "cultural." In a scene toward the end of the film, Caution approaches the border between East and West on the outskirts of Berlin. As he walks through a landscape replete with rubble and derelict buildings, he asks, "I always wondered whether, when one arrived in the darkness, there would still be music," and Zelten, stepping into the frame, responds, "Yes, Mr. Caution. There is music of darkness" (Il y a la musique des ténèbres).[32] They wind their way through the rubble toward the background. As they do so, a Bach chorale is heard, and Godard cuts to a chorus standing on a floor of a ruined house. The singing continues, and there is a cut to Caution and Zelten walking alongside the Berlin Wall while two young people run past them. An intertitle reads, "Là où c'était, je serai" (Where It Was, There I Shall Be), Freud's famous description of the goal of analysis: to put the self in charge of the unconscious. The scene briefly returns to the singers before going back to the Wall, where Caution and Zelten step around and over the prone bodies of the two people who ran past them earlier.

This kind of landscape involves cultural elements in two ways. First, there is the role of cultural phenomena in drawing out the national history that determines the appearance of the landscape. Not all of national history is war, violence, and political action: cultural artifacts as well form part of the detritus of society, marking the history of a landscape. Second, I mean to invoke Adorno's idea of a "cultural landscape" to describe the way historical creations take on the aura of "nature" in appropriate settings. In the contemporary world, Adorno argues, the surface appearance of the natural landscape bears the traces of the historical processes that have marked it.[33]

The sequence by the Berlin Wall combines both definitions of a cultural landscape: it concerns cultural artifacts as well as a general integration of nature and history. The dual valence works itself out in the subsequent shots, which are organized around a kind of contrapuntal recital of Brecht's 1938 poem "In Dark Times." The recitation is divided between people lying on the ground chanting lines in German and a conversation between Caution and Zelten. Zelten says, "They will speak of the epoch when the Democratic Republic crushed the poor"—an addition to the poem that locates it in the contemporary world—and then he begins to quote: "They won't say: when the walnut trees shook in the wind / But: when the house-painter [Hitler] crushed the workers / They won't say: when the child skimmed a flat stone across the rapids."[34] At this point, the music that's been audible during the scene ends on an "Allelujah" and a close-up of a singer. "In Dark Times" then continues, taking up the way a focus on great events goes hand in hand with a lack of care for more mundane activities. The natural landscape—here figured in the verbal image of the child skipping stones, later in Caution's longing for a flower in winter—is made to stand for these everyday activities. "Why were their poets silent?" one of the people lying on the ground demands. But then Caution, looking down at him, remarks, "In my opinion, Count [Zelten], one cannot stage Brecht like that," a line a double edge. Caution appears to be saying that the people on the ground no longer understand how to stage Brecht, no longer know how to use his theater as an effective form of political analysis, protest, and organizing. (Is Zelten's introductory line too perfunctory, too glib a translation of the past into the present?) At the same time, it's difficult not to hear Caution's statement as a judgment on the scene as put together by Godard: *this film* is no way to stage Brecht. Brecht's theater involved fragments, juxtapositions, alienation effects, and these are still there. But it also had to do with political goals. Late in his life, Brecht became associated with East Germany and the ideals it represented; with the collapse of the Soviet Union, these ends appear to be gone. To say, "One cannot stage Brecht like that," is in effect to say, "One cannot stage Brecht anymore."

Yet Brecht is still with us. Godard shows the remnants of his formal techniques as part of the of cultural detritus of Germany, part of the landscape itself: Bach chorales next to variations of Brechtian drama next to quotations from German romanticism, all staged alongside the Berlin Wall. Brecht is now as much a part of the German landscape at the end of the twentieth century as the older cultural products are; the question is what to do with this history lying around us.

4. *UNE HISTOIRE D'EAU*

In some ways, the very idea of landscape tends to gravitate toward a historicist reading: landscapes are places people inhabit, make things their own, and so

mark with the traces of a particular historical moment.[35] But not everything that is natural in the film is organized into landscapes, nor do its landscapes necessarily exhibit their historical mediations. Although this may suggest something like the project of *Nouvelle vague, Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* does not look to nature for resources from outside the historical world that can be used to transform it radically. Images may not carry traces of human history on the surface, but the film places them into a productive tension with historical concerns. How it does this entails new cinematic methods and techniques; in the course of developing these, Godard expands the range and significance of the idea of a cultural landscape.

Following the pattern of many of Godard's films since the early 1980s, waves are one of the central motifs used to work with and on the idea of nature. In *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* they appear in the midst of scenes explicitly concerned with historical topics but often seem to function as a contrast to that history. The first appearance of waves in the film, for example, comes in the midst of a sequence dealing with the terrors of the Nazi regime, not only the annihilation of European Jewry but also the assassination of revolutionaries (respectively, the concerns of West and East). As the sounds of war—planes, radio announcements, and gunfire—are heard on the soundtrack, Godard inserts a clip from *The Fall of Berlin* (Mikhail Chiaureli, 1949). We see Hitler and Eva Braun celebrating their marriage, followed by a plane crashing into a bridge in Berlin. The image flares and explodes into flames, the screen goes white, and then Godard cuts to a shot of rocks in the ocean with gulls flying overhead; waves move gently from left to right, rolling the surface of the water slightly, and melancholy string music is heard. The image suggests an idea of escape or detachment, a space outside the trauma of history. (Godard drew on this idea in the film's previous sequence, the barroom scene discussed in chapter 1.)

The second shot of waves, which occurs shortly afterward, initially seems to do something similar. It follows a scene in which a Soviet sailor bids good-bye to his lover, a violist rehearsing Bach (and then Shostakovich).[36] Their conversation takes place through a window adjacent to a shipyard: tankers and equipment can be seen in the background. Caution enters the frame, listens to their conversation, then follows the sailor off to ask him, "Which way to the West?" The sailor responds, in Russian, "I don't understand, Comrade." The two walk away, moving through an industrial shipping area as a freight train advances slowly toward the camera. Godard then returns to the shot of the water from the earlier sequence. In voice-over, Caution says, "Good-bye, space of spaces" (Adieu, espace des espaces), and Godard cuts to a shot of him at the bottom of a staircase. Light blue rails follow the stairs that climb into the background, creating a rough frame around Caution. He continues, still in voice-over, "For the last time my eye sees your living grace stretch out and your fine pride spread out [before you]" (Pour la dernière fois mon oeil voit s'étirer ta vive grâce et s'étaler ton bel orgueil).

In the middle of this line, an intertitle, "Variation 4, a Russian Smile," appears, followed by two nighttime shots of a large cargo ship. The first is taken at a distance that allows us to see goods being loaded onto it by a large crane; the second is close enough that the hammer and sickle of the Soviet flag are clearly visible on its smokestack.

This is a deceptively simple sequence. Given the juxtaposition of Caution's words and the shot of the waves, we might think that he was trying to find solace in nature, the waves signifying a respite from the pain he witnesses: a personal tragedy caused by international events. Natural cycles do not concern themselves with finite history: no matter what happens in human history, no matter what the atrocities, the waves will continue their course. A different reading, however, emerges with the intertitle and the shots of the ship, as we're reminded of the larger history around these private stories, the world that the shot of waves seems to displace, if not deny. In that case, when Caution bids good-bye to the waves, to the "space of spaces," we can understand him as acknowledging the necessity of his own return to history, the impossibility of escaping it. Godard would be suggesting that Caution's time in East Germany was outside the flow of human history and that his return to the West constitutes a movement back into that world.

Still, that's not quite sufficient. The presence of the shipyard means that we see waves not just as natural entities but also as involved with the shipping industry, a medium of transportation within human economic activity. The shipyard further carries with it a specific political reference: the Solidarity movement that started in the shipyards of Gdansk. The only trade union outside the Communist Party in Poland, Solidarity served as one of the early rallying cries for independence from within the Soviet control of East Europe (and is a reference for Godard as early as *Passion*). This political resonance, once articulated and felt, gives these images of water a more symbolic, and at the same time a more specific, meaning.

Immediately after the shots of the ship, Godard inserts a clip showing large waves rushing swiftly from left to right, dominating the image. The waves are large and threatening, tossing ships on the ocean. But their direction is crucial. In his previous films, Godard generally showed waves moving toward the camera, an image of endless repetition (one wave after another); here the waves move sideways, more like a definite activity. The image suggests that the movement of history is "sweeping away" the old order, a reading confirmed by a recorded radio broadcast we now hear: "There is a whisper from every continent rising up against the Soviet Union." Perhaps, then, Caution's remark, "Good-bye, space of spaces," is not just about the waves standing in for a place outside history. The waves also represent the movement of history itself: Russia is leaving, and so change is coming to (East) Germany.

As the sequence winds down, Godard introduces references to the Soviet Union of the 1920s and 1930s. He begins with a slowed-down and stuttered clip

from *We Are from Kronstadt* (Efim Dzigan, 1936), showing sailors with rifles running across an open field from left to right. The film depicts the Russian civil war immediately after the revolution: in 1920, in the aftermath of their victory over the Whites, the Red Army swept into Poland (a wave of soldiers?) almost capturing Warsaw before being driven back to the boundaries that would persist until another invasion in World War II. The effect of this clip is to establish a connection between the changes of 1989 and the upheavals in the early part of the twentieth century. One way to understand the comparison is that such transformations, while drastic, are nevertheless temporary: the end of the Soviet Empire shows that the occupation of Eastern Europe, despite appearances at the time, was not a permanent state of affairs and is being replaced by something else. (Call it a new wave.) Alternately, the terms of comparison could have more to do with sequence: an initial change (1917, and then the failed invasion of Poland) is followed by a more enduring one (1945). In that case, we will be waiting for a further solidification of the changes that 1989 brought about. But there is still another complication. We might expect the sailors and the waves to move in opposite directions. In the context of the sequence, after all, they represent opposing historical and political forces: the creation of the Soviet Union and its dissolution. In fact, they move in the same direction, left to right: Is the connection between 1917 and 1989 deeper than the initial comparison suggested it was? Recall that, earlier in the film, Caution claimed that the fall of the Berlin Wall represented "the triumph of Marx," because it showed how an idea, once it penetrates the masses, gains material force. Are the two revolutionary events, then, explicable by similar terms and analyses? Does 1989 amount to a continuation of the 1917 revolution rather than a break with it?

Finally, we can see the sequence in a darker aspect. If the audio recording is from the Nazi period, which seems to be the case, it could function here as an early prediction of the fall of the Soviet Union. In that case, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and its political aftermath throughout Eastern Europe would be the realization not so much of democracy as the dreams of the Nazis themselves. (Such a reading would place the film in close proximity to Hans-Jürgen Syberberg's *Hitler—ein Film aus Deutschland* [*Hitler: A Film from Germany,* 1978].)

I'm not sure there's a clear resolution here, or that there has to be one. What matters is that the meaning of the waves not only changes but is changed by the various political arguments present within the sequence. Godard takes an image of nature that apparently resides outside history and then, by placing it into the context of explicitly historical events, uses it to think through and understand the very history from which it appears to be disconnected. In the context of national and international history, the waves become an analytic tool for shedding light on that history, helping us understand events in their historical contexts. If at the end they mark the sweeping away of the Soviet order, earlier they showed the power of

that regime. Godard might be saying that revolutionary events can be singular and at the same time repetitive: communism was a wave, but now it's been swept away; in the future, another wave, too, will come to change the current order.

Behind all this is a question of method. In the scene by the shipyard, the waves are brought into history by virtue of their surrounding context. They are still, in a sense, just waves: their historical meaning is contingent on their position within the film, on the relationship the film establishes with other features. These moments rely on a familiar use of cinematic montage: it creates a context of meaning, of coherence, that allows for disparate elements to be brought into contact with one another. (In Vertov's classic statement, "You're walking down a Chicago street today in 1923, but I make you greet Comrade Volodarsky, walking down a Petrograd street in 1918, and he returns your greeting.")[37] The waves have meaning because the film places them into a context that allows us to read this meaning into them.

A similar interrelation of nature and history can be found in a sequence midway through Alexander Kluge's *Die Patriotin* (1979). One of Kluge's concerns there is the strange cultural imperative to return to normal after World War II: he tells the story of a man kept in a Russian POW camp until 1954 and then asked to pick up his life from 1939 with a wife and child he barely knows. In between scenes of their life, Kluge inserts various reflections on postwar Germany. One sequence begins with a shot through the bare branches of a bush, the sun low on the horizon and shining directly into the camera lens; the skyline of a small town is visible in silhouette at the bottom of the frame. The bush trembles in the breeze for a few seconds, and a voice-over begins: "This bush stands outside Kaliningrad"—cut to a closer shot of the bush—"in the Soviet Union, forty-five kilometers from the Polish border." After a pause of several seconds, Kluge cuts to a closer view of the skyline of the town: "Earlier this area was called Königsburg. That doesn't concern the bush." The presence of the bush next to the town might imply that it has been an observer to the city's complex and changing connection to German and Russian history, a silent witness of sorts. Or, we might say that the bush is indifferent to the world around it, to the vicissitudes of human conflict. Either way, the history with which it is associated emerges only because of what the voice-over tells us and the context into which the film places it.[38]

In these examples, both Godard and Kluge see film as working to create a historical context for an apparently indifferent natural world. It's not that the waves or the bush are wholly resistant to history, but they have no historical meaning of their own. ("Be nature as it is! What do I care?" says Goethe's Mephistopheles.)[39] It is only the work of the film, with its formal capacities, that establishes the variety of these connections.

Unlike Kluge, however, Godard also makes a stronger argument about the historical status and function of nature. This happens in an early scene, where

Zelten and his partner sit in a study reading Hegel. Picking up a German volume, the woman translates what she reads into French (while Zelten types it out): "History is beyond good and evil, and the things of ordinary life." As she finishes the sentence, Godard cuts to a shot of a tree standing alone in a green field (figure 17). The tree is in the center of the frame, its branches, devoid of leaves, arch to the right and left. In the background, a forest stretches into the distance. Discordant piano music, echoing a theme played earlier in the scene, can be heard, and the woman continues (now in voice-over): "World history is not the place for happiness. Periods of happiness are the empty pages in history."[40] The image of the tree seems to illustrate this point, its bare branches an emblem of the ravages of history. And yet it also stands apart as an image of respite from clips of war we saw earlier in the film, before the translation of Hegel began. Nothing happens here; it's just a tree in winter, a blank page in the book of history—perhaps a place where happiness and the pleasures of ordinary life can be found.

History quickly intrudes. As the woman utters the final sentence in the quotation, right before "the empty pages in history," Godard cuts to a black-and-white film clip, overexposed almost to the point of illegibility. A figure on the left of the screen is wearing a uniform and looks to be in a position of authority (he appears

to carry a whip); two prisoners, vertical stripes on their clothing furnishing the recognizable iconography, are at the bottom right of the screen, pushing a cart. These are images of war and suffering, which Godard emphasizes in the manipulation of the image: the violence done to the clip by the overexposure mirrors the violence being done to the persons shown in it.

At this point, it looks as though Godard is drawing an opposition between the tree and the discourse about history. An emblem of natural respite is contrasted with the violent history of the twentieth century, while the prisoners appear to be subject to what Hegel calls the "slaughter-bench" of history. But the opposition soon breaks down. Godard cuts back to the study, where we see the woman pulling a book off a shelf and then replacing it. It's called *Historischer Führer*—Godard makes sure we see the title—a reference to the time in the twentieth century that prevented so much happiness. Melodious string music rises, and the narrator's voice returns: "Isn't the narrator in an impossible situation, more difficult and solitary now than before?" On the last phrase, there is a cut to a video image of a woman in a military uniform in medium close-up, standing in front of a barbed wire fence that looms over her head. The clip is from Andrzej Munk's *Pasazerka* (*Passenger,* 1963), a film about memory and guilt after the Holocaust. The woman in uniform is a guard at Auschwitz, and Munk's narrative proceeds through flashbacks as she wonders whether a woman she sees in 1960 is in fact a prisoner from the camp.[41] Godard now shows an intertitle, "Historie de la solitude," and the narrator continues: "Yes, I believe so. But it is necessary for him to be there, absent and present, oscillating between two uncertain truths: that of the document and that of fiction." The juxtaposition suggests that Munk's film is as reliable a guide to history as the nonfiction book about Hitler is. (The idea that we can best understand history through film, including fiction films, is familiar to Godard's late work.) In the middle of this voice-over, Godard inserts a crucial shot: a road sign that indicates the way to Buchenwald (just outside Weimar). From there, he cuts to a shot of a woman (who will turn out to be Dora/Charlotte Kestner) staging an escape from a concentration camp, then to Caution looking through souvenirs of the Berlin Wall being sold on the street.

It's with the sign to Buchenwald that the tenor of the scene radically changes. One of the important facts about that camp was that it was built around the oak tree under which Goethe used to sit (also noted by Resnais in *Nuit et brouillard*). Godard does not show Goethe's oak, but clearly we are meant to draw the connection (he confirms this in a letter to a critic).[42] Godard's thinking follows a familiar path: the cultural tradition that Goethe embodied was unable to prevent the Holocaust; at worst, it may have colluded with Nazism.[43] The introduction of Buchenwald means that we can no longer read the tree as standing in for a "blank page" in history. Nature does not mark an escape from history or suffering, an "outside," as it were; it is fully part of the destruction and genocide in the twentieth century.

It's not that Godard is eschewing a contextually driven approach to filmic signification here, avoiding the terms and history of montage. Rather, he is trying to negotiate a fine line between history as merely contingent to the natural world and history as inhering in it.[44] On its own, the tree does not signify the history of Goethe and Buchenwald: it's not the same tree; the history is not immanent. What matters has to do with the way natural objects interact with the historical events placed alongside them. Godard's waves and Kluge's bush were emphatically outside history, playing no discernible part in the events happening around them. The tree, by contrast, is located in the same world as the camps—occupying the same space, literally and conceptually, as the historical events taking place around it—and so refuses any full ontological separation between nature and history.

The scene with the tree marks Godard's full version of a cultural landscape. Events next to each other in the film are compared and contrasted, used analytically. But they are also used in other ways. Hegel's philosophy of history, Goethe's tree, the camp at Buchenwald, and Munk's film are brought together in such a way that they gain an intrinsic (perhaps even a necessary) connection. This is what the world, at least in and through (this) film, is like. (In the terms I will develop in chapter 5, what Godard does here involves projection: rather than presenting a sequential arrangement that suggests relationships among hitherto unrelated things, the film *identifies* them in a way that makes them part of the same world.) The references are related to, though not the same as, a more familiar way of clustering associations around a single object, as when, at the end of the strip-mining scene, Caution remarks, "Suddenly, I remembered it was Mozart's birthday." Mozart's birthday is January 27, also the date of the liberation of Auschwitz by the Red Army and the German day of national remembrance for all victims of the Nazis.[45] In the scene with the tree, by contrast, Godard lines up a series of references, using their various features to inflect and define the other terms. He binds together the scattered fragments of a landscape, whether in history or in the film, and makes them into a coherent and wholly present world.

5. ALL FEAR HAS DEPARTED FROM HIM

I said at the outset of this chapter that *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* is concerned not only with understanding the presence of history in nature but also with whether (and to what extent) there are opportunities for acting on the basis of that understanding. It's in the scene of the strip-mining machines that Godard provides a way of thinking about this latter topic. The scene poses a problem. It shows the world to be dominated by the giant machines, entities Godard describes as "the dragons in our lives." They threaten us with a power capable of transforming the physical world itself, a power against which we appear to be helpless. At the same time, the very terms of this problem offer hope. If the machines are dragons,

we should find it possible to defeat them—this is, after all, what is supposed to happen to dragons—or at least to transform them into something better. That possibility is also explored by the scene, functioning in this way as a kind of fairy tale.[46]

The strip-mining scene works by simultaneously telling two dense and complex stories. One happens in the foreground: in the encounters Caution has with people and things, in the references to literary texts that appear in voice-over and intertitles, and in the images that break into the flow of the scene. Godard uses the alignment of references, and the affinities among them, to tell a story of failed action. The second story, which is harder to see, occurs in the background of the shots, in the German landscape and the various historical transformations it has undergone. This is where some hope may reside.

The first story largely emphasizes the difficulties of the present situation, as Godard constructs a loose parable out of allusions to works from Western culture: Grünewald's *Temptation of St. Anthony* (and, implicitly, Flaubert's novel about the same subject), Cervantes's *Don Quixote,* Kafka's *The Castle,* Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet,* and Eddie Constantine's films. The components of this parable are linked by Caution's movements. As he wanders through various spaces around the machines, he becomes a witness to—that is, he does not participate in but observes—the story that unfolds. There is also a thematic affinity among the references. Each work Godard cites involves a moment when the central character is faced with a situation that appears to overwhelm him, and then strives to dismantle it. Through these two forms of organization, Godard presents several tactics for engaging with or attacking the machines, tactics that meet with varying degrees (and kinds) of success.

The first reference is a close-up of a portion of a page from Kafka's *The Castle.* Because this reference comes so early in the sequence, it is crucial in defining the tone. Soon we're going to get a series of references that locate the machines in the context of myths, monsters, delusions, and religious beliefs. All the more important, then, is Godard's use of Kafka at the outset to connect this aspect of the machines to a secular, bureaucratized, and administered world. In the novel, K. is confronted by and forced to respond to a series of decisions about his activities that have been made in places he cannot see. On the analogy Godard draws, this is a dismal picture of our current historical situation: machines with the power to reshape our physical world are operating according to dictates that are out of apprehension.[47]

At the same time, the reference to *The Castle* has a more specific function. The page Godard shows deals with problems of perception and recognition, what we see when faced with such vast systems. It reads:

The Castle, whose contours were already beginning to dissolve, lay silent as ever. Never yet had K. seen there the slightest sign of life—perhaps it was quite impossible

to recognize anything at that distance, and yet the eye demanded it and could not endure that stillness. When K. looked at the Castle, often it seemed to him as if he were observing someone who sat quietly there gazing in front of him, not lost in thought and so oblivious of everything, but free and untroubled, as if he were alone with nobody to observe him, and yet must notice that he was observed, and all the same remained with this calm not even slightly disturbed; and really—one did not know whether it was cause or effect—the gazes *[sic]* of the observer could not remain concentrated there, but slid away.[48]

K. observes the Castle but finds that it may already be looking back at him. Kafka doesn't make it clear whether the Castle is actually aware of K. or just appears to be, whether it actually possesses a gaze or only the appearance of one. One of the implications of the passage is that, while K. needs to learn how to see the Castle correctly—what to see it as—in order for it to open to him, to change its aspect, the Castle actively works to prevent this kind of access. Kafka writes that it forces "the gazes of the observer" (the odd plural makes the activity sound peculiar, not quite right) to slide off. K. is unable to focus on the Castle, to hold his gaze there, a difficulty partly mirrored in the way Godard shows the page of text in the film. We get only a portion of the page, cut off at the top and the sides: it's enough for identification, but nothing complete.

Godard's emphasis on perceptual difficulty, on the obstacles that stand in the way of comprehension, raises an important question: How *should* K. look at the Castle if he wants to keep it in focus? Or, shifting to *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* how should *we* look at or approach the strip-mining machines if we are going to be able to understand and eventually change their activity?

The first indication of a solution to these questions comes with Godard's turn to an older text, a detail from Grünewald's *The Temptation of St. Anthony.* After a shot of the valley, Godard cuts to an intertitle, "Les dragons," then to the painting. It's a shocking image, showing a figure of roughly human shape that combines a bird's head and body with human arms; the creature holds a knotted stick aloft, as if it were about to strike the saint lying out of the frame to the left. Flaubert calls such beings "marvelous anatomies," detailing the full range of fantastic and grotesque bodies in St. Anthony's visions.

Heads of alligators with hoofs of deer; owls with serpent tails; swine with tiger-muzzles; goats with the crupper of an ass; frogs hairy as bears; chameleons huge as hippopotami; calves with two heads, one bellowing, the other weeping; fetuses of quadruplets holding one another by the navel and spinning like tops; winged bellies flitting hither and thither like gnats. They rain from the sky, they rise from the earth, they pour from the rocks; everywhere eyes flame, mouths roar, breasts bulge, claws are extended, teeth gnash, flesh clacks against flesh. Some of them give birth; others copulate, or devour each other at a mouthful.[49]

Godard wants to make the idea of dragons something literal, visceral. Where Kafka implied an impersonal apparatus behind the machines, here the focus is on the alienness of the machines themselves, their fantastic, almost unbelievable aspect. As we look at the painting, we hear a sudden roar of machines and a sound of birds crying, a large increase in the volume of sound; these are the sounds of the dragons, both literal and metaphorical. The next intertitle, "De notre vie," makes explicit the equation of the monsters (in the painting) with the machines (in our lives). Godard uses Grünewald to show us the depth of terror the machines evoke; they threaten us as profoundly as we can be threatened.

But Grünewald does more than provide a metaphor for the machines. The temptation of St. Anthony is not just about the experience of fear but also, and more importantly, about overcoming it. The devil induces a series of visions in Anthony, trying to get him to succumb to the ways of the world, but Anthony, through his faith in Christ, is able to withstand and reject the visions to which he is subjected. ("All fear has departed from him!" Flaubert exclaims at the end of his novel.)[50] As a result, he is able to teach his disciples how to defend themselves against demons and the "filthy thoughts" they engender: "We need not fear the things [the demons] throw at us, for they are brought down immediately through prayer and fasting and faith in the Lord. . . . And so the Lord silences the demons."[51] As important as the visual dimension of the image is, it's the story of Anthony evoked by the painting that lends itself to the possibility of dispelling the monsters.[52] We can't triumph over the monsters ourselves; God intervenes on our behalf, helping us transform them into the mere phantoms they are. But he does so only when we act in certain ways, with purpose and clarity: we have to hold steady in our faith to subdue our fears of the terrors that stand before us.

It's in the context of St. Anthony that the repeated quotation from Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet* gains force. If Anthony needs to have faith in Christ in order to face monsters without fear, Rilke secularizes—and individualizes—that imperative: "All the dragons in our lives are only princesses who are waiting for us to act with beauty and courage," Caution recites. Again, a parallel is drawn between machines and dragons, along with a suggestion for defeating them. The strip-mining machines may be beyond our control, representing an almost impossibly powerful destructive force. But the right kind of human action can transform the world and the (modern) dangers that inhabit it.

Godard provides a conceptual framework for this possibility by juxtaposing Caution with Quixote. Again, it's a comparison secured by a citation, the line from Rilke's *Letters to a Young Poet* they both utter (albeit in different languages). It is also buttressed by Godard's use of music from Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler,* in particular the section devoted to the painting of the Isenheim altarpiece. In Hindemith's work, Grünewald ends his life as a builder of windmills, a

fact that connects a set of references in Godard's film—Grünewald, Quixote, and Rilke—through the shared theme of the illusions and deceptions of the world. Although this theme is found in St. Anthony's efforts to dispel the illusions of the demons and monsters, it is most explicit in *Don Quixote*. ("It is quite clear," Quixote tells Sancho when the latter tries to convince him that the world is not a picaresque romance, that the windmills are not giants, "that you are not experienced in this matter of adventures.")[53] Is Caution the agent who can effect the necessary transformation?

A comparison between Caution and Quixote shouldn't be surprising: Caution always had—as do most secret agents—something quixotic to his activities. But while Quixote might be the exemplary Rilkean actor, employing courage and beauty in his attacks, he's also an emblem for failure. The figure of Quixote thus emphasizes the limits of the heroic individual, as if to suggest that individual belief and desire can do only so much to transform the world. In *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* Quixote brings this limitation into focus when he sets off to tilt against the machines, the modern equivalent of the windmills. Of course, he fails: he can no more destroy the strip-mining machines in Godard's film than he could defeat the windmills in Cervantes's novel. Following Quixote's effort, Godard cuts to a shot of Caution, standing alone on flat ground; a machine is in the middle distance, angled downward beneath the horizon. Standing in the right half of the frame and looking off left, Caution turns around to face the machine, gives a gesture that looks like resignation (figure 18), then slowly turns back to the left and walks out of the frame.

This series of shots suggests that the failure at issue is not unique to Quixote but part of the very position he embodies. It's a *kind* of action that's at stake, an assumption about the possibility for acting on and changing the world, and Godard excavates the history of the character of Lemmy Caution to work through it. We see Caution sitting alone on a stack of tires, looking through a suitcase filled with relics. He plays a tape, an audio recording of a dialogue from a film made during the time when he was a B-movie action hero in France. But the tape implicitly, and perhaps more familiarly, evokes Caution's role in *Alphaville.* There, he came up against the forces of a disenchanted world—the bureaucracy and rationality of Alpha 60 dominating the life of the city—but was able to figure out a way to destroy it from within. He acted not only with courage but also with beauty, quoting Paul Éluard's surrealist poems from *Capital of Pain* to introduce the nonrationality of love into an overly rationalized world, an act that appeared to destroy the power of Alpha 60 once and for all (and let the dragon become a princess, in the form of Anna Karina).

It's against the background of Caution's history as an existential action star that the misquotation of Rilke gains force. As I noted earlier, when Caution and

FIGURE 18. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*

Quixote quote Rilke, they leave out a word, a strategic misquotation of the sort Godard is fond of making.[54] Rilke writes, "All the dragons in our lives are only princesses who are waiting for us to act, *just once,* with beauty and courage"; they leave out the "just once" *(einmal).*[55] This omission, I take it, functions as a criticism leveled by the current Lemmy Caution against his younger self. The effect is to take away the emphasis Rilke places on the idea of a *singular* action—that all we need to do is perform just one astonishing feat—and to make it instead a question of duration, of sustaining something (a commitment) over time. Godard here provides a diagnosis of the failure of political action: duration is what eludes the quixotic actor, and is therefore one of the reasons for Caution's current despair. Looking back from 1990, he sees that his singular, virtuosic act of beauty and courage was inadequate; the spirit behind Alpha 60 not only survived but thrived. If there's no heroism or romanticism anymore, it's because of a failure internal to such ambitions.

That's one story we have in this scene, a story of profound pessimism. Beauty and courage in action may be admirable, but they are not sufficient. Godard, however, develops a second story, one that emerges through the images of nature

that appear in the background. And that story turns out to contain resources that may be capable of leading us away from the world controlled by the power of the machines—the "dark satanic mills" of the contemporary landscape.

6. KNIGHT ERRANTRY IS THE ONLY HOPE
FOR THE FUTURE

Earlier, I discussed Godard's use of images from the history of the German landscape as part of his effort to provide a historical account of the ostensibly natural world. The placement of these images into a story about dispelling the power of the strip-mining machines (the monsters in our lives) is what allows him to explore the question of whether the hope articulated by Rilke and embodied in Quixote can survive the failure to change that world. In so doing, Godard gives his most ambitious—and, I think, his final—engagement with the resources he finds in nature: not only the hope nature holds out but also the limitations to which it succumbs.

To show how nature becomes involved in, and possibly successful at, the quixotic project, Godard calls on an additional reference. Behind the appearance of Don Quixote in the GDR stands an allusion not only to Cervantes's novel but, more immediately, to Orson Welles's unfinished filmic adaptation of it. The plan of Welles's film, which he worked on over the course of several decades, involved transposing the events in the novel into modern Spain and simultaneously reflecting on problems of historical distance.[56] The adventures of Quixote and Sancho are increased in strangeness by their encounters with representative examples of modern technology, from radios and televisions to Vespas and cars: they are mocked by townspeople for their archaic mode of transportation, are puzzled by the television broadcast of a rocket launch. Given that Godard has elsewhere cited this film—he includes clips from it in Voyage(s) en utopie: À la recherché d'un théorème perdu, his 2006 exhibition at the Centre Pompidou—it is likely that he has Welles's film in mind when he transplants Quixote and Sancho into the historical present of Germany.

Welles sees a political significance in the encounters between archaic characters and modern inventions. At one point, he shows shots of an older Spain that has survived into the present (bull-fighting arenas, water pumps moved by donkeys), which he contrasts with images of modern apartments and hotels. In voice-over, Welles remarks, "Together, [Don Quixote and Sancho Panza] have survived centuries of obscurity, repression, and tyranny. Together, they express a landscape with which those of us who are sincere feel sorely tempted to identify. A wonderful landscape which, despite being assailed by tourism and development plans, is still alive, or at least so it appears to me."[57] This is one of several points in the film at which Welles suggests that Quixote embodies a spirit of

Spanish resistance, a spirit that survived Franco's attempts to destroy it. The striking feature of this remark, though, is Welles's claim that the resistance is not just in the Spanish people—populist rhetoric of a sort—but in the landscape itself. He suggests a vague but compelling thesis: the older landscape, just by virtue of its presence, is somehow able to work against the dominance of an unsavory political order. It constitutes a reminder of a different (presumably, better) time. In the conflict between the archaic and the modern that the figure of Quixote produces and that he transfers to the landscape he inhabits, a tradition of utopian rebellion persists. "Knight errantry is the only hope for the future," Welles has Quixote say; there is value yet in preserving images of and from the past.

The idea that the spirit of Quixote and Sancho, while it fails to help them in their actions, can be transferred to and stored within a landscape is precisely what Godard takes up in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* There is, however, a sizable gap between Godard and Welles in their treatment of Quixote. Although Welles moves the characters into the present, he doesn't move them out of Spain, thus allowing them to retain a natural connection to the place they inhabit in the novel: their presence establishes the connection to the older landscape, to a tradition people love (not only the Spanish). In *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* though, Quixote and Sancho are displaced not only in time but in space as well, moved into contemporary Germany. It's not that this is particularly surprising; later adaptations have often situated them in new places. But the shift from Spain to Germany changes the relation between the characters and the landscape: they have no particular relation to the locations they now inhabit.

Godard's solution lies in his use of images from the history of the German landscape. He constructs the scene as a progressive uncovering of this history, moving backward in time from the twentieth to the nineteenth to the eighteenth century; the landscapes go from industrial to agricultural to pastoral. This unfolding history of nature creates something of the resistance that Don Quixote and Sancho Panza automatically gave Welles in a Spanish context. Moreover, through the activity of revealing the historical layers beneath the image of the present, Godard brings the scene into the orbit of a specific intellectual tradition: natural history.

The idea of natural history has a complex genealogy. It emerged as an analytic category when Pliny the Elder advanced the concept of *naturalis historia* to describe the way nature operates and develops in a sphere separate from the human world.[58] The postulate of a "natural history void of time," however, changed significantly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, as German thinkers began to rework the concept in light of new understandings of the natural world and its transformations.[59] A central part of this involved the response of the Romantics to Kant's epistemology, which separated the natural world from our ability to know things about it. In the Kantian aftermath, they turned to

natural history to establish a new and deeper harmony between the human and the natural. Schelling, for example, introduces natural history to account for the foundations of knowledge, ascribing to nature a history that interacts in complex and temporally extended ways with human history.[60] A number of intellectual lines follow from this effort, a genealogy too extensive to discuss here, but one that is helpful for our purposes culminates in the twentieth century with the Frankfurt School, and with Benjamin and Adorno in particular.

Two distinct conceptions of natural history inform this line of thought. The first treats natural history as the accumulation of traces of human history, seeing nature as a blank slate on which human history is written and recorded. This is the idea of natural history at work in Adorno's late work, especially in *Negative Dialectics* and *Aesthetic Theory*. We already saw it in his idea of a cultural landscape: "Engraved as [landscapes'] expression is history, and engraved as their form is historical continuity, which integrates the landscapes dynamically as in artworks."[61] It's fairly easy to find this model in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* in the way Godard frequently shows how nature has been transformed by its historical period. In the strip-mining scene, for example, the images of nature are marked in turn by the sheep, the windmills and flat plains, and the giant machines. We read history off the appearance of nature, precisely because the various historical epochs had a specific impact on the appearance of natural landscapes.

A second conception of natural history in Benjamin and Adorno, however, is concerned more with the history of nature and its relation to human history, a relation best understood in terms of a kind of relative autonomy.[62] It is precisely the separation from human history, Benjamin argues, that gives natural history an emancipatory potential within the human realm. Although Benjamin is rarely explicit about how this is supposed to happen, often glossing it by way of references to a sacred or messianic tradition, it generally has to do with an account of the transience of nature: "Nature, in contrast to history, is Messianic by reason of its eternal and total passing away."[63] Benjamin suggests that nature provides a series of ever-changing conditions, in which the present is never something immutable, eternal, or unchanging. In the *Arcades Project,* he labels the achievement of this position the "'cracking open of natural teleology'."[64] Benjamin argues that there is no final end-point or goal to the history of nature, no ultimately stable position, no organizing principle that determines the course it takes. Natural history is always moving, always changing into something different.

This conception of natural history becomes explicitly political when it is transferred to human history. If the teleology of nature can be cracked open, then it stands to reason that the same can be done with the historical world itself: the given state of things in high capitalism is by no means the necessary end-product of the course of human history. In this vein, Adorno argues that "natural-history is not a synthesis of natural and historical methods, but a change of perspective"

on both nature and history that focuses on the productive tension that emerges from their interaction.[65]

The problem Godard faces in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* is that the full history of the landscape, the various forms it has taken, is not visible on the surface of things. In the image of the machines at work in the artificially sculpted valley or in the flat plateau with the windmills, we don't automatically see the older landscapes that lie behind them. Godard thus works to elucidate the natural history of the German landscape through the successive deployment of images from its history. Starting from the present, the scene presents a visual demonstration of the uncovering of history, the revealing of the historical layers that lie beneath the present. Through the images of landscapes that have emerged and passed away, Godard suggests that the landscapes with which we are *now* faced—the landscapes composed of monsters and dragons, of "terrifying things"—are part of that same history of transience. In Benjamin's words, Godard "cracks open" its teleology: this landscape, too, will pass away, and something new will come to take its place.

We can develop the point differently. As Godard uncovers a history of landscapes, he brings them into the same world: this is the world of *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* the world that is—for the duration of the film at least—the (or, our) present. As a result, when Godard shows the older landscapes alongside their contemporary incarnations, he works against the dominance and uniformity of the landscape created by the strip-mining machines; the coexistence of different times reveals cracks in the seamless appearance of the present world. Where Welles is able to bring older landscapes into the present simply by showing Quixote and Sancho, Godard has to actively construct a world in which the different stages of history—the remnants of past centuries, of past transformations—are not only present but, in the spatial logic of the film, side by side. Caution walks through one century to get to another.

The point is not just that Godard shows that the machines have not (yet) removed all the traces of the history that preceded them. There is something in the images of the older landscapes that stands in stark contrast to the destructive work of the giant machines. Call it a picture of harmony between the human and the natural: it may be nostalgic, but the images of older times suggest a peacefulness that the more modern version lacks. This is an ideal that, however compromised it might have been in actual history, can be transferred into the future. ("The origin is the goal," Benjamin remarks at various points.)[66] The continued presence of the past in the German landscape, like the afterlife of Quixote and Sancho in contemporary Spain, forms a persevering emblem of utopian hope.

These are the resources that Godard derives from his sustained engagement with the natural history of the German landscape, using that history to press against the dominance of the present. Yet Godard does not seem satisfied with his conclusion, a dissatisfaction apparent in the narrative arc of *Allemagne 90*

neuf zéro. It's not that he offers a direct criticism of the ideas relating to the tradition of natural history; instead he makes a deflationary gesture, as if the project of an emancipatory use of natural history has already failed.

The end of the strip-mining scene and the transition into the next sequence constitute an implicit rejection of the motivation behind the turn to natural history. Benjamin and Adorno had turned to that tradition in the increasingly dark and desperate times before World War II, hoping it would provide new resources to avert the coming catastrophe. Human history was in the process of failing to live up to its potential; perhaps an alternative could be found in nature. When Godard revisits this history, however, he gives it a different inflection. After Caution walks through the field with the sheep, Godard cuts to the intertitles "Roads / That Lead / Nowhere." These intertitles serve, at one level, as an explicit comment on the content of the strip-mining scene: this path is not leading anywhere; it isn't worth following. But the phrase is also the title of Heidegger's first volume of writings published after World War II, and thus serves as a reminder of the human and political dilemmas raised in its aftermath.[67] It's a way of saying, in effect, that we're back where we started, with the same questions and anxieties that prompted Benjamin's and Adorno's turn toward natural history. Their gamble did not provide the solution.

The film's overall narrative pattern is a movement toward the West, the location of freedom after the fall of the Soviet Union, but Caution discovers that these ideals have been transformed into their opposite. ("Test the West," an advertisement for "West" cigarettes reads.) When he finally arrives at a hotel in West Berlin, a scene that adapts the opening of *Alphaville,* he finds the staff working for money as ostensibly free individuals in a labor market. But they are enslaved all the same. "Arbeit macht frei," a woman he knew in the East tells him: is this the freedom she had hoped for? The Nazi past returns in the present; the problems that ought to have been eliminated (through human actions, through the recourse to natural history) still remain. Told that every hotel room carries a Bible, he sighs, "Ah, the bastards!" and the film ends (figure 19). The despair in this remark is not just a response to the dominance of Christianity in modern life.[68] In *Alphaville,* the "Bible" in Caution's hotel room is a dictionary of permitted words, a volume that is continually changing as new words are banned. For him to find the Bible in the Berlin hotel room in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* then, amounts to the realization that what he took to be the location of freedom is in fact the administered world of Alphaville. Nothing has changed.

With this, *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* effectively finishes Godard's attempt to explore the resources of nature in and for film. Over more than a decade, this project ranged across a variety of topics: from the sublime to the beautiful, the absolute to the mundane, the spiritual to the historical. But here Godard brings these

FIGURE 19. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*

efforts to a close. It turns out that the problems he faces cannot be solved through the resources that nature has to offer, numerous as they are. In West Berlin, Caution discovers that the world of the late twentieth century has abandoned nature. Rather than the proliferation of natural landscapes he encountered in the East, the exploration of which has preoccupied so much of the film, only glittering artifice is present here. It's this world that constitutes the end-point of the film and, Godard suggests, of the history he shows.

We see this shift happening already in the sequence immediately after the strip-mining scene. Godard shows a woman (Zelten's earlier companion) entering the Topography of Terrors exhibit, a 1980s excavation of the Gestapo headquarters in Berlin,[69] before introducing several clips of torture (the false Maria burning in *Metropolis,* Manfredi being burned with a blowtorch in *Roma, città aperta* [*Rome, Open City,* 1945]), over which Hitler's voice can be heard. The film then goes back to the streets of Berlin and to the site in the *Tiergarten* where the bodies of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were found. After the scene of the strip-mining machines, it is a way of saying that history is no longer centrally about nature. We find history instead in cities, in the sites of torture and murder.

We find it somewhere else as well. Godard's idea seems to be that if nature is no longer where our history can be found, if we no longer live within or beside the natural world, it is cinema that has taken its place. Several features of his late style, such as his penchant for interspersing clips from the history of cinema within the diegetic world of the film, suggest that he sees cinema itself as a kind of landscape. Indeed, the idea that cinema lies in the background of our lives is one of the deep themes in his late work. It's sounded over and over again in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* as Godard places events from the twentieth century up against scenes from the history of cinema. And we find it in the opening montage from *Notre musique,* where clips of combat—from documentaries, from reenactments, from Westerns—show that what we understand war to be is (at least in part) determined by the backdrop of images we've received from the cinema. Godard's point is not so much a general observation about the social significance of cinema as it is a claim that cinema has its own (natural) history, one that runs parallel to, yet intersects with, our history.

Allemagne 90 neuf zéro may work through and dissolve the centrality of nature and natural history within Godard's overall project. But this does not entail the abandonment of the ideas, conceptual categories, and methodological innovations he derived from his investigations into nature. Rather than being simply cast aside, these discoveries are brought into Godard's analysis of cinema and its relation to the history of the twentieth century.

PART TWO

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Cinema without Photography

At the very beginning of the book, I described a scene from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* that takes place in the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin. It starts with a shot of a woman in the act of taking a photograph; a 180-degree cut over her shoulder shows that she is photographing Gustave Courbet's painting *The Wave* (see figure 1). As she presses the shutter, Lemmy Caution says in voice-over, "Bonjour, Monsieur Courbet," and Godard cuts to a black-and-white film clip of a large wave rising up from the bottom of the frame and tossing a small ship. When I discussed this sequence earlier, I suggested that it serves as a meditation on the genealogy of cinema by way of painting and photography. The temptation is to understand this genealogy in terms of technological progress, from painting to photography to cinema, but the sequence of the shots in fact positions painting as the middle term rather than the starting point. The implication is that photography has to pass through painting in order to become cinema. That is, the sequence suggests that it's only when photography learns from painting, when photography incorporates painting's imagistic qualities into its own capacities, that it is able to turn into and become cinema.

In this chapter, I want to work through the issues about media history and definition that arise out of this sequence from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* Short as it is, the sequence exemplifies a central preoccupation of Godard's later films and videos: a concern with the cinematic image in terms that are drawn from painting rather than photography. Some of this has to do with the way an affinity between cinema and painting focuses attention on the pictorial qualities of images,

allowing Godard to use what he calls "the sensuality in painting" to model his own creative practice.[1] But I will argue that the move to painting is more centrally a matter of shifting the orientation of cinema away from photography, a deep change in the way cinema has been historically understood.

Godard's turn away from conceiving cinema in terms drawn from photography and the consequences that follow from his interest in painting are at the heart of the aesthetic, historical, and cinematic project of the late films, yet these concerns reach their full development only in his video work. Speaking about the general ambitions of *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* Godard claims that video "belongs to painting history and it's pure painting."[2] It is through the videographic investigation of the history of cinema—and the histories that cinema has told about itself—that Godard makes explicit something that was there all along: that cinema both emerges from and leads to a wider tradition of image making.[3]

The point is not one of substitution. Photography may be displaced from its position at the heart of cinema, but painting does not thereby become the sole determination of cinema's abilities. Godard does not produce yet another *Laocoön,* reducing cinema to a single way of functioning; if he is deeply indebted to some modernist projects, a stringent form of medium specificity is not one of them. His understanding of cinema, as I've been arguing throughout, is fundamentally impure, containing multiple styles, media, and forms of appeal. And so photography is not entirely eliminated from Godard's account of cinema: it takes a place within the wider ecology of artistic media that cinema contains and is built out of, no longer the privileged medium, but one of many.

As is so often the case with Godard, a critical intervention into the defining conditions of cinema serves to ground further investigations into its aesthetic possibilities; they are, in a sense, one and the same process. In *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* Godard makes use of the turn to painting to displace the central concerns of cinematic ontology—what cinema is, the relation it has to reality—from the physical nature of the medium and onto its engagement with history (both the events that happen and the stories told about them). In what follows, I'll argue that, in Godard's late work, cinema's relation to the history of the twentieth century, and to its own history as well, comes to fill the gap left by the removal of photography. It takes up the task of securing a relation between image and world, between film and history.[4]

2. REFERENCE WITHOUT ONTOLOGY

An interest in painting runs throughout Godard's career.[5] Think of the Renoir portrait that adorns the wall of Patricia's apartment in *À bout de souffle* or Ferdinand's recitation of Élie Faure's discussion of Velázquez in *Pierrot le fou.* In *Passion,* Godard stages famous paintings as *tableaux vivants* for Jerzy's film, setting

them amid conversations that revolve around the relation between cinema and painting. At one point, he draws on Faure's discussion of Rembrandt's handling of light and dark while showing a restaging of *Night Watch* (1642), placing a line from Faure in the mouth of his cinematographer, Raoul Coutard: "Everything is perfectly lit from left to right, slightly from top to bottom and from front to back. This is not a 'Night Watch' but a 'Day Watch,' lit by the setting sun." (Later in the film, Godard quotes again from Faure's discussion of Rembrandt: "That which fades into the night is the echo of what is submerged by silence. What is submerged by silence extends into the light that which fades into the night.")[6] Godard uses Faure's lines to focus the viewer's attention on salient parts of the tableau, to reveal the film's work in re-creating the feel of painting. As Silverman and Farocki suggest, *Passion* does not so much duplicate the paintings as reconceive them "in filmic terms," treating cinema as capable of fulfilling painting's ambitions.[7]

The sequence from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* represents a somewhat different model. It's no coincidence, I think, that the painter Godard cites there is Courbet, whose career sits at the moment when photography began to emerge as a relevant artistic practice; Courbet is a transitional figure in the development of artistic technology. Walter Benjamin situates *The Wave,* the painting Godard shows, in just this context: "With [Courbet], the relationship between painter and photographer was temporarily reversed. In his famous painting *[The Wave],* a photographic subject is discovered through painting. . . . Courbet's special position was that he was the last who could attempt to surpass photography. Later painters tried to evade it—first and foremost the Impressionists. The painted image slipped its moorings in draftsmanship; thereby, to some extent, it escaped competition with the camera. The proof was seen around the turn of the century, when photography, in turn, tried to emulate the Impressionists."[8] Benjamin uses Courbet to argue for a dialectical interplay between painting and photography at the end of the nineteenth century.[9] Though Courbet did not use photography in his practice (unlike Thomas Eakins, who photographed subjects as studies for his paintings), his aesthetic has often seemed to critics to be essentially photographic, participating in a zeitgeist when the terms of pictorial realism were being set by the growing prominence of photography. Discussing *The Quarry* (1856–57), Michael Fried writes, "We might think of it as a *photographic* fantasy, a fantasy of the act of painting as wholly automatistic and therefore very close to the taking (or shooting) of a photograph."[10] Fried goes on to claim that Courbet finds this model inadequate for the ambitions of his painting, but the idea of photography remains as a limiting factor.

By the time Godard begins major work on *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* his ambitions have markedly shifted, something which is noticeable in the way he now uses Faure's discussion of Rembrandt. In episode 4A, he has Alain Cuny read an

extended passage from that discussion, but substitutes *the cinema* for every appearance of the painter's name. Where Faure writes, "Only Rembrandt has seen that, if everyone is doing his job, the composition looks after itself with irreproachable balance," the replacement goes: "Only the cinema has seen that, if everyone is doing his job, the composition looks after itself with irreproachable balance, that the light falls where it should and ignores what it should, because it's needed to illuminate one part of the scene and darkness can prevail everywhere." In *Passion,* Godard is interested in using cinema to reveal something about painting: its internal dynamics, structure, and relation to artistic creation. In *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* his goal is to look at cinema by way of painting, not the other way around, and he appropriates Faure to give filmic images the same status as painterly ones.[11]

Godard's interest in painting challenges basic historical assumptions about what cinema is, in particular those assumptions that derive from an account of cinema as a medium defined by the properties of photography. This account, which emphasizes the twenty-four photographic frames that flit by each second, has its classical definition in the writings of Bazin, who is taken to hold that cinema's photographic base commits it to an automatic and direct recording of the world. (I have argued elsewhere that Bazin's views are significantly more complex; at issue here is the reading that has been generally accepted.)[12] In this view, what distinguishes photographic media from all others is their ability to produce an image of the world without the subjective intention of the artist. With photography, Bazin writes, "for the first time, between the originating object and its reproduction there intervenes only the instrumentality of a nonliving agent. For the first time an image of the world is formed automatically, without the mediation of the creative intervention of man," and so "we are forced to accept as real the existence of the object reproduced, actually re-presented."[13] We do not believe that a photograph refers to the world because of criteria of resemblance. It does not matter "how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, [or] lacking in documentary value the image may be";[14] the reference holds by virtue of the nature of the physical apparatus involved in the production of the image. On the most prominent line of interpretation, such statements are taken to show that Bazin's theory of cinema follows the terms of an indexical sign, in which reference is determined by a direct and causal relation to its source.[15] If we understand the process of production—the fact that light directly impacts and transforms photochemical emulsion—we can say with certainty that what we see in a photograph is faithful to what was there, regardless of the way the image looks.

One consequence of this interpretation is a specific conception of the aesthetic resources of cinema. Bazin maintained that the ontology of the photographic image is intimately related to film style, that "the realism of cinema follows directly from its photographic base."[16] It's been easy to understand this

claim as implying that the realism of film ought to hinge on a correspondence with or resemblance to the world outside the film. If a film is to be true to its medium, it ought to achieve a look that comes closest to our normal engagement with the world. Bazin is taken to advance a kind of cinematic self-effacement, a quasi-ethical imperative that a film should not impose a style on reality.[17]

Godard is often taken to subscribe to a photographic account of cinema, even if not its consequences for style. (It's absurd to think of his films as amounting to the effacement of style and artifice.) There are good reasons for this. Because he came to maturity within the *Cahiers du cinéma* circle, he was immersed in the Bazinian idea of film as a photographic medium. MacCabe, for example, rightly describes as "absolutely crucial to understanding Godard's oeuvre" Bazin's view that "the primary material with which the filmmaker works is filmed reality."[18]

And yet, deep as Godard's connection to Bazin may be, by the late 1980s major features of his films do not depend on this conception of cinema. The visual strategies described in chapter 1 are a case in point: the focus pulls, the vertiginous camera movement over water, and the stuttering of a video clip. These techniques draw attention to the appearance of the image and our experience of it, focusing not on its referential relation to the world but on the form of its presentation. There's a similar indifference to the terms of photography in the images of nature and natural beauty discussed in chapters 2 and 3. The shift from the sublime to the beautiful in *Soigne ta droite* does not take place because of the virtue of *what* Godard shows but rather because of *how* he shows it (an iconography). *Nouvelle vague* operates through an intersection of the pictorial and the literary, image and narrative, using the visual rhetoric of nature (the garden, the green world) to track and inflect the relationship of the central couple. And in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* the historical status of various landscapes emerges not through a photographic demonstration but through the series of references and allusions Godard uses as interpretive guides. In each case, it wouldn't matter if the images were not photographic.

In this vein, it's tempting to link Godard to a more general movement away from the photographic account of cinema taking place at the time, a cultural crisis that was arising with the growth of the digital production and manipulation of images. Numerous media scholars and practitioners argued that photography's central truth claim, the idea that a photographic image provides a direct and unmediated relation to what it is of, was undermined by the "infinite malleability" of the digital image. Though analog images can be manipulated, the extent of their manipulation is constrained by the nature of the physical support on which they exist. Digital images, because they have no set physical medium, have only logical or mathematical constraints. This is true for both the literal production of images (they can be from nothing and of nothing) and their manipulation (they can be turned into any conceptually possible form).[19]

But nothing like this crisis shows up in Godard's work, even when he's using those technologies. Rather than exhibiting concern over problems of recording and photographic truth, Godard uses digital technology to explore the pictorial capacities of cinema. The second half of *Éloge de l'amour,* for example, is shot in digital video, using extensive manipulation of the color and tempo of images. At one point, Godard cuts from a photograph of Simone Weil to a still image of the ocean. Taken from the shore, the shot shows waves coming toward the camera, rocks rising out of the water, and a ship in the middistance. What is immediately striking are the colors in the image: the green of the waves breaking onto the shore is contrasted with the bright blue of the ocean behind, a solid plane of color broken by the dark outcrop of rocks and the rusting red and white of the boat floating on the surface. A light blue sky with orange-tinged clouds hangs overhead. The color is digitally changed, manipulated, but the emphasis of the shot is not on a lack of fidelity or correspondence to the world it shows. Because the image is still and because the focus is ever-so-slightly off—the various planes of the shot almost blend into one another—it largely resembles an impressionist painting. The shot, that is, exhibits a concern to represent movement in a still image, to show momentary reflections and colors of light on various surfaces, and to experiment with combinations of various colors. When, after several seconds, Godard brings the image into motion with a stuttering movement that eventually releases into normal playback, he seems to point to the transition between painting and cinema as having to do with the ability to make images move.[20]

At several places in the second half of *Éloge de l'amour,* Godard provides a variation of this shot. Each time, he begins with a stilled image of the ocean and then, after a pause, brings it into motion. The effect is to emphasize the painterly qualities of the image. Certainly, we look at its visual appearance while it is held still, the use of nondiegetic piano contributing to a contemplative quality. It's as if, by shifting from celluloid to digital, Godard is able to dispense with a concern over the recording aspects of film to focus instead on pictorial qualities. The digital releases him into painting.

Although *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is also video, the issues it takes up initially seem more conventional in their referential work. After all, much of the extensive montage involves the arrangement and juxtaposition of photographs, production stills, and clips from celluloid films. And these images appear to function largely in terms of their indexical capacities: it's *this* person or *this* scene that matters, the fact that it was preserved and recorded by the camera. Jacques Aumont writes, "There is nothing more significant than the fact that, despite all their brilliance and complexity, the *Histoire(s)* never resort to touching up the image, but only to techniques that do not affect their indexicality."[21] One understands what he's getting at. A photograph of Fassbinder in episode 4A is not a fiction, not a digitally constructed image, nor is there an artificial background

behind him. Godard has only used a black felt marker to accent the eyebrows and to create slightly more shadow around his cheeks. But these effects are minor; what matters is that it is a photograph of Fassbinder.

This can't be right. Slight as the retouching of the photograph may be—and such retouching is standard practice throughout *Histoire(s) du cinéma*—it is nonetheless a modification of the indexical status of the photograph. Godard creates objects (or at least shadings) that didn't exist in the world the photograph is of: no matter how rudimentary his techniques may be, no matter how minor the alterations are, they affect the indexicality of the photograph. It is simply wrong to say that his work on and with photographs does not affect their referential claims.

A more serious problem with the position Aumont represents is that it's not at all clear that the forms of reference involved in indexicality matter to or help explain Godard's practice in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* In episode 2A, a clip from Charles Laughton's *Night of the Hunter* (1955), in which the two children escape Robert Mitchum's false preacher, is juxtaposed with a video clip of Julie Delpy reciting Baudelaire's "Le Voyage" and comes after a similar juxtaposition of the clip of Delpy with Joseph Turner's *Peace: Burial at Sea* (1842). It's not easy to determine what the clip from *Night of the Hunter* refers to. Is it the studio in which the film was shot? the actors playing the role? the fictional scene depicted? All these are possible interpretations, and at various points in the video series Godard is interested in each. Moreover, the positioning of the clip within the flow of images makes for added complexities. Is the clip best thought of in the context of the video, the painting, or the poem? Or does it have to do with the general idea of imaginative travel associated with each? In another case, which I'll discuss later in this chapter, Godard juxtaposes a clip of Elizabeth Taylor from George Stevens's *A Place in the Sun* with footage of concentration camps that Stevens shot at the end of World War II. Again, ambiguities of reference are inescapable: Does the clip from *A Place in the Sun* refer to its own fictional world? Is it a documentary of its actors? Or does it gesture back to the concentration camps (and how would it do so)? These kinds of questions are asked, implicitly and explicitly, by the videographic montage throughout *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* However we answer them, the model of indexicality is inadequate for describing what's going on.

If we take a step back, we can see that Godard has in fact long held an ambivalent attitude toward photographic recording. Even the oft-cited phrase from *Le petit soldat,* "Cinema is truth twenty-four times a second," is more complicated than it initially appears. Although generally taken to be a declaration of photography's recording properties, the remark is by no means transparent. It is, first of all, not spoken by Godard himself but given to Michel Subor's character as he interviews and photographs Anna Karina for a fashion magazine. (In Godard's films,

dialogues like these—think of the extended interview with the young woman in *Masculin-féminin*—are rarely presented without irony.) Moreover, we might notice that it is "truth" and not "reality" that's at issue, not a trivial distinction.

Another example can be found in *Pierrot le fou.* When Marianne is driving with Ferdinand, she hears a radio report about a number of Viet Cong killed in a battle and remarks, "They say 115 Viet Cong, and it doesn't really mean anything. And yet they were all men, and you don't know who they are, whether they loved a woman, whether they had children, whether they'd rather go to the movies or to the theater. You don't know anything about them. All they say is that 115 were killed. It's just like photography." The suggestion is that, because a photograph simply records what was in front of the camera, it is unable to capture the "truth" of a situation: it merely records the surface appearance of things. (This is a familiar criticism, found in Kracauer's early writings on photography, Brecht's discussion of cinema, Barthes's *Mythologies,* and even Pasolini's criticism of neorealism.)

Godard presses the issue further. The criticism *Pierrot le fou* exemplifies, after all, still leaves the basic premise of photography intact: its relevant truth-claims may be superficial, but they involve a recording function. A more thoroughgoing criticism comes in a speech Godard made in 1966, in which he reworks a famous opposition from the history of cinema: "A distinction is . . . usually drawn between Lumière and Méliès. Lumière, they say, is documentary, and Méliès is fantasy. But today, what do we see when we watch their films? We see Méliès filming the reception of the King of Yugoslavia by the President of the Republic. A newsreel, in other words. And at the same time we find Lumière filming a family card game in the *Bouvard et Pécuchet* manner. In other words, fiction."[22] Where Lumière documented the fantasies of the bourgeoisie by showing the image they projected of themselves (a recording of a fiction, a world that was itself a fantasy), as in *Repas de bébé* (1895), Méliès used his fantastic films to show the reality of colonial exploitation, as in *Le voyage dans la lune* (1902). In *La chinoise,* Godard extends this analysis by having one of the Maoist students (Jean-Pierre Léaud) say, "Lumière was a painter. That's to say, he filmed the same things painters were painting at that time, men like Charo, Manet, or Renoir. He filmed train stations. He filmed public gardens, workers going home, men playing cards. He filmed trams." Someone asks, "One of the last great impressionists?" Léaud replies, "Exactly, a contemporary of Proust."

Godard's point is not simply that photographs have never enjoyed a direct and unmediated relation to the world. Direct reference on its own, he seems to be saying, doesn't give us the world in the right way; the important relations between film and world have to be produced, achieved. In *Notre musique,* during a discussion with film students about the relation between text and image, Godard holds up a black-and-white photograph of ruined buildings and asks them to identify the image. Responses include Hiroshima, Dresden, London, and Sare-

jevo; Godard remarks that it's a Matthew Brady photograph of Richmond, Virginia, taken in 1865. The point of this brief lesson, as I understand it, is not to show that the students are mistaken or ignorant but to demonstrate that the referent of a photograph is unstable or, rather, unspecific. The Brady photograph has become generic, its reference open, and so it can be used in different contexts—and for different purposes—as an image of war and its effects on civilian life. Rather than taking photographic images to signify because of a causal relation to the world, Godard is concerned to show that there has always been a complicated relation between photography and reality, that this relation is not given simply by the way light reacts on emulsion.

Godard's focus, here as elsewhere, is on questions of how images are *used* to refer to the world. We might label his approach "reference without ontology," a term I take from Cora Diamond, who draws on Wittgenstein to argue against "any metaphysical understanding" of what propositions (or images) can or can't do. Given sentences like, "A shell exploded. Twenty or thirty men were blown up," from Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse,* Diamond argues that it "might be merely a record of what happened, might express moral thought—*which,* depends on its use."[23] The answer turns on how we understand a proposition (or image) to be used in a particular context and to what sort of thing it is meant to refer.

The idea of reference without ontology does not deny that cinema creates and presents worlds in its own particular ways. Godard seems to believe that cinema—whether Méliès's, Lumière's, or someone else's—bears a different relation to the world from, say, a novel by Flaubert, if for no other reason than it employs images rather than words and speaks to a public audience rather than to an individual reader. The difficulty is finding a middle ground: neither a position of absolute medium specificity, in which the only factor determining reference is the physical production of the image, nor an absolute relativism of signification across media. One way to put the point might be to say that cinematic images do have iconic and indexical claims (of a sort that propositions in a written text do not), but that considerations of use, context, and reception determine exactly what these claims amount to (how they work). In other words, if we want to talk about cinema in terms of what Bazin labeled "the ontology of the photographic image," the emphasis should fall on the nature and use of the image and not on its photographic base.

Although this distinction is only a starting point for Godard's more extensive work in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* it is crucial for our ability to track his engagement with various media. The sequence from episode 2A discussed above illustrates this. It begins with a claim by Godard in voice-over, "Cinema is a nineteenth-century matter that was resolved in the twentieth," an example of the belatedness that he repeatedly expresses, a sense that an art form can only be understood—can only be fully appreciated—when its time has passed. It also reads as a claim

about the relation of cinema to earlier media. And if Godard says that cinema is based in the nineteenth century, it is natural to think that he has photography in mind, the technological history that led to instantaneous photography and then to the recording and projection of movement.[24] The idea would be that the fantasy behind photography is realized only in the twentieth century, perhaps Godard's version of Bazin's "myth of total cinema."

Things become less clear-cut when we look more closely. The sequence itself is largely made up of a conversation between Godard and Serge Daney in which they discuss the idea of cinema, the project of *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* and Godard's own role in the history of cinema. Immediately afterward, Godard inserts a set of remarks about projection that suggest a theory of cinema (I take up this topic in chapter 5), including a brief clip taken from *Soigne ta droite* of a projectionist looking out from his booth. He then begins the extended sequence in which Julie Delpy recites Baudelaire's "Le voyage" and which lasts for much of the rest of the episode. This sequence, among other things, complicates the initial claim about the relation between cinema and the nineteenth century. We have a series of references to that century, but none of them concerns photography (or forms of photographic reference). The images in Baudelaire's poem—"We long to travel without steam or sail! / To enliven the tedium of our prisons, / project onto our minds, stretched taut like sails, / your memories framed by the horizon to relieve / the boredom of our prisons. / Run past our minds / taut as a canvas / your horizon-framed memories"—figure cinema as a kind of imaginative travel, a reading confirmed by its juxtaposition with Turner's *Peace: Burial at Sea.*[25] Through superimposition, Godard links two emblems of nineteenth-century culture, Baudelaire and Turner, and casts them as protocinematic figures. Not only is there a historical affinity here—Turner's painting was done the same year Baudelaire returned from his never-completed trip to India, a trip that nonetheless furnished him with the rhetoric and imagery of exoticism found in "Le voyage"—but the sails of the ship and the plume of smoke match the arc of Delpy's shoulder, creating a visual affinity between the two (figure 20).[26]

In the end, the connections between painting, poem, and film are secured not by photographic reference but by a *pictorial* quality, Godard's ability to establish connections at a graphic or iconic level. The connection that emerges is not automatically formed but rather created by montage: the act of bringing images and references together in superimposition, the formation of complex aesthetic judgments, the contingent discovery of visual and historical affinities. Not only does Godard define cinema in terms that exceed photography's scope; the means by which he does so do not themselves depend on cinema's photographic qualities. A double move, as it were, away from the traditional Bazinian position and toward the other arts in the nineteenth century. It's *their* ambitions, *their* concerns, that cinema comes to fulfill. Rather than being based in theories of medium

FIGURE 20. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 2A

specificity and the physical nature of the medium, Godard's account of cinema emerges within and advances a broader artistic tradition.[27]

That's not to say that photography disappears as a subject of consideration. But its role is considerably different from what more familiar accounts suggest. In his preface to *The History of Photography,* Beaumont Newhall claims that "photography is at once a science and an art."[28] Godard, I think, has this statement in mind in episode 1B when he describes photography as "neither an art nor a technology, but a *mystery.*" All this suggests that we have to revise basic ways of thinking about cinema if we are going to be able to get a handle on *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Godard may work with a set of terms that are relatively familiar, but the use to which he puts them is anything but.

3. L'ENFANCE DE L'ART

Given the ambitions of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* to work through the relation between the history of cinema and the history of the twentieth century, Godard's turn away from photography might surprise. An assumption of the indexicality of photographic reference has supported most (though certainly not all) of the

work interested in this relation. It generally serves as a kind of ground-level axiom, a secure way to connect cinema to the world outside it—a foundation from which the more expansive work of a film can be done, whatever that might be. Documentaries like *Battle of Chile* (Patricio Guzmán, 1975) and *Harlan County U.S.A.* (Barbara Kopple, 1976) or compilation films like *The Atomic Cafe* (Jayne Loader and Kevin Rafferty, 1982) depend on an audience's ability to recognize their images as referring to real events happening in front of the camera at the moment the image was taken. Even a film like Godard and Gorin's *Letter to Jane,* which examines the ideology of a photograph of Jane Fonda in North Vietnam, implicitly relies on our belief that what we see in a photograph was really there. Philip Rosen argues that the work of both fiction and nonfiction films interested in the past involves managing the traces of history in the image (their indexicality), negotiating the particular investments that spectators have in past events.[29] And Bill Nichols, writing about *Roses in December* (Ana Carrigan and Bernard Stone, 1982), speaks of "the historical arena to which the stickiness of the film's indexical sounds and images constantly returns us."[30]

For Godard, once photographic indexicality is removed as a basic axiom, the terms of the relation between film and history can no longer be assumed. In place of indexicality, he develops a range of new resources for working through the relation of film to history, and I'll deal with a number of them over the course of this chapter. At the most basic level, however, this relation to history comes to be a matter of the status of the "*histoire*" in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* both the stories about and the histories of cinema that Godard is interested in telling. And that's where we'll start.[31]

Histoire(s) du cinéma works on the premise that the central stories it tells are about the history of cinema itself. The idea seems to be this: cinema needs to learn how to think about history and to do so without drawing on the guarantee that photographic indexicality provides. One of the pieces of history, at least in the twentieth century, is cinema, and so if cinema can investigate anything involved in history it ought to be able to investigate itself. Cinema, then, can learn how to think about history by learning how to think about itself, not just as a physical medium but as an art with its own *histoires.* This is by no means simple. In episode 1B, Godard describes cinema as "a world still almost without history, but a world that narrates." No definitive history of cinema has been established, but there are nonetheless stories about cinema, told through cinema; these will need to be excavated, uncovered, and recounted. It is by telling stories about and by cinema that Godard lays the foundation for bringing film into contact with history.

Godard gets at the status of the stories he tells through a curious comparison. In episode 1B, he remarks, "The cinema, like Christianity, is not founded on a historical truth. It gives us a narrative, a story, and then says to us: believe. Not: grant this narrative, this story, the faith appropriate to the story, but believe

whatever occurs."[32] Godard suggests that in neither cinema nor Christianity are we provided with images (or narratives) whose accuracy we are to judge for ourselves in relation to their correspondence with historical events. The point of the parable of the loaves and the fish does not have to do with its historical plausibility. Biblical stories provide narratives that demand of us unconditional belief, if we are able to accept them at all. And so, Godard suggests, do films.

Much of the work of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* involves these kinds of stories. Some are more or less factual: a story of the films produced by Irving Thalberg in 1A or the legacy of Italian neorealism in 3A. Others are less obviously so: a story about Howard Hughes as the subject of *Citizen Kane* (1941) in 1A or a story about the invention of projection by a French prisoner in a Russian jail in 2A.[33] Though Godard will want to bring the stories of cinema he tells into a relation to extracinematic history, this relation is not a matter of truth or veridical correspondence. (In episode 3A, he prints the word *erreur* over six factual mistakes, each time supplying the correct information in titles, but does not change the video itself.) The requirement to believe in stories—the stories that have been told, not necessarily the stories that are true—is behind his repeated statements that newsreel footage is inadequate for his purposes, that photography is not enough. This requirement is also why, in episodes 1B and 3B, he is eager to tell the history of what he describes as the films that never existed (or were lost in some way).[34]

The problems Godard is concerned with are obviously not those of standard histories. His interest in the history of cinema is unlike Ernst Gombrich's *The Story of Art,* which provides a roughly chronological narrative from cave paintings to the present, driven by a general increase in realism. Instead, Godard is more attuned to the nonlinear histories of Faure and Malraux. While he may not subscribe to their cyclical historical analyses, their example offers historiographic and narrative possibilities. At the very beginning of *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* for example, Godard shows himself working at his ubiquitous typewriter and reciting several film titles. He then cuts to a different shot of him at his desk, as he looks up and says, "*Histoires* of cinema, with an *s*. All the *histoires* that have been. That will be or have been? That there were" (*Histoires* du cinéma, avec un *s*. Toutes les *histoires* qu'il y aurait. Qu'il y aura ou qu'il y aurait? Qu'il y a eu). Rather than one large *histoire,* a single story about cinema, Godard is proposing to tell a range of different stories—"*histoires, avec un* s"—about cinema (the films of war, the films of the new wave, the films of the great interwar cinemas, etc.), even stories that take place in different tenses. As a result, it becomes possible for him to ask, "How should the history of cinema be told?" and to answer this in terms that involve inventive and nonlinear modes of explanation. The form to be taken by a history of cinema, in short, becomes an open question. "All these histories that are mine," Godard muses in episode 2B, "how can I tell them? Show them, perhaps."

As Godard sees it, then, the first history that's a problem for cinema is its own. The history of cinema is neither simple nor self-evident nor single. It's not even, in a sense, really out there. It will need to be created, told as if for the first time. And so we have to follow the way Godard establishes the terms of and need for the history of cinema before we can begin work on the relation between cinema and history. In large part, this will have to do with the way he models cinema on a wider artistic genealogy: "What story do we want, assuming we're worthy of *The Charterhouse of Parma* and *Crime and Punishment?*" Godard's insistence on this point leads him to place cinema within an artistic history, to secure its position as the inheritor of an artistic tradition from which he can derive the terms for a genuine history of cinema—and eventually connect the history of cinema to the history of the twentieth century.

Godard's project is formed by the intersection of two propositions implied by this reliance on stories: (1) that the entire history of art is a precursor to cinema and (2) that what cinema lacks, and therefore needs most of all, is a history of its own. Let's consider each in turn. We can see the first in a brief sequence from episode 3A.[35] After several shots organized around intertitles of Bazin's famous question—"Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?"—Godard cuts to a series of Manet's portraits of women. Quoting Bataille and Malraux, he remarks on a change in the history of art. Whereas in portraits by Vermeer, da Vinci, and Corot the sitters seem absorbed in themselves, removed from the world, in Manet's work "the internal world has become one with the cosmos." The women in his portraits insistently say, "I know what you are thinking about"; not only do they address themselves outward to the viewers, Manet makes the activity of thinking, the sheer existence of an inner world, visible within the paintings themselves.

So far, Godard is following a relatively familiar (though certainly not uncontested) interpretive path. But then he makes a leap: "And with Edouard Manet begins modern painting. In other words, the cinematograph: that is, forms leading toward the word. To be very precise, a form that thinks *[une forme qui pense]*. The fact that cinema was made initially for thinking will be forgotten straight away, but that's another story. The flame was finally extinguished at Auschwitz." At one level, this seems like a familiar Godardian story. From the initial glory of silent cinema, a gradual decline comes with the increasing dominance of Hollywood, the prominence of sound cinema, and finally the key moment when cinema fails to engage productively with the Holocaust.

Behind this story, however, is an account of cinema's artistic and intellectual possibilities, of what it could have been but somehow failed to become. Godard identifies cinema's power as the ability to produce thoughts—more specifically, to produce the activity of thinking—and claims that this feature is what links it to the history of modern painting. Both have an ability to create forms and im-

ages that show historical content, that reveal events, persons, and beliefs in a visible and public form. (The failure to do this is "a thought that forms" *[une pensée qui forme],* an image that shapes or controls the thinking of its spectators: "In cinema it's the form that thinks. In bad cinema [or television], it's the thought that forms.")[36] Manet, by emphasizing the activity of thinking in his paintings, by showing how painting can be used to display thought, clears the ground that cinema will later occupy.

The second proposition, that cinema lacks a history of its own, is more difficult to grasp. In episode 2A, Godard says that cinema has "a history that has been told, one might say, but never recounted" and that, therefore, "there hasn't been any history." It's not the case that too few films have been produced for a history of the cinema to be written or that there haven't been major developments and transformations (stylistic, technological, industrial, etc.) that could be used to produce a broad overview of major trends. What's missing is cinema's ability to understand itself as having a history, to produce films in a way that makes clear the history that precedes them: to acknowledge the past in the process of creating new work. Godard claims, for example, that "at the time when Carné, Delluc, and Clair made their first films, there was no critical or historical tradition [of cinema] yet,"[37] and this limited the possibilities of what they could do.

Taken together, the two propositions appear in conflict. The problem is not, as we might think, that by any reasonable standard a history of cinema does in fact exist, that it has been written numerous times and in numerous ways since Terry Ramsaye's *Million and One Nights* in 1925. Rather, if cinema builds on the history of other artistic media and does so apparently without much effort, how can it be that it has no history of its own?

Godard has a term for this state of affairs. At several points, he talks about cinema as being in a condition he describes as "the childhood of art" *(l'enfance de l'art).* It's a phrase that crops up in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* most notably at the end of the section on Alfred Hitchcock in episode 4A, and it also furnishes the title of a short film he made in 1991. The primary implication is that cinema resides in a state of immaturity, that it has not yet ascended to the status of a genuine art. It may draw on the other arts—"there are in effect some snippets of the history of painting" (2A)—but it is still developing, and telling a story about its own history is crucial to this process. Behind this position is the rhetoric of lineage, the way that being a child entails a set of shared characteristics with one's parents. Cinema may be in an infantile state, but it has resources and possibilities that come from its more mature progenitors; art, and painting in particular, models a state into which cinema might grow.

The idea of cinema becoming a genuine art, then, does not have to do with a need to be recognized by cultural institutions as being on par with painting,

sculpture, and the other established arts. The legacy of that effort, which I discussed in chapter 1, involved placing cinema within institutions of cultural distinction, ensuring for cinema the respect it lacked in its first decades. Godard is after something else.

The problem of maturity is a recurring theme in Godard's late films and videos, where he frequently identifies it as having to do with stories. *Éloge de l'amour,* for example, describes itself as working through the three central stages of life: youth, adulthood, and old age. Unlike the young and the old, whose states can be easily recognized, adults are more difficult to understand: they "have to have a story," Edgar notes at one point. When Phillipe runs into Edgar outside a bookstore, his companion asks why he addresses the younger man as "monsieur." Phillipe answers by saying, "Because he is the only one who is trying to become an adult"—adulthood here described as a task (a process) rather than a naturally occurring state. Maturity even becomes a historical claim. The grandfather tells Edgar that the problem of the Resistance was that "it never went through adulthood" and so never developed a story of its own, never tried to understand itself as being in and having a history.[38]

Histoire(s) du cinéma applies this thinking to the history of cinema. (We might say: if Godard takes cinema to be a form of thinking, one of the things it can think about is itself.) The problem cinema faces—and which it has faced—is one of maturity, of not understanding itself well enough to have a story. Across the episodes, Godard works to show the conditions under which cinema *could have* become mature, raised to the status of an adult (a genuine art) by telling a story (or multiple stories) about its past. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* tries to create that story, to tell the histories of cinema such that we can (now) recognize what it would have been like for cinema to be the full-fledged artistic medium it sought to become.

Two features of Godard's *histoires* will need accounting for. The first is the fact that the history of cinema he tells is deeply incomplete, and fairly obviously so. In any history, some things are left out while others are highlighted. Yet Godard systematically excludes vast areas of the history of cinema: apart from a couple of brief references, East Asian cinema is largely absent, as are Latin American, African, Indian, and other (primarily, though not exclusively) non-Western cinemas. He also seems oblivious or indifferent to the main currents of cinema after 1960, from New American Cinema in the 1970s to the renaissance of Iranian cinema in the 1990s. From remarks that crop up throughout his interviews and writings,[39] we know he watched these films, but they are not in evidence in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.*

Rather than an oddity to be explained away, Godard's practice of exclusion is a deep methodological feature. In episode 2A, in a moment I discuss later in the chapter, he sets out an extraordinarily curtailed history of literature: "The liter-

ary historian says there were Homer, Cervantes, Joyce. Once you've said those three, they include Faulkner and Flaubert." From this partial history, Godard draws a lesson about cinema: "So there have been very few—I'd say ten—films. We've got ten fingers; there are ten films." While this statement fits themes I've touched on elsewhere (the motif of hands, for example), it begs important questions. Under what description of the history of literature are these authors the only important ones? Under what description of the history of cinema have only ten films been made that count as cinema?

The second feature that needs accounting for is the way Godard sees the history of cinema as being bound up with the horrors of violence and war in the twentieth century. Godard is certainly not the only one whose history of cinema pivots around World War II. Bazin implicitly divides his account of the history of cinema—the "evolution" of its major stylistic developments—around the war, when he sees a long-take, deep-space aesthetic being replaced by an engagement with the facticity of everyday reality (as exemplified by Rossellini). Deleuze is more overt, explicitly naming the war as the reason for the break between the regimes of the "movement-image" and the "time-image" (and motivating the break between his two cinema books). But whereas Bazin and Deleuze discern in the trauma of the war the germination of a new kind of cinema appropriate to changing historical conditions, Godard worries over an end to the ambitions of cinema altogether: "The flame was finally extinguished at Auschwitz." What was cinema supposed to do but couldn't? Did it have a historical mission that it failed to take up? If we remember that in episode 3A cinema's ability to think derives from its inheritance of a tradition of modern painting, perhaps the artistic possibilities cinema had—the possibility for it to come to maturity as a genuine *art*—ended in Auschwitz as well.

4. ON CERTAINTY

So far, I've been trying to draw out two key methodological premises behind the work Godard does in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* The first involves a movement away from an account of cinema as an essentially photographic medium. The second has to do with creating a history of cinema—"the one, the true" *(le seul, le vrai),* Godard says at one point—out of the material of that history: clips, texts, sounds, and allusions. The intersection of these two premises has occasioned the most sustained and serious criticism of *Histoire(s) du cinéma.*

The worry comes from the way they go together. By removing the usual means by which a film is taken to refer to the world and then emphasizing the importance of the stories told in the video series, Godard seems indifferent to the actual historical embeddedness of the works on which he draws. The resulting criticism is that Godard, in a work that is explicitly about history, is in fact profoundly

unhistorical, that he is not so much a historian as a formalist, that he is less interested in the history of cinema than in his own stories.

The most developed version of this criticism is found in a series of articles by Jacques Rancière.[40] Across them, Rancière argues that Godard constructs his montage by removing the original narrative and historical context from clips so as to embed them more easily (and more completely) into the *histoires* he creates. This process, Rancière thinks, results in a dangerous kind of aesthetic formalism, predicated on the "pure sensory presence" of isolated details found in symbolist and mystical aesthetic dogmas. He writes, "What Godard sets up . . . is nothing else than the aesthetic dream: the dream of 'free' presence stripped of the links of discourse, narration, resemblance; stripped, indeed, of any relation to anything else except the pure sensory power it calls to presence."[41] Godard's images refer to or engage with no history apart from the specific *histoire* he makes out of them.

This is a serious charge. It suggests that, if the two basic premises of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* hold true—that reference is not given by virtue of a film's photographic base, that the history of cinema needs to be created anew—then it cannot achieve what it proclaims to be its own ambitions. That is, if the meaning of a film used by Godard is not in an indexically determined relation to the world, and if that film's own history is removed in favor of the story into which he places it, then the *histoires* he tells would float free of the world with which they are supposed to interact. The whole series would be, in effect, a self-defeating enterprise, a methodological failure. Therefore, if Godard is to be able to claim that the history of cinema can productively interact with the history of the twentieth century, the terms on which he constructs his historiographic montage have to be understood differently from Rancière's account of them.

Rancière's reading of *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* though spelled out in a variety of ways, is primarily built on an interpretation of a passage in episode 4A, a sequence Godard titles "Introduction to the Method of Alfred Hitchcock."[42] In the intersection of voice-over and images, Rancière discerns what he takes to be the paradigm for the way clips are placed into *Histoire(s) du cinéma* more generally. Against this, I will argue that the sequence in fact presents a different picture of Godard's project, one far less susceptible to charges of formalism.

The sequence begins with Hitchcock's own voice telling us about his craft, placed over a superimposition of him (in medium close-up with his hands outstretched) and a detail of Caravaggio's *Madonna of the Rosary* (1607). Godard then begins to recite the following lines in voice-over while showing a montage of clips from Hitchcock's films:

> We've forgotten why Joan Fontaine leans over the edge of the cliff, and what was it that Joel McCrea was going to do in Holland. We don't remember why Montgomery Clift was maintaining eternal silence, or why Janet Leigh stopped at the Bates

motel, or why Teresa Wright still loves Uncle Charlie. We've forgotten what it was that Henry Fonda wasn't entirely guilty of, and why exactly the American government had hired Ingrid Bergman.

But, we remember a handbag. But, we remember a bus in the desert. But, we remember a glass of milk, the sails of a windmill, a hairbrush. But, we remember a row of bottles, a pair of spectacles, a sheet of music, a bunch of keys. Because through them and with them, Alfred Hitchcock succeeded where Alexander, Julius Caesar, Hitler, and Napoleon had all failed. By taking control of the universe.

The clips we see during this speech mostly show the moments referred to by Godard, though rarely in synchronization with the voice-over. Rancière reads the sequence as being about "the primacy of images over plot," drawing attention to Godard's claim that what we remember is not the narrative of the films but isolated images that stand out within them: "Hitchcock's cinema, Godard is saying, is made of images whose power is indifferent to the stories into which they've been arranged."[43] Rancière takes Godard's own practice to follow these same terms. His complaint is this: "Disconnecting images from stories, Godard assumes, is connecting them so as to make History."[44] In this reading, Godard is willfully indifferent to the original context and meaning of the clips he uses. In transposing a clip from the history of cinema into his own work, he effects an abstraction that allows him to assume control over its meaning, adapting the isolated fragment for new purposes.

I think it's a mistake to read the sequence as one of unambiguous adulation. After all, Godard describes this method as a kind of imperial control—presumably not a good thing—cashed out in the form of images of violence to women and the association of Hitchcock's cinematic ambitions with the strivings of dubious historical figures: Alexander, Julius Caesar, Hitler, and Napoleon. If Godard creates a tribute to the power of Hitchcock's films, he also attempts to undo that very same power. Implicitly diagnosing himself as having fallen under Hitchcock's spell, he seeks to cure himself (and us): call it a case of remembering, repeating, and working through. A talking cure of sorts.[45]

The first thing to recognize is that the claims in Godard's voice-over are patently absurd. *Of course* we remember the plots of Hitchcock's films: we remember that Marion Crane stole forty thousand dollars from her employer and that she got off the main highway because of the rain; we remember that Ingrid Bergman is being sent to disrupt a Nazi spy ring in Argentina; we remember that Joan Fontaine is worried that her husband, Cary Grant, may be trying to kill her. Rancière notes this fact—"[Godard's] argument, as such, is easily refuted"—but takes its absurdity to indicate a deeper truth: that Godard is not concerned with the original narrative context in which the images appeared.[46] But to say this is to miss something important about the sequence. Even if we didn't remember such narrative information, Godard's highlight reel reminds us: Marion driving in the downpour from *Psycho;* the uranium spilling out of the bottle from *Notorious;* the

lighter in the gutter from *Strangers on a Train;* the strangely lit glass of milk from *Suspicion.* These are not random images but narratively charged moments.

Godard certainly defines his own practice in relation to Hitchcock, but he does so through opposition rather than emulation. This opposition is fairly schematic. At various moments in the sequence, Godard includes aural recordings of Hitchcock discussing his own method and then works to undercut them. At the center of the sequence, for example, is this statement by Hitchcock: "The public aren't aware of what we call montage, or in other words the cutting of one image to another. They go by so rapidly, so that they [the public] are absorbed by the content that they look at on the screen." If Hitchcock argues that the public is drawn into the stories being told, absorbed into the narratives, Godard has been saying all along that what we remember about his films is precisely *not* their narrative—"we have forgotten" *[on a oublié]*—but rather the privileged moments, the instances of cinematic detail. Through this gesture, Godard deploys a cinephilic approach that emphasizes details, a move designed to undermine the narrative omnipotence Hitchcock marks as his ambition.[47]

These issues come to a head in the montage Godard creates, an arrangement that works against Hitchcock's claim that the public's absorption with narrative content leads to their unawareness of montage. As Hitchcock says this, Godard shows a clip from the shower sequence in *Psycho,* one of the most recognizable acts of montage in the history of cinema. And then, when Hitchcock claims that the public doesn't notice the images—rather, the shots—as they go by, Godard produces a precise counterpoint. Right as Hitchcock says these words, Godard inserts a shot from *Vertigo,* with Kim Novak (as Judy remade, or made over, as Madeleine) reaching to embrace James Stewart. The shot is slowed down, advanced frame by frame. If we have never noticed the passing of images, we do now.

We can discern in this strategy a logic that differs from Rancière's charge. As Godard sets it out, the control Hitchcock strives for depends on an unthinking absorption into a film's narrative: the audience is caught up by the stories, moved along, manipulated. At several points in the sequence, Godard takes pains to link Hitchcock's emphasis on narrative to a kind of seriality: the idea that, as Hitchcock puts it, "one picture comes up after another." The iconography of seriality is in the fireworks from *To Catch a Thief* that accompany this phrase; the explosions come one after another, each one following another in the same place within the frame. It is also present in the row of bottles from *Notorious* and in the notes of music on a score from *The Man Who Knew Too Much.* Against seriality and the dominance of narrative it implies, Godard employs the rhetoric of cinephilia and its fetishistic emphasis on detail. Rather than serving as a straightforward declaration of principle or method against the self-evidence of our memory of these films—the way Rancière understands the sequence—Godard's

attention to free-standing details constitutes a calculated attack on a specific target, a way of undoing the spell or thrall of the original films.

In chapter 5, I will come back to this sequence to show how Godard develops an alternate account of montage out of his engagement with Hitchcock. For now, it is sufficient to have shown that Rancière misdescribes its orientation—and hence its point. Put bluntly, Godard's attention to details does not require him to abstract each clip from its original context. Even as we recognize that a particular clip is from *Psycho* or *Notorious,* we also feel the way it stands out from the film to strike us with an effect on its own. The recognition of context, narrative or otherwise, does not preclude an appreciation for the power of detail.

The real problem, I think, is this. Rancière's charge of formalism gets started because of the basic fact that it is impossible to recognize and identify the vast array of clips and references in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.[48] Even Céline Scemama's definitive "score" gets a number of references wrong or is unable to pinpoint their precise source. (Hitchcock, in a sense, is an exception to this tendency, precisely because his films are so well known.) Not only that, the associative contexts that drive the connections are often difficult to grasp: sometimes they concern matters of plot, sometimes personnel, sometimes style. At other times, they appear to be based on a private association Godard has with the particular film. And this is all prior to the actual interpretive challenge of understanding the relations among clips that can potentially emerge from their backstory.

Rancière's mistake is to take a practical difficulty—the fact that we can't know every reference or figure out why one image follows another—and elevate it into a general principle. Because at any given moment what we see might not be recognizable, he assumes that recognition simply cannot be involved at all in the functioning of *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* In every case, therefore, the clip Godard uses ought to be treated as if it were isolated and abstracted from its original context. A difficulty of interpretation becomes a source of radical skepticism about meaning, an anxiety about the groundlessness of the historical (and film-historical) claims being made.

The flip side to Rancière's skepticism is no better. It holds on to a certainty about what the video series means on the basis of the presumed self-evidence of Godard's intentions. Brody, for example, writes, "The series is the embodiment of a single, dominant coherent argument, which Godard himself voices with the clarion directness of a lecturer. . . . Ultimately, the most remarkable aspect of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is not its complexity but its simplicity. The text of Godard's own remarks, mainly in voice-over, would—if transcribed—comprise a concise explanation of a powerful set of arguments."[49] Where Rancière claims that the central meaning of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is to be found only in the complex montage that makes up its sequences, Brody argues the reverse: the montage of images,

texts, and sounds is irrelevant to the larger meaning of the series, at best orna-
mental and at worst confusing. The terms of their criticisms may be different, but
the underlying assumption is the same: the only possible meaning in a given se-
ries of images must be self-evident, provided by the specific *histoire* Godard tells.
Otherwise meaning cannot exist at all.

It may be the case that we can never know for sure whether contextual knowl-
edge about a clip, reference, or allusion matters for our understanding of a given
sequence in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. That's ok. It is sufficient that there is a *standing
possibility* for relating clips to their original context, that, at least in some in-
stances, a clip draws on meaning from outside the *histoire* into which Godard
places it. This possibility is alive at each moment in the video series, even when
the *histoire* being told is self-contained. What Rancière and Brody demand is the
absence of any uncertainty and, therefore, the removal of the difficulty of deter-
mining how sequences in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* work. And that's neither possible
nor desirable.

It's telling, then, that Rancière's own interpretations of specific sequences in-
clude pieces of contextual information in a way that contradicts the very theo-
retical principle he discerns and criticizes in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. In an analysis
of a sequence from episode 4B, he describes a superimposition of Murnau's *Nos-
feratu* (1922) over the shots of an audience laughing from the end of King Vidor's
The Crowd (1928):

> Of little importance here is the fictional situation in this film from the last days
> of silent movies: the final reconciliation in a music-hall of a couple on the verge of
> breaking up. Godard's montage is clearly symbolic. It shows us the captivation of
> the crowd in darkened movie theatres by the Hollywood industry, which feeds it
> with a warm imaginary by burning a reality that will soon demand payment in
> real blood and real tears . . . the power of Hollywood that vampirized cinema
> crowds, but also liquidated the artists/prophets of cinema à la Murnau.[50]

Rancière wants to make an argument about Godard's understanding of the rela-
tion between Hollywood and art cinema, and he does so by assuming that the
connections between images do not depend on the plot of the films themselves so
much as on their original historical context. But recall that his methodological
claim about *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is stated quite differently: Godard, he says,
works on the clips so that they are "reintegrated into a pure kingdom of images."
My point is simple. Once Rancière constructs an analysis of a sequence that
draws on information from *outside* that sequence, he violates his own theoretical
framework. His arguments are illuminating and insightful, but by his own lights
he shouldn't be able to make them at all.

Another example helps make this clear. At the outset of a sequence from the
beginning of episode 1A, Godard shows a clip of Fred Astaire and Cyd Charisse

dancing from *The Band Wagon* (Minnelli, 1953). As the clip runs, he begins to intercut it with the summoning of Mephistopheles in Murnau's *Faust* (1926); the two films are matched so as to make the movement of characters in each clip work in harmony. As Rancière sees it, Godard is using *Faust* to make a point about the fate of Hollywood: "Cyd Charisse dancing in *The Band Wagon* isn't just an expression of the immanence of choreographic movement to the moving image, but is presented also as an illustration of Hollywood's pact with the devil, symbolized by Mephisto's appearance in Murnau's *Faust.* Mephisto himself is a double symbol, a figure for Hollywood grabbing this infant art with a mighty hand, and for this art itself, the art of Murnau, who became in his turn the victim of a pact he brought to the screen."[51] For Rancière, the connection between the clips is primarily thematic: the fate of Hollywood is seen in terms of a disturbing, if seductive, pact with the devil. (Of course, even *this* claim requires knowledge about the clips' original narrative.) But surely Godard is playing with the fact that the plot of *The Band Wagon* is organized around the (farcically unsuccessful) production of a stage version of *Faust.* And this is something we don't know unless we recognize the original narrative of the films. Bringing *these* two films together makes no sense without that knowledge; otherwise, any seductive sequence from a Hollywood film would do. Godard's sequence fails unless we recognize the original context of the clip.[52]

I don't wish to deny that Rancière is struggling with a genuine difficulty in Godard's videographic practice. At times, clips function independently of their original context; at other times, they rely heavily on it. But Rancière fails to see that there is no universal model for interpretation here, no absolute principle of making meaning. There are no hard and fast rules to determine which instances do and which don't require contextual knowledge in order to be understood (regardless of whether that information is internal or external to the film itself). The viewer is simply faced with a juxtaposition in the stream of images, a moment that demands interpretation. Throughout *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* Godard emphasizes these moments as acts of *judgment.*

5. LA GUERRE EST LÀ

Even if no set rule determines how Godard uses clips from the history of cinema, there is still something like an approach, a general way of understanding how they (are made to) refer to a historical context. In this section, I'm going to return to the topic of cinema and reference by looking at one of the most challenging sequences—formally and ethically—in the entire video series: the story he tells in episode 1A about the fate of cinema before, during, and after World War II.

Godard will draw on photography to set out the terms of this project, though he understands its role in a particular way. Two remarks in episode 1B suggest

how photography matters to *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* The first comes halfway through the episode, in the midst of a discussion of the Lumière brothers and the physical mechanisms of film. Godard says in voice-over, "Heir of photography, yes. But in inheriting this history the cinema inherited not just its rights to reproduce part of reality, but above all its duties." Whatever else photography does and however it does it, it works to reproduce the world. It has, Godard emphasizes, the right to do that. But he also claims that, in exercising that right, photography incurs an obligation to be a witness, to be there at events that need to be recorded. As a result, when cinema inherits the rights of photography, it inherits this obligation as well.[53] Again, Godard uses the rhetoric of inheritance to acknowledge cinema's link to an earlier medium while still retaining a distinction: cinema is *only* the "heir," the legal recipient of photography's legacy. Cinema takes up photography's rights and duties without thereby *being* photography. The distinction may be fine, but it is important: cinema contains but is not defined by photography, even when it exercises the rights it derives from the older medium.

The second remark, one of the key definitional statements in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* gives a sense of how cinema differs from photography. Godard declares, "The cinema projected, and men saw that the world was there." It's a statement that suggests that cinema allows people to see their own world on the screen, as if for the first time. But he also seems to be saying that it was only after cinema began projecting that people could see there is a world *at all.* Cinema opened up a mode of seeing that confirms the very existence of the world; it is less a recording of the world than a revelation of that world to a public as a projected film.

Godard takes this dual imperative to constitute cinema's central mission, and he thinks the test of its willingness to carry it out involves World War II and the Holocaust. As he sees it, cinema had an obligation both to record these events and to put them on its screens, to make the atrocities visible to a public. What he takes to be cinema's inability (or unwillingness) to do this marks its general failure and spells the end of its claims to importance in and for the twentieth century. The historical crisis of 1939–45 is the moral abyss from which cinema is unable to return.

We are in strange territory here, and a number of questions need to be answered. Some of these are internal to Godard's position: What could it mean for cinema to fail? In what sense do these historical events occasion a crisis in cinema? And what do postwar films amount to, if not cinema? Others are external: Is it wrong to treat the Holocaust primarily in terms of its implication for cinema? Is it fair to say that cinema ought to show, or have shown, images of mass murder? The external questions in particular have occasioned a series of high-profile debates, often revolving around charges of antisemitism.[54] But the internal ones are even more crucial to understanding Godard's project.

Godard claims that cinema fails twice with respect to the war. First, cinema fails because it does not realize that before the war it had already shown the genocide in the guise of fictional films. This is a strange claim, and Godard explains it by pointing to a series of examples that seem to foreshadow the horrors to come: the clearing of the ghetto in *The Great Dictator,* the hunt sequence in *La règle du jeu,* the references to concentration camps in *To Be or Not to Be.* The suggestion is not that these films show moral equivalents to the historical events themselves; rather, they indicate something about the desires (and fears) of the world at the end of the 1930s. The failure at issue is that people were unable to recognize what they were seeing as allusions to events that were beginning to take place, and Godard holds that *cinema* was itself responsible for this public blindness, that it failed to make itself appropriately understood. The second failure follows a more familiar line: cinema was not in the camps during the Holocaust and so did not record the genocide. "Nobody filmed the concentration camps, no one wanted to show them, or to see them," Godard says.[55] The documentary impulse that cinema inherited from photography, the right and duty to "reproduce part of reality," is abdicated when it fails to record (and project) the one event that really needed it.

These two failures form a narrative of sorts, one of Godard's *histoires.* If fictional cinema failed to alert the world to what was going to happen, a redemption of cinema might have been possible through its ability to document the Holocaust. At one point in episode 1A, Godard remarks, "From Vienna to Madrid, from Siodmak to Capra, from Paris to Los Angeles and Moscow, from Renoir to Malraux and Dovzhenko, the great directors of fiction were incapable of controlling the vengeance that they had staged twenty times over." The fantasies of fear and violence, rage and desire, that had populated the cinema's screens during the 1920s and 1930s were now being enacted in the world outside the theaters, and the people who had put those fantasies there were unable to control their spread. It's here that the documentary enters: "It's the poor newsreel that has to wash clean of all suspicion—blood and tears—just as the pavement is swept when it's already too late, and the army has opened fire on the crowd." Cinema's photographic inheritance gave it a second chance, as it were, to take hold of and perhaps change the historical world around it.

In his most eloquent tribute to the documentary image, Godard says, "Even scratched to death, a simple rectangle thirty-five millimeters wide saves the honor of all reality," and he talks of the "martyrdom and resurrection of the documentary." The war provided an occasion for the rediscovery of facts, the importance of being attuned to the world: the fulfillment of the rights and duties cinema inherited from photography. But this didn't happen, or didn't happen enough. Not only was cinema unable to show audiences atrocities that were yet to happen;

neither could it reveal these events as they were taking place. And so cinema failed twice over, losing its vitality once and for all. When Godard says that "the flame was finally extinguished at Auschwitz," he's talking not so much about a humanistic impulse or Enlightenment rationality as about the way the powers and possibilities of cinema were shown to be historically irrelevant. (There is also a third, postwar failure; I discuss this below.)

The key sequence for this project, one that has generated controversy about its ethical and aesthetic claims, takes place most of the way through episode 1A. Over a detail from Goya's etching *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (1797–98), Godard says, "And if George Stevens hadn't been the first to use the first sixteen-millimeter color film at Auschwitz and Ravensbrück, Elizabeth Taylor's air of happiness *[bonheur]* would never have found a place in the sun." As Godard mentions the names of the camps, he cuts briefly to a black screen, then to color footage Stevens took of corpses at Ravensbrück as a war photographer for the army. The name of Elizabeth Taylor triggers another cut: over the documentary footage, Godard begins intercutting and superimposing a clip from Stevens's *A Place in the Sun,* showing Taylor cradling the head of Montgomery Clift in her lap and caressing his hair. After several moments, Godard cuts from Clift looking up to a shot of a corpse, mouth open and staring up, a color image that seems filmed off a television screen. He says, "Thirty-nine, forty-four: martyrdom and resurrection of the documentary," a time period that goes from the beginning of the war to (presumably) the liberation of France. Godard then returns to *A Place in the Sun,* as Taylor stands up from the rock where she and Clift have been lying; he superimposes over the clip a detail from Giotto's *Noli me tangere* (1320), rotated 90 degrees so that Mary Magdalene now reaches down from the top of the frame while the hand of Christ is visible at the bottom. Taylor bends down to kiss Clift, then rises back up; in so doing, her figure mimics the gesture of the Magdalene, and she assumes a pose such that it is now *her* hand that moves to touch the hand of Christ [fig. 21]. Adapting lines from Georges Bernanos, Godard says, "O, how marvelous to be able to watch what one can't see. O sweet miracle of our blind eyes!"

The controversy generated by this sequence largely involves issues of representation, in which Godard's use of footage of the camps is contrasted with the "negative aesthetic" of Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah.* Lanzmann argued that, by using photographic images of Holocaust victims, Godard effectively belies the scale of the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis. Since no image can possibly represent the entirety of what happened, images should not be presented at all: what is shown can only concern *these* people at *this* moment.[56] For Lanzmann, Godard embraces a logic that admits the possibility of visual proof to determine that the Holocaust took place, thereby implicitly giving credence to the position of deniers.[57] At the same time, Godard has also been accused of using a Christian

FIGURE 21. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 1A

framework to understand an event that happened to Jews. The reference to miracles (via the Catholic Bernanos), the image of *Noli me tangere,* and a later quotation from Paul on the image: all these seem to import a theological framework antithetical to the nature of the event they purport to describe.

An extensive debate has occurred between Lanzmann and Godard and between supporters of each.[58] Yet even for those who support Godard, Lanzmann's arguments set the terms of discussion. Alan Wright, for example, argues that the juxtaposition of *A Place in the Sun* with images from Ravensbrück does not itself show history or reality, but instead "produces an apparition of the Real, a sublime recognition of the impossibility of doing justice to reality." Since the history at issue in the sequence is outside all forms of representation, cinema can only gesture toward it. In this vein, Wright concludes that Godard's montage "make[s] visible the abysmal structure at the heart of cinematic representation, the absence that haunts every film image, i.e. the traumatic kernel of the Real."[59] Montage shows, or makes apparent, what any individual shot cannot contain.

Part of the power of Lanzmann's argument is the way it corresponds to basic assumptions within film theory. On the model of the index, film images refer to particular things—and *only* to particular things. Therefore, if what's at issue is not any one concrete thing but rather something general (or conceptual), we are

led to look elsewhere than the image to find its presence. Eisenstein's theory of montage is one example, in which meaning emerges not in any shot but in the conflict *between* shots.[60] Equally prominent, especially with regard to Godard, is Deleuze's argument for the "interstice" that forms in the act of combination: "The interaction of two images engenders or traces a frontier which belongs to neither one nor the other."[61]

In contrast to this, I've been trying to show that Godard treats problems of reference and history very differently. The kind of failure he is concerned with is not the inherent inadequacy of representation—on which everything revolves around cinema's inability to show reality as such, a reality, as Wright puts it, in which "the name of that Thing is Auschwitz"—but a failure that is historically specific and contingent. In this way, I'm going to argue that the sequence from episode 1A functions as a model for the overall ambitions of *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* illustrating Godard's general approach to the history of cinema and its engagement with the history of the twentieth century, including but not limited to the Holocaust. It shows the project to be one of teaching an audience how to discern the history within the images, how to read the way history enters into and is mediated by cinema. Godard's juxtaposition of clips from fictional films with newsreel images shows us how to see and understand the historical reality on which films draw. It provides a user's manual of sorts.[62]

One way to understand the sequence from episode 1A is that it makes a relatively uncomplicated causal claim: Stevens could not have made *A Place in the Sun* without the experience of filming the camps during the war. Georges Didi-Huberman glosses this line of thought when he writes, "It was simply necessary that the allies win the real war for George Stevens to be able to return to Hollywood and to his little fictional stories."[63] If this is true, however, it is so only in a fairly trivial sense, leaving unanswered an important question: to what extent did this experience, as compared with anything else that happened to Stevens, affect his presentation of Elizabeth Taylor in *A Place in the Sun?*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Godard is engaging with Bazin's critical voice here. In an essay on William Wyler, Bazin writes,

> In a certain sense, *The Best Years of Our Lives* [1946] is still related to American wartime propaganda films, to the didactic mission of the film unit of the American army, from which unit Wyler had just been discharged. The war and the particular view of reality that it engendered have deeply influenced the European cinema, as we all know; the war's consequences were less strongly felt in Hollywood. Yet, several American filmmakers took part in the war, and some of the horror, some of the shocking truths, with which it overwhelmed the world, could be translated by them as well into an ethic of realism. "All three of us (Capra, Stevens, and Wyler) took part in the war. It had a very strong influence on each of us. Without that experience, I couldn't have made my film the way I did. We have learned to under-

stand the world better. . . . I know that George Stevens has not been the same since he saw the corpses at Dachau. We were forced to realize that Hollywood has rarely reflected the world and the time in which people live." These few lines of Wyler's sufficiently illuminate his purpose in making *The Best Years of Our Lives*.[64]

American directors worked through their wartime experiences in the films they made afterward, and so, Bazin argues, these films can and should be understood as engagements with the war and its horrors, even when they're dealing with other topics.

Bazin insists that this is not simply a matter of psychology. In their nonfiction work during World War II, American filmmakers discovered an ethical obligation to realism, a moral imperative that was later absorbed into their studio projects. What matters, in other words, is the way an *attitude* was transposed from documentary to fiction, less an ethic and aesthetic of witnessing than the way fictional films work through wartime experiences. From this perspective, a more complicated interpretation of the Stevens sequence becomes available, in which the impression of happiness that Taylor exudes is impossible without Stevens's knowledge of the pain and suffering that came before. Her expression of happiness and contentment is "won" from the memories of the horrors that preceded her. Without his experience at the camps, Stevens would have been unable to understand the costs of that happiness, and the poignancy of this moment in the film—the sense of a blissful idyll on the verge of collapse—would have been diminished.[65]

Still, more is going on in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* than can be derived from Bazin's essay alone. The juxtaposition of *A Place in the Sun* with Stevens's footage of the camps in fact occurs at the end of a more extended engagement with the relation of media to the war, beginning when Godard provides something like a historical timeline. He says in voice-over:

> Thirty-nine, forty, forty-one: perfidy of the radio, but the cinema keeps faith. Because from *Siegfried* and *M* to *The Great Dictator* and Lubitsch, the films had been made, hadn't they?
>
> Forty, forty-one: even scratched to death, a simple rectangle thirty-five millimeters wide saves the honor of all reality.
>
> Forty-one, forty-two: and if the poor images still strike without anger or hatred, like a butcher, it's because the cinema is there, mute, with its humble and formidable power of transfiguration.
>
> Forty-two, forty-three, forty-four: that which fades into the night is the echo of what is submerged by silence. What is submerged by silence extends into the light that which fades into the night.

There is a discernible story here. In the first years—1939, 1940, 1941—Godard claims that radio is what initially betrays the world, inserting titles that say "Radio

Paris Lies" and "Radio Paris Is German" over war footage that he has manipulated. We hear Hitler's voice, presumably from a radio broadcast, with its full incantatory power. But if the human voice has succumbed to the power of the Nazis, and if radio has fallen from grace, cinema still remains true to its ethical task. It does so, however, through fiction. These films and filmmakers—Lang and Chaplin, Lubitsch's *To Be or Not to Be* (printed as "Dasein oder nicht Dasien"), and, later on, Renoir's *La règle du jeu*—exposed the ambitions of the Nazis. (Godard also plays a fragment of the theme from Fassbinder's *Lili Marlene,* an aural foreshadowing of that film's appearance later in the sequence.) "The films had been made," Godard says—again, if only audiences at the time had known how to look.

The next pair of years—1940, 1941—changes things. Fiction has now failed, and Godard suggests that the documentary image is all that's left. His statement here echoes Bazin's famous description of photography—"No matter how fuzzy, distorted, or discolored, no matter how lacking in documentary value the image may be . . . it is the model"—in saying that photographic images have a trace of the real in them. Yet although this feels like a return to photographic indexicality, what we see is a clip from *Lili Marlene,* a fiction film, as Willie ascends a staircase with a giant Nazi flag in the background; the clip is paired with, and at times superimposed over, a corpse lying in a field. The juxtaposition suggests that the referential work of Fassbinder's film, the reality of war and death, is not based on the unmediated recording of photography. Godard says that the documentary image saves the honor of "reality": the single image may ensure that the world is there, but something else will need to happen before *cinema* can find its mission again. (It's also worth noting that Godard pegs the claim about the value of the documentary image to a time relatively early in the war; it does not refer to the camps.)

The intimation of what cinema will require emerges in the next pairing: 1941, 1942. When Godard says that images will "strike without anger or hatred, like a butcher," photography is being evoked: the unmediated image, without feeling or intention. After all, he says this over the photographic image of the corpse from the previous pairing. Even as this reading emerges, though, Godard is already moving past it. The lines he recites are taken from Baudelaire's praise of the butcher in *Les fleurs du mal,* but they also refer to Georges Franju's *Le sang des bêtes* (*Blood of the Beasts*, 1949), a film that uses them to describe the moral status of slaughterhouse work. Although a nonfiction film, *Le sang des bêtes* is not primarily concerned with cinema's ability to record the world. Instead, among its various ambitions (in particular, a study of the limits and powers of surrealism), Franju uses the slaughter of animals as an allegory for the human genocide that has just taken place.

This movement away from the simple recording of reality is drawn out in a passage that Godard surely has in mind. Siegfried Kracauer concludes his *Theory of Film* by arguing that Franju's film represents one of the few authentic ways of coming to terms with the grim reality of World War II: "In experiencing the rows of calves' heads or the litter of tortured human bodies in the films made of the Nazi concentration camps, we redeem horror from its invisibility behind the veils of panic and imagination. And this experience is liberating in as much as it removes a most powerful taboo. Perhaps Perseus' greatest achievement was not to cut off Medusa's head but to overcome his fears and look at its reflection in the shield. And was it not precisely this feat which permitted him to behead the monster?"[66] Through the mediation that cinema creates between viewers and the event being shown or alluded to, a "safe" distance is created, allowing audiences to look at and acknowledge the reality of the war—to look at it, that is, not simply to be overwhelmed (turned to stone, as Kracauer's metaphor implies) but to begin to come to terms with it. (In episode 2A, Godard describes cinema's power as the ability to let Orpheus look back without killing Eurydice.) We might say: It is the ability of an audience to *look* at the world, an ability that depends on cinema's prior effort to *show,* that Godard means when he evokes cinema's ability to "transfigure" reality. It's this "humble and formidable power" of cinema that could have enabled these events to "strike" an audience, to be worked through by a wider public.

The last group of years that Godard sets out—1942, 1943, 1944—is fairly confusing. Interweaving *Lili Marlene* with clips of corpses, he recites, "That which fades into the night is the echo of what is submerged by silence. What is submerged by silence extends into the light that which fades into the night." The lines are powerful and obscure, and it's hard to know what we should do with them.[67] What matters, I think, is that they are taken from Élie Faure, from his remarks on Rembrandt that Godard adapts for cinema in episode 4A. They are, that is, about *painting,* and Godard positions them at the end of the sequence as if to confirm that his analysis of the relation between cinema and the camps, and between cinema and history more broadly, needs to be understood through a wider artistic genealogy.

Stepping back, we can say that the sequence shows cinema's task to be the dual project of preserving the horrors of the world and making them available to a public in a recognizable form. Godard insists that this task cannot be achieved by newsreels alone: "What there is of cinema in war newsreels says nothing, it doesn't judge; never in close-up. Suffering is not a star, nor is a burned church, nor a devastated landscape." The newsreel may have value, but what Godard is after, and what he thinks genuine cinema can achieve, is a more general understanding of the world. The historical work of cinema may begin with photography,

with the trace of the real, but it ends with painting and the possibility for historical judgment—cinema's capacity for thinking—in the creation of images.

A sequence from the middle of episode 3A shows Godard developing the terms of this interaction. He structures it around a series of intertitles: "What Is the Cinema? / Nothing. / What Does It Want to Be? / Everything. / What Can It Be? / Something." These questions and answers evoke Bazin's *Qu'est-ce que le cinéma?* suggesting that the ambitions of the sequence are definitional. But they are even more a thoroughgoing citation of the opening lines of Abbé Sieyès's *Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?* (1789), one of the founding texts of the French Revolution.[68] By drawing on Sieyès, Godard makes explicit the public orientation of cinema (what is the Third Estate concerned with if not the public?) but also its place in moments of historical upheaval. In between the intertitles, Godard repeats a two-second clip from Laughton's *Night of the Hunter,* in which Uncle Birdie, stunned by his vision of the children's mother at the bottom of the river, rocks maniacally back and forth in his chair. The clip appears over and over again, as if enacting for itself his traumatic motion. Godard then begins to repeat the word *something (quelque chose),* now superimposing it over the torture of Manfredi from *Roma, città aperta.* Is this—Rossellini's film—what cinema can be, what it aspires to?

Godard's idea seems to be that both *Night of the Hunter* and *Roma, città aperta* contain characters trying (and failing) to understand the horrors they have seen or experienced. At the same time, considered as *films,* they represent a more successful attempt to come to terms with horrors that have recently taken place in the historical world. They are, in other words, of equal status to the work Kracauer sees in *Le sang des bêtes.* History is worked through in the guise of fiction.

The interweaving of history and fiction continues in the next sequence. After the clip of Manfredi's torture, Godard shows black-and-white newsreel footage of corpses lying in ditches and women grieving over bodies in a field—the images are not specific in time or place—and then returns to the realm of fiction with a startling juxtaposition, superimposing the silhouette of a bomber flying overhead with the attack on the schoolchildren from Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963) (figure 22). The planes are graphically matched with the birds, and only after the birds descend in Hitchcock's film does Godard cut to clips of bombs falling to the ground. The implication is that behind Hitchcock's cinematic imagination is the experience of aerial bombardment, that the terror he evokes in *The Birds* refers to the sense of helplessness on the ground.[69]

Paired with the clips from Laughton and Rossellini, *The Birds* shows what cinema can (and should) do: it takes a traumatic experience of war and transposes it into narrative fiction, creating a shareable form through which such experiences can be taken up, absorbed, and perhaps understood by a broader audience. This ambition is partly why painting, rather than photography, fits the

FIGURE 22. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 3A

project Godard is undertaking. Because painting does not have the same auto-matic relation to reality as photography, the terms of this relation are open to interpretation and reworking. Taking painting as a model thus affords cinema the freedom to determine exactly *how* images refer to the world, to find new ways of looking and seeing. In the terms that Godard sets out in episode 1A, cinema inherits from painting the capacity to *judge:* it can determine what's important in the historical events it shows and, from there, how best to preserve and make them public as an image. This mode of judgment is what cinema calls thinking, what defines it as *"une forme qui pense."*[70]

If we return to episode 1A, we find this model driving Godard's treatment of the relation of cinema to World War II. Right after he finishes the pairings of years, he shifts his orientation slightly and begins to bring in postwar films. Over the image of Auschwitz from the opening of Resnais's *Nuit et brouillard,* Godard superimposes a clip from Bresson's *Les anges du péché* (1943) in which the nuns prostrate themselves on the floor of the church. What we hear, however, is dia-logue from Bresson's next film, *Les dames du Bois de Boulogne* (1945), when Ma-ria Casarès whispers, "Je lutte" (I struggle), on her deathbed. The line has been read (by Barthes, among others) as a gesture toward the French Resistance,

a coded acknowledgment of the occupation that had just taken place. Godard then reverses the chronology, coupling Siegfried in Lang's *Die Nibelungen* (1924) with newsreel footage of soldiers running from left to right, a juxtaposition that returns to his earlier claim about the dangers released by fiction films in the 1920s. Finally, he inserts a Monet painting of a pond shrouded in mist, a transition secured by the presence of fog in the previous clips. What we have here is a compressed version of the argument that will be more fully developed in episode 3A: about fiction and history, about painting and cinema. *Les dames du Bois de Boulogne* evokes the Resistance not because of a causal relation between image and world but because the imperative to struggle was felt by a viewing public to draw on and make visible a fact of history. The relation was there, but it was not evident until an act of viewing (and judgment) drew it out.

This method of analysis continues in the sequence that follows, which leads into the discussion of Stevens. Godard says, "It's Daumier, and it's Rembrandt with his terrible black and white," and then cuts to a clip in which a group of prisoners play in an orchestra, over which he interweaves and superimposes images of shocked-looking figures from the two artists. Godard then shows several Monet seascapes as he continues, "And it's because this time, and this time only, the only art that has been genuinely popular [cinema], is converging with painting. That is, with art." A shift in imagery now occurs, as Godard shows a painting of the Madonna and child and then a detail of a severed head from Caravaggio's *Salome with the Head of John the Baptist* (c. 1607). Over these images, he describes art—and therefore cinema as well—as being "what is reborn out of what has been burned." While this might look like another example of Godard's importation of a Christian theology into his historical account, the kind of move Lanzmann criticizes, I think the point is more general. Art, painting in particular, creates *images* out of historical events, presenting history for a broader public. Cinema, the greatest *popular* art, finds itself within this logic.

In the shots that follow, Godard flickers between two paintings of Mediterranean towns. He says, "We've forgotten *[on a oublié]* that small town and its white walls shaded by olive trees. But we remember Picasso, that is, *Guernica*." As Godard says "Picasso," he cuts to a newsreel clip of a burning town, then to a detail from Picasso's painting—two women in agony, the one to the right with her face upraised to the sky—over which he juxtaposes a clip of a dive-bomber.[71] This alternation and superimposition continue briefly, and then Godard replaces the plane with the vampire from Murnau's *Nosferatu,* who bends down as if to bite the neck of the woman in the painting (figure 23)—an image of death and dehumanization, part of what Bazin called "the great sanguinary mythology" of cinema.[72] A new iteration of the pattern now follows. Over several photographs of two youths being hanged, Godard says, "We've forgotten Valentin Feldman, the young philosopher shot in '43. But who cannot remember at least one prisoner,

FIGURE 23. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 1A

that is, Goya." On the last name, he cuts to a drawing of Goya's that shows a man bound by a chain around his neck.

(There's a slight puzzle here. *Guernica* clearly helps us remember the historical event, but the function of the image from *Nosferatu* is less clear. By virtue of chronology, the film can't be a commentary on the bombing in the way that Picasso's painting is. Is it a metaphor for the way life was sucked out of the people? Or is it a suggestion that art, while preserving the event for memory, removes the life from it? Similarly, the juxtaposition of Goya and the photographs raises a question about whether the drawing serves to retain the event for future generations or whether it causes us to lose sight of that history.)

In these two examples, Godard shows one of the functions of art to be its ability to provide a public memory (or memorial) of a historical tragedy, to furnish an image that can be used to remember events we might otherwise forget—to work against the dangers of historical amnesia. (As he remarks earlier in the episode, "Forgetting extermination is part of extermination.") Picasso helps us to remember the Spanish civil war, just as Goya allows us to remember the prisoners executed by the Nazis. They are images of suffering that let us keep history alive—and, presumably, incorporate knowledge of it into our lives. To be sure,

there is an asymmetry here. While Picasso's painting has a direct relation to the historical events that are at issue in it, the same is not true for the relation between the photographs of young men and Goya's drawing. So what interests Godard is not so much a causal claim as an audience's ability to absorb and make sense of an image in a way that recalls history.

By this point, we're a long way from photographic reference, with painting being used to model a contingent relation to the historical world. It is up to cinema, and therefore to an audience as well, to establish the terms of reference, to discern and create connections between images and history. This way of thinking is behind the line from Baudelaire that evokes Franju's film, and it's behind the clips from Laughton and Rossellini that negotiate the legacy of war. But it's most evident in the clip from *The Birds* that Godard associates with aerial bombardment. The relation between the film and the war is not given; nothing in Hitchcock's film provides hard and fast evidence for a connection. Godard's work is to provide a videographic montage that shows us how (and even that) the reference happens and in so doing lets us see this relation. It's this complex, contingent process of reference—connections that are created, not given—that drives the relation between cinema and history in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.

From this perspective, we can return to the superimposition of *A Place in the Sun* and the footage of the camps. At the end of his remarks about Goya, Godard utters an isolated "and," establishing a connection between the previous examples from the history of painting and the sequence to follow. He then proceeds by way of a rough analogy. The 16mm footage of Ravensbrück is to *A Place in the Sun* as Guernica (the town) is to *Guernica* (the painting): reality turns into, or is remembered as, art. Again, this claim is not based on causal connections, even though it is (or could be) reinforced by them. When Godard says that the air of happiness that attends Elizabeth Taylor could not have existed without the horrors that Stevens had witnessed, he is producing an act of criticism designed to elicit an image of the camps from the film, a story that allows an audience to see the history within the fictional film. He is trying, in other words, to establish *A Place in the Sun* as capable of preserving a memory of a prior atrocity in the manner we recognize in Picasso and Goya—to treat the film as art.

Godard is insistent that a fictional film is always engaged in a complex relation with the world around it, though it may require work to make explicit. The documentary footage Stevens shot at Ravensbrück may serve to establish a connection to history, to create the conditions for its remembrance. But only when Godard makes Elizabeth Taylor rise up and assume a gestural affinity with the Magdalene from Giotto's painting does this become art, part of a tradition that strives for the remembrance of reality through the creation of images. (Stevens is made to join a broader artistic enterprise.) And so it's only this act of montage

that is able to elevate *A Place in the Sun* to the status of *Guernica.* Documentary footage is attuned to reality, but this is not the same as cinematic art: "What there is of cinema in war newsreels says nothing." To be sure, cinematic art can be documentary in nature, as in *Le sang des bêtes,* but it is often fictional, as in *The Birds.* In either case, more than the photographic inscription of reality is needed. What matters is cinema, a unique medium that contains others within it, a form of thinking that is able to produce genuine historical knowledge through the images it creates.

6. BIRTH OF A NATION

The story Godard tells about cinema and war doesn't end with Stevens. Following the clip from *A Place in the Sun,* the music stops and the screen goes black. After a brief pause, Godard introduces a stunning superimposition: the background is of a Palestinian boy holding up a burning U.S. flag, a crowd of women behind him; within the flag is a shot from Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* (1915) in which one of the Cameron boys grits his teeth as he fights in the Civil War (figure 24). Over this image, Godard prints "His / toire / (s)" in cascading lines and says in voice-over, "Apart from that, cinema is also an industry"—the final line from André Malraux's essay "Sketch for a Psychology of the Moving Pictures."[73] He cuts to black, then to two clips from *The Searchers* (Ford, 1956) separated from each other by a black screen: in one, Ethan rides through the Comanche camp; in the other, he reaches down to lift up his niece, Debbie, in the film's climax. Over these images, Godard says, "And if the First World War allowed American cinema to ruin French cinema, with the birth of television the Second World War allowed it to finance, that is to say, to ruin, European cinema." At the end of this statement, Godard cuts to a clip from *The Heart of Humanity* (Allen Holubar, 1918)—the title of which has just been printed on screen—in which Erich von Stroheim throws a baby out a window, then prints the word *Endlosung* (the final solution) over it. It's a shocking sequence. Godard seems to equate two incommensurable things, the attempted annihilation of European Jews and the dominance of American cinema in Europe. Not only does the sequence seem to border on the tasteless or morally vicious in its treatment of the Holocaust; at best it also appears to be an instance of anti-American rhetoric aimed at preserving the cultural specificity of Europe.

Certainly, examples of such rhetoric can be found in Godard's late work, and they are one of the reasons some critics and viewers have recoiled from these films and videos. At least in this case, though, taking him so literally is a mistake. The issue at stake isn't really art against industry, or even Europe against America, but rather the broader possibility of achieving a genuine and mature cinema.

FIGURE 24. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 1A

In this coda to the George Stevens sequence, Godard suggests that the onrush of Hollywood films in the aftermath of World War II prevented postwar European cinemas from creating a constructive, and necessary, link with their own past.

One of the surprising aspects of the history of cinema that Godard tells is that it is resolutely national—surprising because the history of cinema, from its beginnings, is fundamentally international.[74] The broader culture in which Godard's taste was cultivated understood cinema in this way, as the young film critics and directors of the *nouvelle vague* drew on models from across the world. They were called the "Hitchcocko-Hawksians" for a reason, often defining themselves in relation to non-European cinemas—as in Jean-Claude Brialy's incantation of "Ozu Mizoguchi Kurosawa" in Godard's *Tous les garçons s'appellent Patrick* (1959).

In *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* however, Godard treats the idea of cinema differently, looking to what he describes as the few "genuine cinemas" that emerged. The idea of cinema here doesn't rest on the production of a small number of great films, which would render general diagnoses moot. Nor does it have to do with the sheer volume of production at a given place and time; an audience with particular requirements is necessary. Michael Witt writes, "There must be a wealth

of more or less average films that engage with, rework and reflect contemporary concerns of direct relevance to the audience in question, concerns in turn desired and engaged with by that national audience." Genuine cinemas, on Godard's terms, have therefore tended to emerge in the aftermath of historical upheavals, when a public is searching for ways to grasp the changes that have happened and are happening around them. And this definition is shaped by the idea of the nation. Cinemas arise only, Witt writes, "when a nation's self-image is absent, in question, or under threat."[75]

Following these criteria, Godard's list is appropriately brief: "There have only been a handful of cinemas: Italian, German, American, and Russian. . . . The Russian cinema arrived at a time when they needed a new image. And in the case of Germany, they had lost a war and were completely corrupted and needed a new idea of Germany. At the time the new Italian cinema emerged, Italy was completely lost—it was the only country which fought with the Germans, then against the Germans. They strongly needed to see a new reality, and this was provided by neo-realism."[76] Godard elsewhere argues that American cinema emerged because the country's lack of a national history required the production of a self-image.[77] As he sees it, the strength of the desire for a national image paradoxically helped Hollywood achieve its global appeal. International audiences could identify with the expressed need for a national image in the films and so fell under the sway of American cinema.

It's in the context of cinema's explicitly national ambitions, and its connection with moments of upheaval, that the sequence from the end of episode 1A takes shape. Godard's citation of Malraux's concluding line, "Apart from that, cinema is also an industry," coupled with the clips from *Birth of a Nation* and *The Searchers,* gestures toward the global reach of Hollywood cinema. These two films were themselves made at a time when the idea of America was explicitly at stake (the two world wars), which they explore in terms of the country's own history (the Civil War and its aftermath). They are also, and this is no small matter, films about race and racism in American history. The clips Godard shows, that is, offer an image of a nation in crisis and show different responses to that crisis. The point, then, is not that American cinema has the moral status of the Nazi occupation; rather, it has to do with questions of influence. In World War I, the decline of French cinema enabled the rise of Hollywood to the extent that 1920s French film culture defined itself primarily in terms drawn from American cinema. And when Hollywood dumped its backlog of films onto the European market after the next war, this had the effect of precluding attempts by European cinemas to reckon with the events that had just taken place, to provide an image for the public of each nation, in the way that *Birth of a Nation* and *The Searchers* did for America. Godard's emphasis on national cinemas, that is, lies behind his criticism of American cinema as a hegemonic and imperial force in the postwar era. The

countries that needed to deal with the implications of their own actions in World War II were swamped instead by the popularity of American cinema, films that defined the imagination of their audiences. Outside a few isolated cases, cinema simply carried on as before or adapted to abstract and global values, and it was this inability to change in response to historical events, to allow individual nations to come to grips with what they had done, that marked its postwar failure.

Godard's emphasis on the paucity of genuine national cinemas is indicative of a more general feature of the history he tells. Earlier in the chapter, I noted that his historical accounts are decidedly fragmentary. The first words Godard speaks in the video series (following the opening epigraph from Bresson) are the names of three films: *La règle du jeu, Cries and Whispers* (Bergman, 1972), and *Broken Blossoms* (Griffith, 1919). These films are from different decades, different countries, different directors; it's not clear what, if anything, they share with one another. What kind of history could begin this way?

The histories Godard tells often proceed through such lists. The lists are of a variety of topics: names of filmmakers and artists, photographs of intellectuals, quotations from various writers. They are printed as titles on screen: the films produced by Irving Thalberg in episode 1A *(The Crowd, Freaks, Greed, A Night at the Opera, The Merry Widow, Ben-Hur, Flesh and the Devil, Dracula, Treasure Island, Billy the Kid);* the intellectual inspirations behind *Histoire(s) du cinéma* at the end of episode 4B (Hollis Frampton, Arthur Rimbaud, Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, Emily Dickinson, Jorge Luis Borges). They are spoken by Godard in voice-over: "my friends" in episode 3B (Becker, Rossellini, Melville, Franju, Demy, Truffaut). They are shown as still photographs: female intellectuals at the beginning of episode 4A (Camille Claudel, Lou Andreas-Salomé, Simone Weil, Hannah Arendt, Virginia Woolf (twice), Anne-Marie Miéville, Colette, Sarah Bernhardt); male filmmakers shortly thereafter (Robert Bresson, Fritz Lang, Jean Cocteau, Eric Rohmer, François Truffaut, Jacques Rivette, Luchino Visconti, Phillippe Garrel, Rainer Werner Fassbinder). Or they are created out of clips: Hitchcock's films in episode 4A *(Psycho, Dial "M" for Murder, North by Northwest, Foreign Correspondent, Suspicion, Marnie, The Man Who Knew Too Much, Notorious, Strangers on a Train, Vertigo, The Wrong Man, To Catch a Thief, I Confess);* films organized around the trope of wind in episode 1B *(A Tale of the Wind, The Wind, Written on the Wind, Orphée, Gone with the Wind).*

The lists are not just archives of films, photographs, or names; they mark a method. In episode 2A, during the conversation with Serge Daney, Godard describes the history of literature as proceeding through only a few select figures: "The literary historian says there were Homer, Cervantes, Joyce. Once you've said those three, they include Faulkner and Flaubert." It's a remark that clearly holds some importance for him, because he repeats it in other films and videos of the

time (such as *2×50 ans de cinéma français* [1995]). By any reasonable standard, though, it's an absurd account; that is, it is obviously false that literary historians construct histories this way, and certainly Godard knows that. But he nonetheless takes it to be a model, saying, immediately afterward, "So there have been very few—I'd say ten—films. We've got ten fingers; there are ten films." This suggests, not least, that the lists Godard makes concern his longstanding ambitions for bringing cinema into line with the other arts, for giving cinema the history appropriate to an art.

There's some precedent here, perhaps even a reference, that helps explain the methodological ambitions of Godard's statement. In an early essay on *Pierrot le fou,* Louis Aragon argues that Godard occupies a rare place in the history of cinema: "The cinema, for me, was at first Charlie Chaplin, then Renoir, Buñuel, and now Godard. That's all: it's quite simple." Aragon insists that what's at issue is not a question of accuracy or coverage: "Somebody is going to say I'm forgetting Eisenstein and Antonioni. You're wrong, I'm not forgetting them. Or several others, for that matter." It's a way of thinking, Aragon says, that derives from the history of art: "Painting, in the modern sense of the word, begins with Géricault, Delacroix, Courbet, Manet."[78] In these sentences, Aragon elevates the creation of lists—marking down key figures within a particular art—into a historiographic method. The history of cinema just is a select number of persons who embody the nature of the medium for a given period of time. "Charlie Chaplin, *then* Renoir, Buñuel, *and now* Godard"—they *are* cinema.

Aragon's list is emphatically partial, not only in its fragmentary nature but in the way it is organized by a particular goal, designed for a particular end, on one side of a debate. He creates these lists to provide a historical lineage that will lead to a new iteration in the series. The idea is fairly straightforward: in order to understand the present, it's not pure historical knowledge that's needed, an accurate picture of everything that happened, but a selection of figures who, taken as a partial history, can serve as models. Aragon's goal is to show the genealogy that produced Godard, the lineage by which he is best understood. I think the lists in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* do similar creative work with and out of history. They mark out various strands, multiple through-lines within the history of cinema that can be teased out through the activity of criticism. All these lists are ways of telling (or doing) the history of cinema: "*histoires, avec un* s," Godard says.

In many ways, this is a deeply modernist project. Generally, the connection between modernism and film is treated in one of two ways. The first emphasizes the importance of specific cinematic techniques, primarily montage, as models for artistic production.[79] The second highlights a form of medium specificity, a reduction to the basic physical essence—photography's claim to record the world automatically—that serves as the basis for stylistic innovation.[80] Godard's interest

in the history of cinema, however, points to a third, less common way of conceiving this relation on the basis of what T. S. Eliot defined as an awareness of "tradition." Tradition here means something specific, an understanding of the past in relation to creative activity in the present, a past that is, by virtue of the use to which it is put, decidedly partial and fragmentary.[81] Eliot, for example, uses his essays to work through the select artists and movements he considers of value to his own poetic practice; similarly, F. R. Leavis begins *The Great Tradition* with the deceptively simple statement, "The great English novelists are Jane Austen, Henry James, George Eliot, and Joseph Conrad."[82] The ambition is not to constitute a complete history of an art or even its major works. The lists are declarations of lines of importance, critical acts that look to the past for use in the present.

If we don't recognize this modernist lineage, we risk mistaking the ambitions of *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* seeing in it eccentricity or error when in fact Godard is proposing a method. In this way, when Rancière argues that Godard implicitly follows a neo-imperialist position in leaving out non-Western cinemas, or claims that, for Godard, "facts prove nothing" about the history he constructs (because his history goes against facts), he is misconstruing the purposes of the *histoires* that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* tells.[83]

Godard's most explicit acknowledgment of the idea of tradition comes at the very end of the video series, whose last two minutes contain a reflection by Godard on his own career, using a Borges adaptation of a Coleridge poem.[84] In the few minutes before that, Godard runs through a list of predecessors whose work has been important to him. Many of them we might expect: Rimbaud, Bataille, Blanchot, Jankélévitch, even Emily Dickinson. But the list is bookended by two puzzling references: at the end, Godard inserts an audio clip of Ezra Pound reading the opening of the *Cantos;* at the beginning, he names Hollis Frampton, quoting lines from his 1971 essay, "For a Metahistory of Film." While the reference to Pound might make sense—the combination of classical allusions and modernist aesthetics is an interest of Godard's that goes back to *Le mépris*—the reference to Frampton is less clear.

The puzzle is partly due to Godard's longstanding dislike for the American avant-garde.[85] But the affinities between Frampton and Godard are deep. Both hold that cinema draws less on photography than on a long-standing affinity with the other arts, and with painting in particular. "I think it is clear," Frampton writes, "that the most obvious antecedents of the cinematic enterprise, at least in its beginnings, are to be found in painting."[86] But of more interest here is their shared obsession with the way cinema shows or reveals history, both internal and external to it.[87]

Like Godard, Frampton is emphatic that cinema can become a genuine art only by establishing its own history. To this end, both evoke and rework Louis Lumière's famous (and famously wrong) prediction, "The cinema is an invention

without a future." Godard places the statement in episode 1B following a discussion of nineteenth-century art and technology. His response takes two forms. First, he provides a catalogue of films—including Lang's *The Secret behind the Door* (1948), Demy's *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg* (1964), *Le mépris,* and Pasolini's *Salo* (1975)—showing them as printed titles, spoken phrases, and brief clips. They function, I take it, as a demonstration that cinema has continued to exist despite Lumière's prediction. (At the same time, he recites in voice-over the titles of Dumas's *Twenty Years After* [the second of the Musketeers series] and Céline's *Death on the Installment Plan,* as if to continue the claim that cinema is connected to a broader artistic history.) But then Godard switches gears, suggesting that Lumière may have been right after all: "Less than a hundred years later, we see that they were right. Television has made Léon Gaumont's dream come true, bringing the spectacles of the world into the poorest living rooms." The history of cinema is brought to a close by television, a technological development that fulfills the early prophecy.

Frampton does something different. Rather than point to decades of films to argue for the historical falsity of the claim or to other media's eventual rise to displace cinema, Frampton straightforwardly agrees with it. Lumière was perfectly right, he says. But the validity of the statement is historically contingent: Lumière was right *only* at that particular moment in the history of cinema. Frampton argues, "It was impossible at the beginning . . . for the cinematograph to have a future because it did not have a past."[88] Therefore, only with the establishment of a past—the creation of the material for a history—will cinema be able to begin, for the first time.

At this moment in his thinking, Frampton turns to Eliot's idea of tradition— something that, given his absorption in modernism and studies under Pound, is never far away—to explain his position. He writes, "It is only now, I think, that it begins to be possible to imagine a future, to construct, to predict a future for film . . . because it is only now that we can begin to construct a history and, within that history, a finite and ordered set of monuments, if we wish to use T. S. Eliot's terms, that is to constitute a tradition."[89] While cinema may have a history, it does not, on its own, cohere into a genuine tradition that can be used for (and modified by) the production of new films. That work remains to be accomplished.

Frampton argues that this project requires a reconception of the role of the historian and, to that end, introduces the position of the "metahistorian of cinema":

> The historian of cinema faces an appalling problem. Seeking in his subject some principle of intelligibility, he is obliged to make himself responsible for every frame of film in existence. For the history of cinema consists precisely of every film that has ever been made, for any purpose whatever. . . . The historian dares neither select nor ignore, for if he does, the treasure will surely escape him.

> The metahistorian of cinema, on the other hand, is occupied with inventing a tradition, that is, a coherent, wieldy set of discrete monuments, meant to inseminate resonant constancy into the growing body of his art.[90]

In these lines, Frampton sets himself the task of the metahistorian, striving to create the works that will found a cinematic tradition: not the whole history of cinema, an impossible archive, but a select line of major works (a canon of sorts) that would enable a future, genuine cinematic art.

Frampton died before he could realize his call for a metahistorian to create, from the history and material of cinema, a tradition designed to enable artistic productivity.[91] The project nevertheless might be thought to exist elsewhere. The terms of a metahistory of cinema are in many ways realized in Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* in the stories he tells about and creates out of cinema.

We can see this project take shape in one of the lists Godard creates. In a statement found in several works of the 1990s—*Histoire(s) du cinéma* 4B, *JLG/JLG,* and *Je vous salue, Sarajevo* (1993) all contain versions of it—Godard links cinema to an expansive cross-media artistic tradition. He says, "Culture is the rule, and art is the exception. Everybody speaks the rule: cigarette, computer, T-shirt, television, tourism, war. Nobody speaks the exception. It isn't spoken; it is written: Flaubert, Dostoyevsky. It is composed: Gershwin, Mozart. It is painted: Cézanne, Vermeer. It is filmed: Antonioni, Vigo. The rule is to want the death of the exception."[92] Godard declares the continuity of cinema with the ambitions of the other arts by way of an opposition. Culture is characterized as a state of enforced uniformity, while genuine art is marked by its status as an opposition, a breaking of culture's familiar rules and forms. They struggle: culture tries to bring the exceptions into the fold, art tries to preserve something that conformity cannot abide. As Godard lays out the history of this struggle, cinema is positioned to take up the mantle of art in the contemporary world.

There is also a darker, more urgent side to Godard's statement. In some versions, he includes an additional set of lines: "Or it is lived, then it is the art of living: Srebrenica, Mostar, Sarajevo. . . . So the rule for cultural Europe is to organize the death of the art of living, which still flourishes." At issue is a general law of survival, a way of preserving the dignity of humanity (of cultural specificity?) in the face of aggressive and leveling uniformity. Art, and therefore cinema as well, has a role to play in a project of human preservation, a fight against the repressive political and cultural forces of its time.[93]

Everything comes together—the lists, the idea of tradition, the importance of national cinemas, even the role of art in relation to history—in Godard's treatment of Italian neorealism, the one postwar cinema that escapes his censure. While neorealist films appear throughout *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* he takes up this cinema in a sustained manner at the end of episode 3A.

The sequence is introduced with a discussion of national cinemas in the aftermath of the Second World War. It's not, Godard thinks, a pretty picture: "The Russians made films of martyrdom; the Americans made advertisements; the British did what they always do in cinema: nothing; Germany had no cinema, no longer had a cinema; and the French made *Sylvie et le fantôme.* The Poles made two films of expiation, *The Passenger* and *The Last Stage,* and a film of memoir, *Kanal,* and then they welcomed Spielberg: "never again!" became "it's always this way" *(c'est toujours ça).* Neorealism is different. Godard cuts to a blank screen with the title "Voyage en Italie"—both suggesting the direction of the sequence to come and citing an exemplary film—then to the climax of *Stromboli* (1950), Rossellini's first film with Ingrid Bergman, as she climbs to the top of a volcano in a paroxysm of despair and self-annihilation. Godard says, "But with *Rome, Open City,* Italy simply reconquered the right of a nation to look itself in the eye. And there followed the astonishing harvest of great Italian cinema." And then, over a roughly four-minute span, he provides a highlight reel of neorealism's greatest hits: clips from films by Rossellini, Fellini, De Sica, Visconti, and De Santis, ending, appropriately enough, with the crow from Pasolini's *Uccellacci e uccellini* (*Hawks and Sparrows,* 1966), the film that writes the obituary for neorealism. All the while, we see texts from Lucretius and Dante printed on screen and hear a 1980s ballad by Ricardo Cocciante, "La nostra lingua Italiana."

It's a glorious and deeply moving sequence. The clips Godard chooses are suffused with emotion not simply in their appearance but in our memories of the films to which they belong: Umberto pretending to be testing for rain rather than asking for money; the fishermen from *La terra trema* (1948) worrying at night; Ricci and Bruno struggling through the rain; Gelsomina suddenly bursting into a performance from the depths of her sadness; and so on. But it's also a peculiar sequence within *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* because it conforms to a more conventional kind of historical project the video series might be but isn't: clips from great films, organized in a form that is generally poetic.[94] In this regard, the sequence is essentially unique in the entire work, the sole "tribute" of this sort. There are other differences as well. Godard's physical presence is missing (no visible person calls up these images), and there are relatively few of the visual distortions that generally attend his use of clips, from dissolves, wipes, and superimpositions to subtle modifications of color and shading (the ones that are there, however, are extraordinary).

Amid all this, the most striking feature of the sequence is the content of Godard's voice-over. Before he starts to show the clips, he poses a question: "How did Italian cinema manage to become so great when no one—from Rossellini to Visconti, from Antonioni to Fellini—ever recorded the sound at the same time as the images?" And then he answers himself: "There's only one answer: the language of Ovid and Virgil, of Dante and Leopardi, had permeated the images" *(était passée dans les images).* This is, to put it mildly, a surprising conclusion.

In order to understand what the sequence is doing, we have to attend to the way it takes shape against the history of neorealism's reception in France, not least the way this reception was shaped by Bazin. Bazin is typically seen as treating neorealism on terms that follow Cesare Zavattini's proscription: a cinema of authenticity and reality, almost an anticinema, designed to correspond as closely as possible to the world the films are about.[95] Bazin's most famous formulation comes in response to Vittorio De Sica's *Ladri di biciclette* (1948), in which he writes: "No more actors, no more story, no more sets, which is to say that in the perfect aesthetic illusion of reality there is no more cinema."[96] Although this is only one way he treats neorealism,[97] it has proved the most influential and was especially powerful for the young cinephiles and critics in Paris at the time. Godard was no exception; he described *Une femme est une femme,* for example, as a "neorealist musical," the neorealist label used to inflect the musical toward reality, toward a genuine, lived experience outside the conventions of Hollywood genre.

Histoire(s) du cinéma, however, is interested in a different set of considerations. The key shift is Godard's voice-over question about how neorealism was able to achieve its success without recording sound with image. Bazin actually wondered about this, too, and concluded that the loss in realism in sound was compensated for by the flexibility gained by the camera, which could journey into new places.[98] On a cursory reading, the sequence from episode 3A follows this approach, showing the power of images even without their sound; a heightened emphasis on the photographic in the clips demonstrates the essential realism of the films.

But Godard doesn't treat the absence of sync-sound recording as a loss, a lack of reality that requires compensation if the overall realism is to be maintained. Instead, he suggests that it's precisely *because* neorealism wasn't bound to the world in this way that it was able to become a genuine cinema. It is art, not newsreel; images, not photographs. And so he models neorealism on the traditional arts, and nationally inclined art in particular, as a way to show the possibility of cinema's analysis of history without direct recording. The sequence thus closes with a detail from Piero della Francesca's fifteenth-century *Legend of the True Cross,* a gesture toward the flourishing of the Italian Renaissance and its attempts at national self-definition. (It's also, I think, an allusion to the end of Pasolini's *Decameron* [1971].)

More generally, we can see here the full account of cinema, tradition, and the arts that I've been extracting from *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Because neorealism was not, as Godard argues, a precise and accurate recording of the world around it, its ability to function as a cinema—the production of a national image of self-definition for a people that required it—needed to come from somewhere else. Hence, Godard's answer to the question of sound recording involves not photography but literature: Ovid, Virgil, Dante, and Leopardi, as well as the presence of Lucretius in the titles printed on the screen. These are authors whose work was attuned to, or was utilized by, Italian nationalist movements. (The lyrics of "La

nostra lingua Italiana" emphasize a nationalism inherent within the Italian language.)

All the elements of the idea of tradition are present. Godard sets out partial lists—not only of Italian literature but of neorealism itself—within a cross-media artistic history. The idea is that, because neorealism involved these elements, it formed images of reality that could refer to and memorialize historical events in the right way. But there's an interesting twist. It's not simply that Godard is able to deploy lists to create his own *histoire* for neorealism. The sequence implies that neorealism itself created, even if only implicitly, its own artistic tradition. Where Bazin argues that neorealism succeeded because it is especially attuned to the reality carried by the photographic image, Godard suggests that its success was instead due to its ability to draw on and continue a longer tradition of the arts in Italy.[99] By creating a place within this *national* history, precisely as its culmination, neorealism was able to produce a new image of the nation after the war. The reasons for its success, for its status as the only genuine postwar cinema, have to do with this activity: the artistic (literary and cinematic) tradition neorealism establishes allowed it to engage productively with the historical world. It was able, that is, to adapt an older tradition to a new context.

We might wonder: Is Italian cinema the only cinema that does this? We saw earlier that postwar French films by Bresson, Franju, and Resnais productively engaged with the legacy of the war. Did French cinema itself ever rise to such a status? After all, one of the central aspects of Bazin's encounter with Italian cinema was his hope that French cinema would be able to do something similar. Although he thought neorealism offered a way of making films that was different from the Hollywood model, he cautioned against simply making a French version of neorealism, dismissing in a similar vein what he labeled as "American neorealism," because it merely copied the technical features of its Italian precursor.[100] Bazin saw two difficulties for a successful transfer of neorealism to France. The first concerned a link between criticism and filmmaking that was present in postwar Italy but that he found wanting in France (though he thought it existed for literature), an absence that threatened to impoverish the film culture of that period.[101] The second had to do with war and liberation. In France, Bazin argued, the liberation was quickly turned into myth and legend: "On the day of the actual Liberation it already belonged to history." By contrast, the success of neorealism owed less to its connection to the resistance, or even to the liberation, than to the sense of historical continuity that came afterward. In Italy, liberation "meant political revolution, Allied occupation, economic and social upheaval. The liberation came slowly through endless months," and so required cinema to develop and engage with history over an extended period of time.[102]

In the sequence from episode 3A, Godard presents a similar analysis. Before he begins the series of clips, he says that Italian cinema was the only one "that

resisted the occupation of the cinema by America, a certain way of making films." The reason for this, again, is historical: "Italy was the country that fought least, that suffered greatly, but that twice changed sides—and therefore suffered from a loss of identity." Alluding to Italy's shifting allegiances during the war, in particular the "secret surrender" in September 1943, which led to the German occupation, Godard asserts that the country found itself in need of a national image, a picture of what it was or could be. The success of *Roma, città aperta,* as he understands it, is its ability to show an image of the complexity of Italian society—communist, liberal, proletarian, Catholic—while being uniquely national in its mode of production.

Although Godard roughly follows Bazin so far, he differs in his assessment of the possibility that French cinema could have replicated the success of neorealism. Despite Bazin's suspicions that historical conditions would prevent this, he believed that it was possible. So, too, did others, not least the *nouvelle vague.* But Godard, looking back in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* from the end of the century, argues that France never managed to develop a genuine cinema of its own, even though he does think that something like a cinema emerged with the *nouvelle vague:* "The French had so many filmmakers that people ended up believing that they had a cinema," he remarks at one point.[103] Elsewhere, he says that the *nouvelle vague* wanted France to have a genuine cinema so badly that they were almost able to create it out of sheer desire and effort. But it didn't quite happen; perhaps it couldn't. French audiences didn't need what they were offering. As Godard says, somewhat mournfully, in episode 3B, "Our only mistake was then to imagine that it was a beginning, that Stroheim hadn't been murdered, that Vigo hadn't been covered in mud, that the four hundred blows were continuing when really they were weakening."

For Godard, as for Bazin, Italian neorealism offers an exemplary model for coming to terms with the present while simultaneously drawing on a national past and the broader artistic resources it contains. Even though they see the terms of its success differently, cinema's relation to history—and with it the category of national cinema—is centrally involved in their appraisals of Italian success and French failure. The opportunity was there for everyone in the years after the war; French cinema was unable to take it.[104] *Sylvie et le fantôme* just isn't *Roma, città aperta,* and if the *nouvelle vague* wasn't fully adequate to the task of a genuine cinema, the "tradition of quality" that Truffaut denounced never stood a chance. The problem with postwar French cinema was that it had no access to an artistic history that could provide the conditions for its success. If the material for a tradition did in fact exist, French films failed to use it. They were unable to draw on the resources of a tradition that could have enabled France to create a genuine cinema of its own.

What Projection Does

1. I CAN'T GO ON, I'LL GO ON

Spurred by the 1995 centennial of cinema's invention, an occasion to evaluate the medium's past, present, and future, the rhetoric of a "death of cinema" became prominent at the close of the twentieth century. The discourse ranged from the popular to the scholarly: Susan Sontag's "The Decay of Cinema," Paolo Cherchi Usai's *The Death of Cinema,* Laura Mulvey's *Death 24x a Second*.[1] The reasons given for cinema's death were varied: shifts in viewing habits, economic and industrial transformations, and, most frequently, the slow eclipse of celluloid in favor of new digital technologies. Godard was by no means immune. Indeed, the broad spread of this rhetoric may have been partly the result of his own insistent reiteration of it.[2]

The death of cinema is not a new topic for Godard. In *Le mépris,* amid the deserted grounds of Cinecittà, Jeremy Prokosch's description of the ruins of the studio—"Only yesterday there were kings here"—is wonderfully (mis-)translated by the interpreter as "It's the end of cinema" (C'est la fin du cinéma). The final titles of *Week-end* proclaim not just "the end" but "the end of cinema" (*fin de cinéma).* Godard even suggested that *À bout de souffle,* his first feature film, was made with the sense of an end to cinema having arrived: "We have already had Bresson, we have just had *Hiroshima,* a certain kind of cinema has just drawn to a close, maybe ended, so let's add the finishing touch, let's show that anything goes."[3] These proclamations have always had the status of a mild paradox. If Godard repeatedly proclaims the death of cinema, he generally does so within a film—and with the full intention of making more films. As he put it, "The death

of cinema? For me, I say, not at all. . . . That idea has always existed in French cinema. . . . You find artists in 1910 who say that the cinema is in crisis."[4]

More precisely, we can say that these pronouncements are used to indicate the death of a certain kind of cinema. *Le mépris* marks the demise of the studio system (American, Italian, or German) and the closing-off of the option of classical cinema; *Week-end,* the end of bourgeois cinema altogether. Each time Godard announces the death of the cinema, it is with the intent of showing that a particular way of making films has ended, is no longer viable, and therefore that something new is required.[5] It's a dynamic exemplified by a play on words in the title of *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* itself. *Neuf,* after all, means both "nine" and "new" in French. So is it "Germany 90 Nine Zero" or "Germany 90 New Zero"? A year suffused with a century of history, or one of clean beginnings? Or is it both simultaneously? Godard arrives at an end but is able to imagine it as containing cleared ground—perhaps a new "return to zero"—on which cinema can be reestablished.

A change in Godard's rhetoric occurs in the late 1980s, when he becomes interested in a kind of end not specific to the history of cinema. In his films and videos throughout the next decade, he explicitly positions his work as an engagement with the idea of the end of the century and a related set of anxieties about the end of various endeavors: state socialism, revolutionary politics, perhaps even modernity and the Enlightenment. This concern emerges in *King Lear,* whose action is explicitly located "after Chernobyl"; we are told, "We're in a time now when movies—and, more generally, art—have been lost, do not exist, and must somehow be reinvented." *Soigne ta droite* begins "at the end of the twentieth century," while *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* takes place at the point when "the cold war is over." Late video projects like *Histoire(s) du cinéma, The Old Place,* and *De l'origine du XXIème siècle* are similarly concerned with a retrospective engagement with the particular entwinements of art and politics during the twentieth century.

Even here, the ending at issue is not an eschatological one.[6] Godard's position seems to be twofold: an era has ended, so we have to look back, but history goes on, so we need an orientation for the future. His films and videos thus contain moments not only of endings but also of beginnings; they take the end of the twentieth century as an opportunity to rethink cinema, to evaluate and understand what it was in order to produce something new. One way of putting this is that the challenges posed by the sense of an ending, historical as well as cinematic, prompt Godard to begin (once again) a rethinking of what cinema is and what it can do.[7]

Histoire(s) du cinéma brings this rhetoric to a head. Across its episodes, Godard isolates five distinct deaths of cinema, involving historical events as well as transformations internal to the medium. Put roughly, these are: the demise of silent cinema; the failure of cinema to record or show the Holocaust; the end of the studio system in the 1950s; the May '68 call for the end of bourgeois cinema; and, from the 1970s on, the crisis stemming from newer media technologies.[8]

It's in the context of these challenges, especially the last, that Godard puts forward the idea of *projection* as a way to account for the power of cinema. In the previous chapter, I argued that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* moves away from a familiar model of thinking about cinema as an essentially photographic medium; Godard turns instead to painting, seeing an affinity there that gives him room to develop a different account of cinema. The new account he develops is based on the experience and history of theatrical projection. My basic aim in this chapter, then, is to make visible the central role projection plays in Godard's thinking about cinema during these years.[9] Though he overtly draws on an experience of theatrical projection from the Cinémathèque Française in the 1950s, he claims it as exemplary of viewing practices across the twentieth century. In this light, I will argue that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is an elegy for, an accounting of, and—most prominently—a structure built out of the kinds of experiences that occur in the context of projection.

In setting out Godard's theory of cinema at this point in his career, I'm also interested in the way a range of aesthetic and historiographic strategies follow from it, namely, how projection becomes a driving force behind the construction of his films and videos. More than just a theory of media, Godard uses the idea of projection—as both a physical, historically situated fact and a general experience— to motivate and ground his own cinematic and videographic experiments.

I develop the productive aspect of projection in two directions. The first involves making sense of a formal feature that defines Godard's practice of montage: the bewildering images, allusions, quotations, and references that make up *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* often combined in ways that fairly obviously violate standard historical accounts. Take an example from episode 2B, "Fatale beauté," in which Godard combines a range of seemingly unrelated clips: Jennifer Jones struggling across the earth in *Duel in the Sun* (King Vidor, 1948); a young woman running in *Fury* (Brian De Palma, 1978); Pina chasing the truck taking Francesco away in *Roma, città aperta;* Shirley MacLaine being shot in *Some Came Running* (Vincente Minnelli, 1958); and Gretchen struggling in the snow in Murnau's *Faust.* Similar examples abound, as Godard repeatedly uses films from different decades, countries, genres, and styles to make his historical and film-historical arguments.[10] In chapter 4, I talked about the modernist version of history that such sequences exemplify, along with the change in mode of reference this entails. Here I will be less concerned with the claims about history and cinema than with uncovering the way everything hangs together, the idea of cinema that lies behind and makes possible (and plausible) the formal structure of the montage.

The second part of this chapter takes a different tack. Turning away from *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* I look at the three films that formed the core of the first part of the book—*Soigne ta droite, Nouvelle vague,* and *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*—to argue that the idea of projection does less obvious, but by no means less significant,

work in them. Godard employs ideas and visual motifs associated with projection to think through the possible uses of time in cinema, especially those uses that, in the complex movement back and forth across the history of cinema, exceed straightforward linear models. This interest in time, both historical and ahistorical, drives a number of these films' more perplexing structural features, and I'll argue that Godard develops a logic of "off-screen time" to negotiate their formal and historical work. In addition to elucidating an account of cinema based on projection—what it amounts to, the problems it solves and raises—I hope to show something of the way Godard's thinking about cinema works: how he articulates a theoretical account of the medium that translates into practice.

2. THE INVENTION OF UTOPIA

One of the defining features of Godard's idea of projection is the absence of considerations of the physical medium, a position that carries with it a relative agnosticism in terms of film or video. An initial confusion is that this agnosticism seems to go against earlier models he articulated. One of these is his fondness, mainly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, for using the metaphor of Cain and Abel to describe the relation between cinema and video (most famously in *Sauve qui peut [la vie]*). An enigmatic remark at best, it's generally been taken to mean that film and video are opposed by virtue of a difference in their material base: they are locked in a struggle, with cinema figured as the good brother.[11] (What goes unremarked upon is that, in the structure of the analogy, "cinema" actually matches up with "Cain.") Twenty years later, however, Godard evinces an altogether different way of thinking about the two media: "I'd say there was no very big difference between video and cinema and you could use one like the other. There are things you can do better with one so with the other you do something else . . . above all you can alter the image easily with video."[12] Godard said this during the production of *Éloge de l'amour,* a film that employs 35mm black-and-white film along with the saturated color of digital video; he thereby implies that cinema and video are not different media but different tools for the production of images.

The significance of projection does emerge through a contrast with other media. It's just that this contrast doesn't have to do with the means by which an image is produced or the format in which it is stored. Rather, it involves the mode of exhibition and the different spaces and sizes in which images are seen. Projection functions as a way to specify cinema in the context of an increasingly diverse and porous media ecology, perhaps Godard's contribution to the field of "screen studies."

For Godard, the main challenge to cinema is not the rise of digital technologies of image production and manipulation but what he sees as the increasing encroachment of *television*—more generally, the small screen—throughout all

aspects of life. At various points, Godard describes television as a "cancer," as an "occupying power," and as "radiation poisoning" in the domain of images. For example: "The great defeat, which is not ours, which is that of our parents, was TV in its entirety. It's irreversible, a mutation."[13] These are strong metaphors, even excessive, but they draw on a complex history. In France, dislike of television has been a matter not only of high-brow taste but also, from the start, of political suspicion. Television arrived along with the occupying German army in World War II and was later controlled by the Vichy regime. Godard refers to this history when he says, "When I watch French television today, I think I know exactly how the French resistance felt about the German occupation or about the collaborators."[14] It's not entirely surprising, then, that he uses such violent metaphors to describe television or that he ascribes responsibility for it to the generation of his parents, the generation that fought in World War II.

For Godard, the threat to cinema is thus not a decline in cinema attendance, or even a shift in creative production, but rather a change in how images are viewed. With its smaller screen, location in a domestic and private space, and continuous broadcasting, television offers a fundamentally different model for looking at and experiencing images. The increasing proliferation of small screens in contemporary culture is simply an extension of the initial shift away from the theater.

Godard's engagement with television has two main consequences. First, starting in the mid-1970s, he began to produce works that attempt to engage that medium directly, the most ambitious of which are two extended series: *Six fois deux/Sur et sous la communication* and *France/tour/détour/deux/enfants*. These works try to intervene in, and even change, what was becoming the standard form of television production and reception.[15] Second, television changes how Godard thinks about *cinema;* he starts to posit the site of viewing or reception as the central criterion for differentiating film from other media. It's in this context that he defines cinema in terms of projection: "Cinema has never existed. It has only been projected."[16]

To some extent, projection is just a matter of scale: "Cinema is higher than us, it is that to which we must lift our eyes. When it passes into a smaller object on which we lower our eyes, cinema loses its essence."[17] To give a historical grounding for this opposition, Godard evokes the struggle between Lumière and Edison, between the projection of images onto a screen in a theatrical setting and the exhibition of films in penny arcades for individual viewers. Television, he says, is "the triumph of Edison, because Edison wanted cinema for one person at a time while Lumière . . ."[18] Godard trails off, but it's clear he is thinking of audiences present for the collective viewing of films on large screens. Behind this position is the thought that it can't be a trivial fact that Edison's model failed, that cinema became popular only as a collective experience. The fate of cinema, then, involves more than whether or not films are being shown in theaters. It has to do with the

cultural conditions that made cinema important, that made possible a certain kind of experience.

This is the position that projection captures. Godard makes a powerful, if schematic, argument: when an image is shown on a large screen in a theater, it's cinema; when it's shown on a small screen in a home, it's television. The former counts as the "projection" of an image, the latter as its "transmission"; this is true regardless of the physical medium in which the image is housed. We see this distinction at work in Godard's insistence that *Éloge de l'amour,* though half of it is shot in digital video, is cinema because it is shown in theaters, while *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* designed to be shown on television, is not an instance of projection but a transmission of its history.[19] Godard describes the video series as a "keepsake portrait," noting, "We can see the shadow of a film on the television, the longing for a film, the nostalgia, the echo of a film, but never a film."[20] Rather than trying to reenact cinema (after its death, as it were), *Histoire(s) du cinéma* attempts to create a memory of genuine cinematic experience, preserving what it was like to watch films in a certain way at a certain time.

(This distinction raises a question. When Godard's video work is projected in a theater, does it become a film? Or: If *The Searchers* on late-night cable is television, does a collective viewing of an episode of *The Wire* in a theater make it a film? Something doesn't seem right with these thoughts. I don't have a ready answer; nor, I think, does Godard. In a sense, he's just less concerned with what happens to television in a theater than he is with what happens to films when they're viewed at home.)

Although Godard is certainly not the only person to use projection to pick out something central to film,[21] his use of the term is singular. What follows is a sampling from the several dozen appearances of projection in his films, writings, and interviews over the past three decades:

Cinema will disappear when it's no longer projected. (1984)[22]

The cinema was projected in a recognizable form, that of visual representation. Thus the "I" was projected and magnified; it could get lost, but the idea could be found again, there was a sort of metaphor. With television, on the contrary, television no longer projects anything; it projects us, it projects us *[sic],* and so we no longer know where the "subject" is. In the cinema, in the idea of the screen, or in Plato's cave, there was an idea of "project." Besides, projection . . . : project, projection, subject. (1985)[23]

The mystery, then. That of projection. Cinema only has projects. Unlike television, which only has rejects. Television spits, sweats, and vomits. Cinema opens, shows and welcomes. It projects. As the newborn child passes through the corridor—the camera obscura *[le chambre obscure]*—and comes out of the hole. It projects itself into life. . . . There lies the source of the human project. (1987)[24]

The greatest history is the history of the cinema. It's greater than the others because it projects, whereas others reduce themselves. When Foucault wrote *Madness and Civilization,* he reduced insanity to [a book]. When Langlois projected *Nosferatu* and in a small village where Nosferatu lived you already saw the ruins of Berlin in 1944, a projection took place. So, to put it simply, I say that it's the greatest history because it can project. Other histories can only reduce themselves.

My goal, then, alas [laughter], is like that little poem by Brecht: "I examine my project carefully: it's unrealizable." Because it can only be done on TV, which reduces. Or which projects you, the viewer, but then you lose consciousness, you're rejected. Whereas in cinema, the viewer was attracted. But we can make a memento of this projectable history. It's the only history that projects, and it's all we can do [because cinema is dead]. But it's the greatest history and it's never been told. (1988)[25]

In a Moscow prison, Jean-Victor Poncelet, army officer of Napoleon, reconstructs without the aid of any notes the geometrical knowledge that he learned in the courses of Monge and of Carnot. The *Treatise of the Projective Property of Figures,* published in 1822, constructs in general method the principle of projection utilized by Desargue for understanding the properties of conical sections and put to work by Pascal in his demonstration of the mystical hexagram.

What was then needed was a revolving prisoner facing a wall for whom the mechanical application of the idea and the desire to project figures on a screen takes wing practically speaking with the invention of cinematographic projection. Let's equally note that the instigating wall was rectangular. (1992)[26]

The origin of projection: where the idea of projecting something was born before the invention of cinema, the invention of utopia. (1993)[27]

Projection will disappear. And the possibility that was given by motion pictures will be missed. The possibility of there being a real audience—a group of people who have nothing in common, but, at a certain time of the day or the week, are able to look with other unknown neighbors at something bigger than they are. To look at their problems in big. Not in small. Because if it's small, you can't . . . it was big, so it was evident. (1994)[28]

Cinema has not played its role as an instrument of thought. Because it was, all the same, a unique way of seeing the world, a particular vision that could then be projected in large for many people, and in several places at the same time. (1995)[29]

Cinema is no more. With television, it is not projected, it is transmitted. . . . You see the transmission of it, but that which was projected can no longer be known today. This is what I call the memory of a history of projection. (1999)[30]

I think the cinema is an image of the world. If you know how to look, you learn many things. It is a projection of the world at a given time. (2000)[31]

It's only at the movies that everybody sees more or less the same thing. They darkened the theaters and widened the screen for that, so that everybody is on an equal

footing. That was projection's strength, which is precisely what television killed. Projection has disappeared on television, hence the *project* has disappeared. (2001)[32]

The most important and sustained work being done in these examples concerns the way projection makes possible the particular intersection between cinema and history that Godard develops in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. But this work depends on and is built out of several other elements.

1. Medium definition. Whatever is projected in a theatrical space, whether its physical support is film or video (analog or digital), counts as film; whatever is shown on a small screen in a domestic situation, even if it is a broadcast of a film, counts as television. Godard uses *projection* and *transmission* to mark the difference between the media in terms of the way they present images to a viewer. This is projection in the literal sense.[33]

2. Public space. What is crucial to cinema is the projection of films in darkened theaters for a collective of anonymous viewers. Godard talks about the presence of "a real audience" for films, "a group of people who have nothing in common, but, at a certain time of the day or the week, are able to look with other unknown neighbors at something bigger than they are."[34] Implicit in this ideal is that part of cinema's appeal lies in its separation from domestic space: Godard notes in *Meetin' W.A.* (1985), "Entering the cinema theater is to liberate oneself from the permission of mummy and daddy. While with television, daddy and mummy are in the room next door from the outset, or in the same city with the same television set, so it's very different from going to the theater. I mean the liberty to enter the dark room."[35] Indeed, the connection of television to domestic space, and in particular the relation children have to television within the home, is one of Godard's main interests in the television series he made.

3. Image and viewer. Godard frequently talks about the cinema as being able to produce images, while, with television, "there is no true image."[36] Projection in this sense entails the possibility of a more open set of relations between viewer and screen: an image, when projected in a theater, can reveal something new and of importance to the audience. In *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* Godard says, "I think the cinema is an image of the world. If you know how to look, you learn many things. It is a projection of the world at a given time." This openness is precluded by television, a medium that "fixes" the viewer (both physically and psychically) in front of the screen in order to transmit a message clearly and in the way the broadcasting agency intends. Godard claims that television "subjects" the viewer to a message and in so doing creates a clearly defined "subject."

4. Politics. Godard uses the idea of projection here to discuss two different things. On the one hand, he talks about an egalitarian ideal embodied by the

viewers in a theater: "It's only at the movies that everybody sees more or less the same thing. They darkened the theaters and widened the screen for that, so that everybody is on an equal footing. That was projection's strength, which is precisely what television killed." Cinema, as he puts it elsewhere, was "the invention of utopia," a fantasized democratic space; it "was born with the idea of democracy."[37] On the other hand, Godard suggests that watching a film brings with it an experience of individual freedom, especially for aspiring filmmakers: "What we felt in front of projected films . . . saved us. . . . We could do things with no 'class,' with nothing, with neither head nor tail. Just the fact that [films] were made that way meant something, whereas in literature and even in painting, there were norms, and judges who judged. I think there was this feeling of freedom."[38]

5. History. Godard brings out three lines of inquiry by introducing history into his account of projection. One involves connecting cinema to what Laurent Mannoni calls "the history of projection," an "archeology of the cinema" that describes cinema not so much in terms of technological advances in production as through devices involved in the projection of images, from shadow puppets, through magic lanterns, to phantasmagoria.[39] In *King Lear,* Godard's "new" invention is a lightbulb projecting shadows of dinosaurs onto a screen. Elsewhere, he invokes mathematical uses of projection, from Poncelet and Pascal, as quasi-allegories for cinema. The appeal of such an archaeology is that it leads away from the traditional account of cinema as emerging from science and photography. Projection provides a media history predicated on the visual appearance of images.[40]

The second has to do with an account of history itself. At various points, Godard describes projection as constituting something like a law of history. In *JLG/JLG,* for example, he says that Germany "projected" the Jews into an autonomous state; that is, Germany, by its actions in World War II, generated out of itself (projected) the state of Israel. Godard intones, "There was Germany, which projected Israel. Israel reflected this projection, and Israel found its cross. And the law of the stereo continues" (Et la loi de la stéréo continue). He goes on to claim that Israel has done the same thing with the Palestinians: it has projected them from within itself to create an independent political entity.

The third is the most extensive encounter between projection and history in Godard's work and involves what he describes as the "history of projection." Godard argues that cinema is able to create histories simply through the projection of films: our experience in a theater is one of forming connections and associations, of being reminded of films and events not explicitly contained within or referred to by the film being screened. This experience is at the heart of one of his most evocative descriptions of projection: "When

Langlois projected *Nosferatu* and in a small village where Nosferatu lived you already saw the ruins of Berlin in 1944, a projection took place. So, to put it simply, I say that it's the greatest history because it can project. Other histories can only reduce themselves."

I want to pause on this last statement, since it seems to me central for understanding how Godard thinks about cinema's ability to engage with history. Initially, he seems to index *Nosferatu* to the time when it was screened, to the moment when he saw the film in the Cinémathèque Française. But he quickly extrapolates to nonstandard historical connections, to different times and places. We might ask: If cinema "is a projection of the world at a given time," what is Godard's thought in claiming that, when he was at the cinema in the 1950s, he was able to see the world of 1944 in a film made in 1922, which depicted the world of the nineteenth century (if not earlier)? The difficulty here is that Godard uses "projection" *both* to denote the ordinary screening of a film *and* to describe the complex creation of historical knowledge. His argument seems to be that the physical projection of a film, when combined with its reception by an audience in a specific theatrical setting, forms the condition for the possibility of discerning historical affinities and connections. It's not simply that we recognize affinities and connections that would otherwise have gone unnoticed; Godard suggests that they would never have existed in the first place were it not for cinema.

But if projection connects historical (and film-historical) events in new ways, forming what Godard describes as the "greatest history," there are major questions. How do the terms of comparison—between *Nosferatu* and Berlin, for example—go together? What is the relation between the projection of a film and the recognition (or creation) of historical affinities? Why is it that cinema, the simple fact of going to the movies, can generate historical knowledge at all?

3. COSSACKS IN WEIMAR

There are two fairly familiar ways of treating the intersection between cinema and history. One involves looking at films in terms of the context in which they were made: Brazilian *cinema nuovo* and the military dictatorship, Warner Bros. and the New Deal, Soviet cinema of the 1920s and the Russian Revolution. This is the social history of cinema. (A different version, prominent especially in studies of early cinema, is an "aesthetic of reception.") A second examines the way individual films themselves treat historical events, such as Rossellini's *Rise to Power of Louis XIV* (1966) Pontecorvo's *Battle of Algiers* (1966) and Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1935). The two approaches can be combined: Italian neorealism is often examined not just in its historical context (fascism and World War II) but also with an eye toward how the films themselves treat that history; such an ap-

proach is also common with political documentaries. Although Godard certainly appropriates both methods, he also does something different, something stranger: the historical connections he draws often go across the history of cinema, and they do not rest on standard historical grounds.

We can begin working out an approach to the kinds of historical connections Godard is interested in, and the grounds on which he makes them, by turning away from *Histoire(s) du cinéma* to look at a brief episode from *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*. As Caution starts his journey from East to West, he embarks on a detour to Weimar—his guide, appropriately enough, is Charlotte Kestner, the heroine of Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*—and comes across a statue of Pushkin. Caution stands in profile at the right of the frame, reaching to the left to touch the base of the monument; Kestner enters in the foreground from the left, walks in front of and around Caution to face the camera (figure 25), and remarks, "It was a great day for Weimar when the Red Army took over the city." Kestner urges Caution to continue their journey and then exits behind the statue to the left. He looks up at the statue, salutes, and says, "The soldiers salute the artists." Godard cuts to a close-up of the statue's face, stained by weather, and we hear a stanza from Pushkin's "Portents" (1829) being read in Russian.[41] The pair then moves on to Goethe's house.

By juxtaposing Pushkin with the Soviet occupation of Germany, Godard refers to the constructed historical memory of East Germany—that the Russian presence was a "great day" in the nation's history—and suggests that the occupation was as much spiritual as physical. At the same time, he implies that the occupation of the West by the East is nothing new. The influence is symbolized by the presence of a statue of Pushkin near Goethe's home, an international marker in the primary location of national culture. (What is German national culture if Pushkin is at the heart of it?) It is further emphasized by the fact that it is the beloved from Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* who lauds Weimar's occupation by foreign troops.

There is another level to this sequence. Charlotte Kestner is Goethe's heroine, but she reappears in Thomas Mann's *Lotte in Weimar*, in which, at an older age, she journeys to Weimar to see Goethe again. (Godard repeatedly places copies of the book within the film.) Amid the conversations that make up the novel, Mann takes up the German reaction to Napoleon: Goethe's love of him and others who longed for his defeat. When that defeat came, though, it was at the hands of an army that included Russians, a circumstance that generated great anxiety:

> "Shortly after the middle of October, with mingled admiration and horror, we beheld Cossacks in Weimar. . . . Napoleon conquered? . . . Did anybody know what would come after the great man's fall? Russian hegemony instead of French? Cossacks in Weimar? . . . These friends of ours would plunder and lay waste, precisely

FIGURE 25. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*

as our foes had done. . . . That was the truth, disguise it as one would with senti-
mental fables. The poets ruined themselves mixing in politics. They and the people
were simply in a state of disgusting and indecent heat. In short, it was awful."[42]

By invoking this series of literary references, Godard shows Weimar as a site of
extended struggle between East and West, and the prominence of Goethe en-
sures that the questions are cultural as much as they are political: Is Russia a part
of Europe? Is German history integrally connected to Russia? Is Pushkin a Euro-
pean poet? Is Goethe an Eastern one? There is also a question of what we should
make of the political involvement of artists. Later in the film, Godard will con-
demn "artists of the state" but surprisingly cites Velázquez, Giotto, and Dürer as
prime examples. So what should we make of "national poets" like Goethe and
Pushkin? And what of Godard himself, a Swiss artist who lent himself and his art
to various, and largely French, political causes?

The difficulty of such sequences is that Godard is making historical arguments
about events that are historically unrelated and seem historically unrelatable, and
he is doing so by citing artistic works that evoke them rather than referring to the
events themselves. Moreover, the way he constructs the sequence implies that the
connections he brings out are not found in the world but instead are created by his

film. By using references to link events that don't "naturally" belong together, Go-
dard creates, as if for the first time, the connections among them.

This practice is part of a general method. In the sequence from *Allemagne 90
neuf zéro,* Godard is bringing fragments—clips, events, texts—together, not in the
form of comparisons but as part of the same world: the world of his film. Contrast
this with a familiar way of drawing historical analogies. We say, for example, that
the revolution of 1848 is "like" the revolution of 1789 and that the revolution of 1917
is "like" the revolution of 1789 as well. They each have their Robespierre, their Gi-
rondins, their Thermidor, their Reign of Terror. (We also talk about the first time
as tragedy, the second as farce; the third is something else altogether.) Godard's
shift is to drop the *like:* 1917 simply is 1789, and so is 1848. Weimar in 1945 is not
like Weimar in 1806, it *is* Weimar in 1806; Berlin of 1944 is *Nosferatu*'s village of
1922. They are present to and for each other. Analogy becomes equation, compari-
son turns into identity; all events are made, through cinema, contemporaries.[43]

Such a method is central to the way the historical arguments of *Histoire(s) du
cinéma* work. Take the sequence from episode 1A that juxtaposes George Ste-
vens's *A Place in the Sun* with footage Stevens took of concentration camps. In
chapter 4, I argued that Godard brings together fragments of art, fictional films,
and newsreel footage to model the establishment of historical memory, to set out
the terms on which events and traumas are not only preserved but also created
by the work of cinema. But now we can extract the methodological implications
of this practice: the fragments of films (and paintings) are not distinct terms
compared with one another in order to discern the influence of reality on fiction.
Instead, the superimpositions Godard employs function as a form of identifica-
tion: the content of *A Place in the Sun* simply is the documentary footage Stevens
shot of the camps, just like the content of Picasso's *Guernica* is Guernica. In
Histoire(s) du cinéma, they become one and the same thing.

Another sequence from episode 1A illustrates this method while also offering
an argument for its general validity. The sequence takes place toward the begin-
ning of the episode and is the first virtuosic montage in the video series. Starting
with a shot of a woman's blue eyes intercut with white frames from De Palma's
The Fury, Godard moves among clips from the following films: *Faust, The Band
Wagon, La règle du jeu, Crucified Lovers* (Mizoguchi, 1954), *People on Sunday*
(Siodmak, Ulmer, and Zinnemann, 1929), *The Public Enemy* (Wellman, 1931), *Bro-
ken Blossoms, Rancho Notorious* (Lang, 1952), *Alexander Nevsky,* and *The Leop-
ard* (Visconti, 1963). All of this is framed around a quotation that Godard, since
Le mépris, has misattributed to Bazin: "Cinema substitutes for our look a world
that accords with our desires." And it takes place against dialogue from *L'année
dernière à Marienbad (Last Year at Marienbad,* Resnais, 1960), the Adagio from
Beethoven's Quartet no. 10, and the ever-present sound of Godard's own type-
writer. The sequence leads to a brief segment on Eisenstein, then to a longer one

on Irving Thalberg, and eventually to a comparison between Hollywood and Soviet cinema under the heading, "A Factory of Dreams," linking Eisenstein to Griffith, Vertov to von Stroheim, Lenin to Hughes.

The relations between the clips are initially perplexing. The films Godard includes are from different decades, different countries, different traditions: they have little to do with one another. Their only connection appears to be Godard's placement of them within the same sequence, an act which effectively declares that a relation exists.

An initial task, then, is simply figuring out what these relations are and how the sequence hangs together. We look for connections: *The Band Wagon* probably follows *Faust* because the narrative of Minnelli's film is driven by the staging of a production of *Faust,* while the Renoir and Mizoguchi clips are linked because they involve formal affinities between figures moving through forests—movements that, in each case, lead to death. *People on Sunday* follows these clips because of its shared interest in a kind of sexual mobility, the way dissatisfaction leads to new lovers. And *The Public Enemy* doubles back to the beginning: if *The Band Wagon* stages a dance in a gangster setting, here there are gangsters dancing. These formal and thematic links continue throughout the sequence, all the way to the production of spectacles in *Alexander Nevsky* and *The Leopard* and their emphasis on social orders about to fall.

More generally, the connection that underlies these clips derives from what the sequence says, or shows, about the way Godard does the history of cinema. We can take a cue from the definitional phrase imprinted on the screen: "Cinema substitutes for our look a world that accords with our desires." And so we might notice that the clips exhibit a variety of persistent desires: for sex and power, for salvation and revenge. More generally, they exhibit a desire to remake the world. Both *The Fury* and *Faust,* the two films with which the sequence starts, revolve around characters who use (and abuse) supernatural powers to transform physical reality. *The Band Wagon* picks up this theme with the production of a show, the creation of an artificial world that, through its performance, transforms the world that produced it. (Surely it matters that Cyd Charisse is formally matched with Faust in the superimposition, and Fred Astaire, the designer of the show, with Mephistopheles [figure 26].) Other clips—*Alexander Nevsky, The Leopard,* even *The Public Enemy*—are about individuals and groups who try to remake the contours of their world through (violent) conquest. The organizing thread of the sequence, we might say, is that cinema has a propensity to create a world in which the desires of characters are realized. And because we identify with them—these are general desires, after all—cinema satisfies our desires, too.

The idea of cinema at issue here does not concern a combination of different worlds, each of which illustrates some general feature of cinema. In the way the clips appear in succession on the screen, their worlds are identified. They're the

FIGURE 26. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 1A

same world. And the single world they form, the world in which all the films in the sequence participate, is cinema. (This may be why Godard wonders earlier in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* whether cinema is "all the stories that there were or might have been" and then declares, "That there have been.") Cinema simply is Lillian Gish's fantasy, in *Broken Blossoms,* of a world in which she can survive, or it's the sexual liberty in *Rancho Notorious* that serves as a background for, and yet unsettles, Arthur Kennedy's desire for revenge.

A puzzling aspect of the sequence nonetheless remains. If the clips trade on the explicit desires of the characters in the films, the world of each film—hence, the world of cinema—does not show desire satisfied. Arthur Kennedy discovers that exacting revenge for the murder of his fiancée does not bring peace, and Lillian Gish finds rest only in death. Cinema may be about the satisfaction of our desires, but Godard repeatedly shows films in which the satisfaction of desire is itself the problem. Indeed, the entire sequence takes place under the sign of Faust and his discovery of the perils in getting what you wish for.

Part of this explanation has to do with the way we discover that desires are dangerous, creatures of history, and can lead us astray. The films show a world organized by desires in all their ambiguity: they show us what we can't see, or won't see, about ourselves—and about our world. Cinema does not so much reflect our

desires as show them to us in new ways, becoming involved in a fairly complex relation to its spectators; in the way it reveals something new to us about ourselves, it works to redefine the contours of our world. Cinema, then, seems akin to the fantasy of control in *Last Year at Marienbad,* in the conversations we hear throughout the sequence, in which X is trying to make A remember an affair they had (to believe it actually happened)—to replace her world with his. Godard returns to this theme later in the episode, when he talks about how Soviet films aided the spread of international socialism and the analogous case of corporate politics in America, with Senator McBride's claim that "trade follows films."[44] In episode 4A, Godard labels this ambition "the control of the universe," the quasi-imperial determination of the viewer's experience. We are made over, transformed by cinema.

4. A GALLERY OF IMAGES

The sequence from *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 1A leaves us with the curious picture of all the films ever made being (even if only potentially) part of a single world. Why does Godard think that clips, as well as the associated contexts they carry, are brought together in this way? Why should we take historical connections seriously when they are made not through comparison or analogy, much less through documented evidence, but through identification across space and time?

There is, however, an intellectual genealogy behind this practice, prior descriptions of a similar experience. The final section of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* describes "Spirit emptied out into Time," an "externalization" that results in "a slow-moving succession of Spirits, a gallery of images."[45] At the end, Hegel argues, the Spirit is able to see all the successive stages of its development arrayed as if in spatial form, the history of the world turned into a picture gallery available in a single view. In art history, André Malraux's idea of a "museum without walls" imagines photographic reproductions of great works of art used for personal accounts of its history. Malraux's museum takes the organizing principle away from institutional control and gives it instead to the creative activity of the individual collector.[46] In a similar way, Aby Warburg's *Mnemosyne Atlas* arranged selected images from the history of art and culture without external commentary, doing so in such a way that the links between the various fragments—the art-historical arguments Warburg wanted to produce—would become clear through the juxtaposition of images.[47]

The figure who brings this tradition into cinema is Élie Faure, who argued in 1920 that "through the cinema time really becomes a dimension of space." Faure produced a thought experiment, imagining beings on another planet recording Christ's crucifixion and then "sending it to us in some sort of projectile or perhaps transmitting it to our screens by some system of interplanetary projection." He claimed that viewing this film "would actually make us the contemporaries

of events which took place a hundred centuries before us."[48] The gallery of images becomes the source for contemporaneity, for a form of montage that brings fragments into the same world.

What we have, in these cases, is the terms of a modernist aesthetic based on montage and oriented toward historical knowledge. Godard's interest in bringing disparate texts and events together thus places him squarely in a tradition that also includes figures such as Pound, Eliot, Joyce, Breton, and Celan. This (predominantly literary) tradition employs similar components and techniques: fragments from antecedent texts directly inserted into a new work, images and symbols replete with meaning (both preexisting and newly created), and an extraordinarily wide range of allusions. The fragments, moreover, tend to be placed one after another according to an obscure logic, without overt explanation or justification—with perhaps only a general interpretive gesture as a guide. (Eliot: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins.") The effect of such combinations on the reader can be powerful, producing sustained flashes of recognition and insight, but it entails a range of difficulties concerning the way a work holds together: not only internally, in the relations among parts, but for a reader as well—that is, how the connections are to be understood in the act of reading.

An exemplary version of this poetic practice is the work of Paul Celan. The first stanza of his "In One" (1963) reads,

> Thirteenth of February. Shibboleth
> roused in the heart's mouth. With you,
> peuple
> de Paris. *No pasarán.*[49]

Raymond Geuss argues that, in this brief verse, Celan evokes and connects a range of events. The date, 13 February, refers to both a 1962 event in Paris, when a number of activists killed in a demonstration against the OAS were buried, and a workers' uprising in Vienna in 1934. The latter is an event Celan also refers to in a 1955 poem, "Shibboleth"; that context, too, is brought into "In One." (The word *shibboleth* comes from an Old Testament story in which the various pronunciations of the word were used to distinguish friend from foe.) *"No pasarán"* is a slogan associated with the Republican defense of Madrid in the Spanish civil war, a context evoked later in the poem by Celan's reference to an encounter with an older man in France, a former Spanish partisan still living in exile.[50]

The method driving these connections is what Celan terms a "meridian." He writes, "I find the connective which, like the poem, leads to encounters. I find something as immaterial as language, yet earthly, terrestrial, in the shape of a circle which, via both poles, rejoins itself and on the way serenely crosses the tropics: I find . . . a *meridian*."[51] Celan derives from this topographical feature the idea of lining up events without a causal story to support their connection,

the act of lining up alone furnishing its justification. Geuss writes, "The form this investigation takes is the linking of a particular dated event, which is the occasion or origin of the poem, with some other dated events in other places. . . . distinct events can be 'one'—can belong together, especially when *put together* by the poet."[52] In this way, "In One" links revolutionary moments from the twentieth century in order to create a kind of utopian memory for future generations. It is the poet who, by drawing the meridian, joins the events together and thereby creates relations that would not otherwise exist.

Godard is certainly aware of this modernist genealogy, and two places where he acknowledges it are particularly loaded. Both involve audio recordings: the first is of Pound reading from Canto I (1930) at the very end of *Histoire(s) du cinéma;* the second, of Celan reading "Todesfuge" (Death Fugue) in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and *Éloge de l'amour.*[53] When Godard cites this tradition, he also insists that cinema has a special role to play in an ongoing modernist project. He will describe, for example, the very activity of bringing together historical figures, texts, and events—that is, the work of the modernist poet—as "making a film."[54] Celan and Pound may not have known it, and each probably would have rejected such an implication, but Godard claims that, because they created poems out of fragments from art and history, they had already marked themselves as filmmakers, *cinéastes avant la lettre.*

When Godard brings cinema in line with these modernist practices, he introduces an important wrinkle: he holds that cinema is untouched by many of the formal and interpretive difficulties that traditionally accompany such a project. (It's a belief expressed early in his career, when he discusses a writer who "suddenly realized that the cinema had managed to express what he thought belonged exclusively in the domain of literature, and that the problems which he, as a novelist, was setting himself had already been solved by the cinema without its even needing to pose them for itself. I think it's a very significant point.")[55] Godard's central claim is that the kinds of connections at stake in modernist poetics—those created by the virtuosic structure of the text, by the act of the poet—are just (part of) the way cinema works. As a medium, cinema is *naturally* modernist. Rather than each work actively bringing fragments from different sources into a new context, all films—and therefore the worlds they invoke as well—are always potentially part of the same world, with all the possibilities for juxtaposition and combination that implies. When they're brought together in an act of viewing—or by a sequence in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*—they form a world that is by nature publicly shareable (and so not irredeemably private).

It's a strange claim, to be sure, but Godard defends it on the grounds that it is a normal feature of theatrical projection; the formal virtuosity of modernist poetics matches our ordinary experience of going to the cinema. Perhaps it's more accurate to say that the description fits *Godard's* experience when he saw films at

the Cinémathèque Française in the 1950s and 1960s. Under the direction of Henri Langlois, films from different times, places, and genres were shown one after another, combinations based on Langlois's discernment of affinities. For viewers, films that were radically different suddenly appeared to share the same world, just by virtue of their successive projection on a screen. Jacques Rivette describes this experience: "One could see there successively at 6:30 P.M. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* and at 8:30 Andy Warhol's *Chelsea Girls* [1966]. And it was fabulous precisely because one could see Griffith and Warhol together on the same night. Because it was then that one realized that there are not two or three kinds of cinema, *there is only one cinema.* It was the perpetual interaction of the present and the past of the cinema that was so exciting."[56] Godard seems to take Rivette's insight as literal truth: the contemporary of Anthony Mann was not just Ford but also Griffith; Nicholas Ray and Vigo were in conversation with one another, and so were Feuillade and Cukor.[57]

For Godard, Langlois's programming made explicit something that was latent in cinema all along: because cinema exists only when it's projected, the creation of meaningful juxtapositions of unrelated films is simply part of the medium. When Godard saw a film in the Cinémathèque Française, it formed part of a world that also contained both the other films on the program—they were part of the same experience—and the films he recalled while watching them. He then ascribes this viewing situation to the nature of cinema itself: because each film can potentially share a world with *any* other film (regardless of country of origin, year of production, genre, etc.), *all* films thereby become one with one another. They are no longer separated by external factors but, in the experience of projection, linked in the viewer's mind. Call it the unified world of cinema.

The history of cinema that emerges is thus based on the appearance of films on the screen in front of Langlois's audience. In a tribute to Langlois in episode 3B, Godard says, "So we were dazzled more than El Greco in Italy, or Goya also in Italy, or Picasso looking at Goya. We were without a past, and the man in the Avenue de Messine made us a gift of that past, metamorphosed into the present. . . . And when he was screening *L'espoir* for the first time it wasn't the Spanish war that jolted us but the fraternity of metaphors." Cinema simply is all the films that have been made, opened out through theatrical projection onto the possibility of interacting with every other film (and the various historical events they carry with them). They all share, or could share, the same screen; they inhabit the same world. It's as if the experience of cinema just is how *Histoire(s) du cinéma* looks.

5. I WAS THAT MAN

The idea of projection and the theory of cinema it entails lead to a puzzle about spectatorship: How is the audience supposed to understand what they are seeing

on the screen in front of them? Does the audience do nothing but generate associations with other films? In *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* the puzzle is an explicitly modernist one: How are we to make sense of the allusions and citations we're given? Are we supposed to recognize exactly how and why extended sequences, like the one constructed around the juxtaposition of *Faust* and *The Band Wagon,* are put together? Is it ever possible for us to discern, in the act of viewing, the logic behind the virtuosic montage that's constructed out of a vast array of fragments?

These are by no means an unmotivated questions. Take Langlois's expression of a desire to write up a program that juxtaposed Man Ray's *L'étoile de mer* (1928) and Nicholas Ray's *Rebel without a Cause* (1955), a program he knew would not be shown. When asked about his reason for doing this, he remarked, "In one hundred years . . . people will see that the two films were programmed together, and then they'll do it, and they'll be the ones to see the connection."[58] For Langlois's act of montage to succeed, an audience must recognize the terms on which he makes the juxtaposition, must see the connections between the films in the way that he did.

So it is with *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* If Godard draws historical connections through the juxtaposition of various fragments, an audience must be there to recognize them. We must be able to see, for example, Renoir's France of the 1930s and Mizoguchi's Japan of the 1500s (although filmed in the 1950s) as simultaneously present, or see the residue of Napoleon's occupation of Weimar in the statue of Pushkin. The audience's recognition is the contingent term necessary for Godard's montage to succeed.[59] To be sure, Godard can depend on an audience in the most basic sense: people see films (frequently), and people see his films (less frequently). But the stance his films and videos take toward this audience is another matter: Does their form allow an audience to see the connections he makes?

Questions about the audience have always caused trouble for thinking about Godard's work. It's not just that his films are seen by a relatively small number of people, a number steadily diminishing since the mid-1960s, although that certainly does matter. Godard's own picture of the audience is complicated. He is explicit in stating that part of what defines cinema is the sheer fact of its popularity, yet he clearly does not try to please a mass public. Cinema, following the line Godard attributes to Bazin, may show us a world in accord with our desires, but that does not mean *Godard* feels the need to follow that prescription. Dixon argues that the way Godard has financed his recent projects follows a Renaissance model of patronage: since he receives money up front, he is not dependent on audience numbers, and so can be indifferent to public response. This has allowed him, in Dixon's view, to create a style that is irreducibly private and personal, hostile to the very idea of a viewing public.[60] I think this conclusion is wrong, and will try to show why, but it underlines the problem of Godard's relation to his (potential) audience. While earlier periods of Godard's career might have

suggested an address to cinephiles eager to make films of their own or to political activists looking for models of criticism, neither fits his practice during the 1980s and 1990s. In what way, then, does he claim to speak representatively, such that an audience can properly grasp his work?

We can begin to get at this question through a comparison with Kluge, who articulates a model of spectatorship in tune with Godard's concerns. Kluge argues that film ought to intervene in the way viewers relate to the public spheres they inhabit, whether at home, at work, or in public spaces themselves. What a film is, the work it does, is defined through a dialectic between screen and viewer: "The film is composed in the head of the spectator; it is not a work of art that exists on the screen by itself. Film must work with the associations which, to the extent they can be estimated, to the extent they can be imagined, the author can arouse in the spectator."[61] The goal of Kluge's productions is to create specific reactions in the viewer that help form what he calls "counter-public spheres": sites that, separated from dominant media conglomerates—in production, form, and reception—provide locations for resistance to emerge. What matters is the intersection of film form, the space of viewing, and the individual spectator's own psychological activity.[62]

Projection gives Godard the resources for a similar account. When he describes the origin of cinema as "the invention of utopia," for example, he also worries that "the possibility that was given by motion pictures will be missed. The possibility of there being a real audience . . . able to look with other un-known neighbors at something bigger than they are. To look at their problems in big. Not in small. Because if it's small, you can't. . . . it was big, so it was evi-dent."[63] To say that audiences saw their problems on the screen is not, I take it, to imply that they were watching politically committed or social problem films. Godard emphasizes a more basic psychological relation that takes place between viewer and image, one that cinema creates but that other media, television in particular, cannot sustain. As Witt puts it, "Where cinema set itself the project of constructing and reflecting an image . . . through which the injuries of life might be 'redeemed' or 'resurrected' . . . television merely broadcasts *programmes*."[64] It's only the physical projection of images in a theater that allows for the appro-priate psychical projection (response) by the viewer.

Godard's use of projection draws on its resonance as a term in psychoanalysis, marking the back-and-forth movement between inner and outer reality. Freud understood projection as a defense mechanism by which something internal that is unpleasant, disagreeable, even intolerable is expelled or cast out; projection works by locating such feelings in an external object. At the same time, every projection implies the possibility of a corresponding introjection, an activity in which the external object—and the emotional valence attached to it—is incorpo-rated within the individual's psyche.[65] This account is extended in the work of

Melanie Klein, where the projection/introjection dynamic plays a more fundamental role in the creation of self. Klein positions it as an ongoing process from the beginning of the infant's life, coining the term *projective identification* to describe the way internal objects are projected outside, identified with, and then (possibly) (re)introjected.[66] The introjection of a "good object" can serve as a defense against anxiety, propping up the ego against threats from external and internal aggression; correspondingly, introjecting a "bad object" can lead to feelings of persecution. Proper development involves the management of projection and introjection to create a healthy subject, able to distinguish clearly between inner and outer reality and effectively use psychic mechanisms of defense.

If Godard is suggesting that film viewing involves "projection"—not just in the literal sense, but having to do with the mental activity of the viewers as well—the psychoanalytic resonance seems transposed onto the distinction between self and screen. That is, viewers are involved in a dynamic byplay between introjection and projection inside the movie theater. Godard speaks, in this vein, of "recognizing yourself through projection, the need to project yourself in order to be able to see yourself."[67] There is an implied affinity here between the darkened theater and dreams—even an affinity with the psychoanalytic situation itself, in which the hold of the conscious mind on the unconscious is loosened. Viewers project their problems onto the film being projected, where those problems are worked through and resolved so that the (possible) solutions can then be introjected.

Although Godard's idea of projection resonates with Kluge's position, there are important differences. Godard repeatedly argues that the kind of open experience that film permits is impossible on a small screen at home, while Kluge readily shifts his focus to television on the pragmatic grounds that he can reach more people and intervene in the "flow" of broadcasting.[68] For Kluge, changing the locale of exhibition from the darkened theater to the illuminated home is necessary because the public sphere, along with the struggles that accompany it, has moved into private spaces. Godard may think this is an accurate diagnosis, and my sense is that such a feeling is behind his pronouncements on the death of cinema. But he nonetheless hangs on to the *experience* of cinema, the uniqueness of this experience, even in the wake of its disappearance as a dominant cultural site.

To be sure, Godard does not put forward anything like a full theory of spectatorship. (It's not clear that Kluge does either, for that matter.) The claim that cinema, because it projects, necessarily involves an "appropriate" psychological relation between viewer and screen is fairly obviously underargued and underdeveloped. (It brings to mind Bazin's declaration: "I apologize for proceeding by way of metaphor, but I am not a philosopher and I cannot convey my meaning any more directly.")[69] Still, I don't see this as a deep problem. Godard's picture of the audience in the darkened theater is not so much a theory as a series of hints at the contours of a possible theory, one that serves to support his practice.

These hints are made explicit at the very end of *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Godard recites an elegant and deceptively simple fable: "If a man—If a man traveled across paradise in a dream and received a flower as proof of his passage, and on his awakening he found that flower in his hands: what is to be said? I was that man" (J'étais cet homme). As we hear these lines, Godard repeatedly and rapidly cuts between a photograph of himself, Francis Bacon's *Study for a Portrait of Van Gogh* (1957), and an image of a white rose (figure 27). The fable seems intended to sum up, to stand for, or to reflect on the video series as a whole. It's about Godard's place in cinema, but also about beauty: its evanescent, brief appearance on a screen, always passing away, never solid. Is this cinema? What would it mean to hold on to this experience?

Rather than traveling this interpretive road, I want to draw attention to a rhetorical element of the fable: the move from "a man" to "I was that man." In this shift and in the context of the photograph of his face, which flickers in and out before gradually emerging as the final image of *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* Godard writes himself into the (apparently impersonal) dream. In doing so, he confirms that the history we have just seen was his personal experience. The history of cinema shown by *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is as it is because it is Godard's own history: the history of cinema as he saw and participated in it, the history of cinema that allowed him to make films.[70] It's largely for this reason, I think, that he includes relatively few films that were made after 1960 (apart from his own): in that year, he began making feature films, and so the *history* of cinema is only what came before that date.

To a certain extent, Godard has always treated the history of cinema as his own workbench. His practice of citation, for example, was never just a matter of paying homage to prior artworks, a gesture toward a favorite figure or a pastiche of other texts. By citing and referring to prior films, Godard was attempting to found a tradition out of which he could create new works, to establish the very history in which his own films ought to be seen. We can see this as early as *À bout de souffle,* in Belmondo's overt incorporation of Bogart's signature gesture (rubbing his finger across his lips) and the shot through a rolled-up poster that echoes the shot through the barrel of a rifle in Samuel Fuller's *Forty Guns* (1957). When Michel and Patricia enter a cinema to escape a detective, they see a clip of Budd Boetticher's *Westbound* (1959), but the sound is a recitation of lines of poetry by Apollinaire. This moment links the pleasures of Hollywood cinema with poetry, B-movies with modernism—the ambition, perhaps, of Godard's own work.[71]

The personal orientation of history informs the construction of *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* as when, in episode 4B, Godard names and pays tribute to those who made his life and career possible. A subtler version occurs at the beginning of episode 1B. Amid a series of clips and stills from films that have to do with the motif of the wind, Godard says, loud and insistent, "But for me, first of all, mine.

FIGURE 27. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 4B

My story. And what have I got to do with all of that?" (Mais pour moi, d'abord, la mienne. Mon histoire. Et qu'est-ce que j'ai à faire avec tout ça?) During this speech, Godard inserts a production still from *Fängelse* (Ingmar Bergman, 1949), showing a close-up of a man and a woman side by side with a movie projector between them. The man is a film director who's been asked by his former mathematics teacher to make a film about the postulate that Earth is in fact Hell, the devil having already won; the woman is a young prostitute he meets and befriends as he runs from the murder-suicide he witnesses between his wife and best friend. The two hole up in the attic of his aunt's house, where they find a cache of old slapstick films and project them onto a wall.[72] In the center of this image, Godard superimposes an iris that covers the space occupied by the projector, inside which we can see a strip of film running through the reels of a flatbed editing machine—an image that appears throughout *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. The very fact of cinema, Godard suggests, is bound up with its history, and showing this history is connected to the pleasures of childhood.

Godard's positioning of himself in this sequence is complex. Earlier, he demonstrated that his own films are involved in the history of cinema, noting that *Soigne ta droite* employs the actor (François Périer) who played the chauffeur in Cocteau's

Orphée (1949). He then cuts to a shot of Jean Marais at the mirror, looking for a passage to the other side—this is placed between the couple from *Fängelse*—then to a shot of a filmstrip, and finally to a still of María Casares's face. Godard then repeats his question about his place in this history. By positioning himself in the sequence as a filmmaker with his own history, caught up with the history he has been telling, Godard refuses to treat the history of cinema as something autonomous and fixed, existing as if in some frozen space. He takes himself to be created—as a person as well as a filmmaker—by his presence in this history, at the same time creating that very history. In episode 2A, he confesses, "The only way I could say that I have a body" is by showing the history of cinema, a gloss on Buffon's famous phrase, "Style is the man himself." Godard is his work, embodied by his place in the history he creates and in which he is caught up.

The problem of the audience arises here. Godard's emphasis on a personal history of cinema, a history defined by his experience of and participation in cinema, does not mean that it is his alone—or that he is (or can be) indifferent to whether an audience accepts it. Think of the curious image of Godard standing in his study, a shot that bookends the sequence from 1A discussed above and also appears in various guises across the episodes. Generally, Godard looks off-screen to "face" an image from out of his memory or on a screen in front of him; he will pull out a book and read a passage, recite a name or line he is reminded of, or, more frequently, summon up further images. When Godard does this—or when he says, "I was that man"—he identifies his position within the world of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* as that of a spectator. But not just any spectator. He sets himself up as its "first viewer," and the shape of the video as it develops is, according to this conceit, his response to what he sees (figure 28).[73] In this, Godard is placing the audience in a curious position. Viewers are asked to identify with his own experiences of films, as he positions himself (as a concrete viewer) as part of, even in place of, a collective audience in a theater: he says things like "when I saw," "what I saw there," and so on. In effect, Godard is trying to bridge the gap between himself (the creator of the work, the person who makes the connections) and the audience (those who determine whether the connections succeed). How we see the video series is caught up in our relation to the figure of Godard, at least as he presents himself on screen.

One way to describe the spectatorial position that results is as the "beholder as montagist." Godard positions himself as an exemplary spectator: we're not supposed to simply understand and appreciate the connections he draws but to treat his example as a model, to begin to draw our own connections—make our own *histoires*—when we watch films. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is a lesson about how to see cinema; more generally, it is a set of teachings for understanding what we already do in the theater, for making sense of the films we have already seen. We might say that the goal of the video series is to effect a transfer of Godard's experience

FIGURE 28. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 1A

of cinema to a form in which it can be part of a broader public awareness. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* may be an account of his own experience, but the claim it makes is that it's our experience as well; Godard presents his viewing habits and associations as representative of a more general kind of experience.[74]

Phrased this way, Godard's address to the viewer of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* roughly follows the contours of what Kant calls the "subjective universality" of aesthetic judgments. A judgment of beauty is subjective—it is based on an appreciation of an object not subsumed under a general concept—but it also speaks "with a universal voice," making a claim on others. Kant argues that, in making a genuine judgment of taste, I "demand" agreement from those around me at the same time as I recognize (from past experience) that not everyone will in fact agree. He writes, "This claim to universal validity belongs so essentially to a judgment by which we declare something to be *beautiful* that it would not occur to anyone to use this term without thinking of universal validity."[75] We can describe Godard's montage practice in these terms. On the basis of what he sees (or saw) in a film, he connects that film to another film, artwork, or historical event; he makes a *judgment*. The central feature of his practice—and one of the hardest to keep in mind—is that there are no grounds, outside the juxtaposition of im-

ages, texts, and sounds, to justify the arguments and connections being made. In an interview with Pauline Kael, Godard remarked: "To me, a good review, good criticism (whether it is the *Cahiers du cinéma* or *Film Comment*) would be trying not to say 'I don't feel,' 'I don't see it the way you saw it,' but, rather, 'Let's see it, let's bring in the evidence.' . . . We have to bring in the evidence."[76] *Histoire(s) du cinéma* works to make Godard's judgments *public,* to record them in a shareable mode, to present them in a form to which an audience can give or withhold assent. He brings in the evidence.[77]

We can see this method in an example I gave above. When Godard describes seeing Berlin of 1944 in the villages in *Nosferatu* and says that "a projection took place," he is reporting something that happened to himself. It's an experience he had in a movie theater. But Godard also expects what he saw to resonate with his audience. If he was able to see it, so should we, at least once the connection he draws gives us the license to assume such a relation. The connection between *Nosferatu* and Berlin of 1944 is not a determinate, objectively verifiable claim (one cannot prove it), nor is it simply a private association; it is a judgment addressed to a public for their approval. On the basis of the form of Godard's montage, the manner of its presentation, the audience determines what's going on in a sequence, and that's it: it either works or it doesn't. There is nothing outside the evidence he brings in to make us assent to the judgment he makes. Godard's entire edifice stands or falls on such acts of judgment.

6. *LOINTAINS ET JUSTES*

The demands of judgment that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* makes on its audience are reflected in key aspects of its formal structure. Part of the point of the way Godard puts sequences together, I take it, is to dramatize or exemplify the contingency of the claims he makes. The affinities generated by montage create the conditions for the possibility of recognition, but they do not, on their own, ensure its success. Can Weimar in 1945 be identified with Weimar in 1806? Berlin of 1944 with *Nosferatu*'s village of 1922? or even *Faust* with *The Band Wagon?* Nothing in the terms of the montage guarantees the successful apprehension of these affinities.

More is involved here than an issue of the objects of comparison and the kinds of connections that link them. Godard uses a range of techniques to create visual, often audio-visual, analogs to the acts of judgment out of which the connections are built. The most important of these is superimposition. Over the course of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* Godard repeatedly constructs two- and three-layer superimpositions out of clips, stills, photographs, printed words, and paintings. For example, he "conducts" a dance from *Adieu Philippine* (Jacques Rozier, 1962) by placing a shot of himself, baton in hand, over the dancing youths; layers

the smoke from his cigar over Tippi Hedren's legs as she disrobes in *Marnie* (Alfred Hitchcock, 1964); aligns Elizabeth Taylor in *A Place in the Sun* with the Magdalene from Giotto's *Noli me tangere.* In each case, Godard uses superimposition to establish links between elements that constitute his larger arguments: about history and art, authorial control and cinema, and so on.

Godard's most sustained treatment of the powers of superimposition comes in a sequence that deals with another filmmaker: the "Introduction to the Method of Alfred Hitchcock." In chapter 5, I discussed this sequence to counter Rancière's claims about Godard's aesthetic formalism. Here I want to draw out its positive argument, namely, the elucidation of two different ways of linking images that explicate Godard's practice of montage: sequentially and simultaneously.

Recall that the sequence begins with Godard speaking about the effect of Hitchcock's films: what audiences remember about them are isolated details—a glass of milk, a hairbrush, a row of bottles, a bunch of keys, a cigarette lighter— rather than the overall plot. "We have forgotten why," Godard keeps saying about various plot developments. Earlier, I argued that reading the sequence as one of unambiguous adulation or admiration is a mistake. If Godard pays tribute to the power of Hitchcock's films, he also attempts to undo that power, working against the claims of narrative power that Hitchcock makes.

Godard's response to Hitchcock, however, is not simply that of the saboteur. He uses moments of subversion to secure distance from the power of Hitchcock's narrative drive so as to be able to set out his own aesthetic program. This is the role played by superimposition. It is most visible in an image that runs throughout the sequence: the photograph of Hitchcock's face and hand that appears over the clips, a construction that positions the authorial figure in control of—hence responsible for—the world he creates. I think we can understand this image as an announcement of Godard's intentions, matching up with two different kinds of superimpositions within Hitchcock's work. The first is in the opening shot of the sequence (and it's easy to forget that it is in fact a superimposition): this is the reflection in Marion Crane's rearview mirror in *Psycho* as she anxiously checks to see whether the police officer is still following her. In Godard's line of thinking, it is a quintessentially Hitchcockian superimposition: thoroughly narrativized and seamlessly incorporated into the diegesis, it loses visibility as an act of montage. By contrast, the second kind of superimposition—taken from *The Wrong Man* and used as the final image of the sequence—has a very different role. In the shots leading up to it, Godard quickly alternates between a spectral photograph of Hitchcock (showing his face and hands) and a shot of Kim Novak walking amid the redwoods in *Vertigo.*[78] In between these shots, he inserts a series of intertitles—"The Only One / with Dreyer / Who Knew // How to Film // a Miracle"—before introducing a clip from the climactic scene of *The Wrong Man,* in which Manny, in despair at not being able to clear his name, prays to the im-

age of Christ on the wall. In *that* film, Hitchcock cuts to a close-up of Manny's face and then begins a superimposition: we see a man walk from the background into close-up, his features superimposed over Manny's. This is the "right man," the man whose arrest will eventually prove Manny's innocence.

An initial question: Why does Godard call this a miracle? In the comparison to Dreyer, it's safe to assume he is thinking about *Ordet* (1955), when Johannes raises Inger from the dead. But what happens in *The Wrong Man* isn't supernatural: a habitual criminal commits another crime and is caught. Where's the miracle in that?

Godard is drawing on Bazin here, not his use of a religiously inflected critical vocabulary, but rather his appraisal of Hitchcock. Bazin did not much like Hitchcock, although he sufficiently trusted the taste and judgment of his younger friends and colleagues to acknowledge that he was probably missing something. What bothered him had to do with narrative: "It is not merely a way of telling a story, but a kind of a priori vision of the universe, a predestination of the world for certain dramatic conventions."[79] As Bazin saw it, Hitchcock makes narrative into a metaphysical condition: nothing lies outside it; there is no space for action free of the constraints of the story that moves through the film. Despite Godard's different assessment of Hitchcock's work, he sounded a similar theme in his early criticism, talking about "the sense of a machine grinding inexorably on" in a review of *The Wrong Man*.[80] But where Bazin looked to Hitchcock's dark humor as a counterweight within the metaphysics of narrative, Godard thinks something more drastic is necessary. The force of narrative is of sufficient power that only a miracle—something from outside the world's normal possibilities—can break it.[81] The superimposition in *The Wrong Man* is a miracle precisely because it violates the metaphysical condition that defines the film; Manny is allowed to go free even though he has been caught up in the narrative drive. This miracle is as genuine, given the nature of the Hitchcockian universe, as the one in *Ordet*.

Godard, however, is not content with Hitchcock's own superimposition alone. There are in fact *three* layers to the superimposition in *Histoire(s) du cinéma:* two from *The Wrong Man,* the other a photograph of Hitchcock (figure 29). It's this third layer that allows Godard to mark a difference with Hitchcock. When Hitchcock uses superimposition to create a miracle, it is still under his control: everything remains within the context of the larger narrative structure. Manny may be proven innocent, but guilt does not disappear from the world: it transfers to the new man and then, most heartbreakingly, to Rosa, who blames herself for doubting him.[82] When Godard superimposes the photograph of Hitchcock himself, however, it breaks the diegetic frame: we are presented with a juxtaposition of elements both in and out of the world of the film.

Against Hitchcock's serial form—a form designed to serve and enhance narrative—Godard articulates a simultaneous, disjunctive montage. Where

Hitchcock seeks to subsume the multiple elements of a superimposition within the drive of the narrative, Godard keeps the elements distinct and then uses them to create what he calls an "image."

The image is one of the key concepts at work in and around *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.[83] By an image, Godard does not simply mean a representation or picture, a mere optical sight. Instead, adopting a definition beloved by Breton and others, he quotes French poet Pierre Reverdy to describe it as a combination of disparate forces, an expression of montage: "[The image] cannot be born from a comparison but from a juxtaposition *[rapprochement]* of two more or less distant realities. The more the relationship between the two juxtaposed realities is distant and just *[lointains et justes],* the stronger the image will be. . . . An image is not strong because it is *brutal* or *fantastic,* but because the association of ideas is distant and just."[84] A range of figures Godard employs to think about his cinema follow this logic. One is the trope of a "constellation" in *The Old Place,* in which elements are arrayed in various patterns, separate from but still interacting with one another. Another is the "law of the stereo" from *JLG/JLG,* in which two elements interact dynamically across history. Most pertinent of all is the quotation from Bresson placed toward the end of episode 4B: "Bring together things that

have never before been brought together, and that don't seem disposed to be so."[85] All these figures are variations on Reverdy's account of the image: the attempt to effect a *"rapprochement,"* an act of bringing elements together.

In the Hitchcock sequence, for example, the final superimposition creates an image on precisely these terms. If the first "reality" involved is the shot from *The Wrong Man*—Hitchcock's own superimposition—the second is the photograph of Hitchcock's face and hands that Godard places over it. The image that results resides in neither of these elements but rather in their *rapprochement.* Godard creates an image out of elements that are ontologically distinct from one another, bringing them together to create a visual form of criticism: the revelation of Hitchcock as a controlling force, imposing his will on the world he creates and transferring guilt from Manny to the real criminal.

Godard's reliance on Reverdy's definition is intuitively compelling, but what's striking about it—both puzzling and powerful—is its explicit moral claim. The specific criticism of Hitchcock has a fairly obvious moral valence: against imperial control, for a more open construction of films and narrative. (This is what Bazin wanted.) But Godard seems to claim an *inherent* moral dimension for the image. This stands out in no small part because it seems to reverse his most famous dictum about the image, the polemical statement from *Vent d'est:* "This is not a just image, this is just an image" (Ce n'est pas une image juste, c'est juste une image). That line shaped the terms of politically motivated cinema for the next decade, and few things mark the changes in Godard work since his Maoist years as much as this. And yet I think the difference is more apparent than actual: what changes is less the valuation of the image than the idea of the image itself. In *Vent d'est,* Godard worried about an insidious moral persuasion of the visual; images are so immediate, so direct, that anything shown carries the aura of certainty. In the mid-1980s, Godard rehabilitates the image by adding a second element. Through Reverdy, Godard treats the image not as something self-evident or given but as an achievement, a creation. The ethical value of the image comes from the fact of *rapprochement.*

In thinking about an image as a conjunction of multiple elements rather than a singular, self-contained entity, Godard participates in a long tradition. Both Aristotle and Hegel, for example, treat an image—whether in art or in the imagination—in this way. But Godard's main interlocutor in this endeavor is Eisenstein, a relation he acknowledges in several places.[86] Although Godard's interest in Eisenstein is a more extensive topic than I can treat here,[87] it is important to note that the Eisenstein at issue is neither the theorist of intellectual montage from the late 1920s nor the early advocate of the "montage of attractions." Instead, it is the Eisenstein of the late 1930s, when he was teaching and wondering if he was ever going to be able to make films again.[88] In his writings of this time, Eisenstein makes a crucial distinction between a "depiction" or "representation"

and an "image" *(obraz).* While the former is the specific, individual thing being shown, an image is "a generalized statement about the essence of the particular phenomenon." Eisenstein argues, for example, that a barricade in a scene about revolutionary struggle ought to be shown as a series of collisions and conflicts, with lines, shapes, and volumes forming disorganized interactions with one another: "Their disposition should be such that their overall contours indicate an *intrinsic, generalized image of what a barricade implies:* struggle."[89]

Eisenstein repeatedly emphasizes that, properly created, an image automatically produces the desired result in a viewer. It's a claim that results from his powerful, if peculiar, psychophysiological account of mind: the "laws of thought" work in predictable ways, and filmmakers can (and ought to) take advantage of them. Even cultural references generate predictable responses in viewers, which can then be used to control meaning. Discussing the mise-en-scène for a staging of Balzac's *Père Goriot,* Eisenstein says that the community's rejection of Vautrin when they discover he is a criminal should be shown in the form of a turning away. He argues that the dominant image of the scene is "aversion" and that the action of turning away is built into the linguistic root of the word, something he claims to be true across languages, from its Latin root to German, French, English, and Russian. Because of this, to show a character turning away from a group is to make the audience—whether consciously or not—think of "aversion" in response to the scene.[90]

It is tempting to think about Godard's idea of the image on these terms. As we've repeatedly seen, the montage sequences in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* often draw on the wider context of a given film, painting, text, or piece of music to create their meaning. In the intercutting of *Faust* and *The Band Wagon,* for example, Godard suggests that an association between them implicitly shapes the presentation of the dance. Or, in the juxtaposition of Giotto's *Noli me tangere* with *A Place in the Sun* and the footage Stevens shot of Ravensbrück, we are given the framework of a specific iconographic and gestural tradition, a claim about the appearance of the fictional film. But Godard is not creating images whose meaning is determined in advance. In neither of these examples is the viewer being *trained* to respond in a specific way; there is no attempt to determine, once and for all, the response to—and hence the meaning of—a particular combination. The comparisons Godard creates are dependent on the viewer's own ability to recognize the *creation* of an association among elements. Nothing guarantees their success outside the contingency of the encounter between viewer and image.

Driving this account of the image is the idea of projection. Recall that projection marks both the physical act of showing a film and the kind of experience the viewer has in front of the screen—an experience Godard pegs to his own experience in the Cinémathèque Française. There, he was able to create associations

between films being shown on the same screen, to discern for himself—following the promptings of Langlois's programming—the connections that might be established. Watching a film there came to mean thinking as well about other films, artworks, people, and historical events; in short, it meant the creation of *images* in his mind. As Godard remarks, "An image doesn't exist. This is not an image, it's a picture. *The image is the relation with me looking at it dreaming up a relation at someone else.* An image is an association."[91] The capacity to form individualized, even idiosyncratic relations to the screen marks Godard's distance from Eisenstein's reliance on film's ability to determine our responses.

In this context, the work of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is to translate images into videographic form, to make Godard's own associations public and shareable. This is the role superimposition plays, holding two or more elements together without subsuming either within a coherent diegesis or narrative. The very rhythm of superimpositions in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* prevents this: pictures emerge, flicker, flit back and forth. They're rarely stable, nor is the montage invisible. At each moment, Godard seems to be posing a question of how the elements go together, the furious tempo of the superimpositions highlighting the contingency of the creations. Put broadly, superimposition is the form of montage implied by the idea and historical fact of projection (figure 30).

It's here that we can see why Godard thinks that the image has a moral value. An image can be "just" because it is not at all clear that it will succeed, that the two "realities" will actually cohere into a general idea. For Eisenstein, the work of an image is guaranteed: done correctly, it has no possibility of failure, hence nothing is at stake in its creation except the successful manipulation of known laws of thought. For Godard, above all else is the necessity of judgment: first, in his initial discernment of a relation between the two "realities," the kind of experience he describes as taking place in a theater; then, in the viewer's recognition of the public expression of that association in video form, the discerning of the relation implied by the videographic montage. Both actions, Godard insists, are explicitly moral: to judge, he says, is "to see two things and to choose between them in completely good faith."[92] The image succeeds, comes into being, only when it is judged to be right.

All this may explain Godard's fondness for the quotation he (falsely) attributes to St. Paul: "The image will come at the time of the resurrection." Although this line imports something of a Christian theology into the discussions of the visual, continuing his longstanding opposition between text and image, it also suggests the deferred temporality of the image. An image has to be created, judged, accepted: it is placed into the future, its creation ratified and secured only by its subsequent acceptance. The quotation from St. Paul suggests both the power of the cinematic image—its ability to make something out of its disparate elements, to return them to something like a unified whole—and its difficulty,

FIGURE 30. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 2A

the success arriving only if and when the viewer of the video series recognizes and accepts the image.

Godard has said that he made *Histoire(s) du cinéma* because the kind of viewing that determined how he put clips together has ended. But this act means more than that, since Godard's montage in fact inhibits the kind of experience it is based on. If projection involves the capacity to produce associations—to be reminded of other films, to bring additional knowledge to the screen—*Histoire(s) du cinéma* nullifies this by the speed with which films, photographs, paintings, and other texts fly by. Rather than branching outward toward new relations, we're continually trying to figure out what's on-screen and how it relates to what came before it. (Perhaps this is itself part of the experience of cinema: "I can no longer think what I want to think. My thoughts have been replaced by moving images.")[93] It's not quite a contradiction or a self-defeating tactic, more like a deep tension between form and content. In recording, rather than producing, the experience of projection, *Histoire(s) du cinéma* functions at once as an act of mourning and as a utopian memory for the future, a kind of time capsule. "We can make a memory of this history," Godard says in episode 2A. If and when conditions change, perhaps the mode of viewing associated with theatrical pro-

jection will be relevant once more, and then *Histoire(s) du cinéma* can serve as a guide for a new generation of film makers and viewers.

7. MEHR LICHT!

Considered as a general theory, projection raises a concern that Godard holds on to cinema as a privileged site of experience long after it is, even in his view, already dead. Does he long for a golden age of cinema, an earlier time when an "appropriate" relation between viewer and screen was not only possible but easily attained? Certainly, Godard's criticism of other screens as necessarily incapable of providing a valuable mode of experience is a real limitation in a world increasingly moving away from traditional modes of cinematic viewing.[94] But this should halt us only if we assume that the purpose of his turn to projection is *only* to furnish a theory.

Put simply, Godard is not a media theorist: he is not trying to furnish a standalone account of cinema, something that will generally (if not universally) hold true. Instead, projection is better understood as an account of cinema that functions as a productive concept in the construction of *his* films and videos. If there is a theory here, it is one that is used to mobilize a form of experience for the production of new works. I've already argued that the idea of projection provides a set of resources, both aesthetic and historical, that ground the form of *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* but projection has an even more extensive application in Godard's late work. To draw this out, I will return to the three films from the first part of the book—*Soigne ta droite, Nouvelle vague,* and *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*—to argue that projection plays a vital role in their construction. As in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* much of this late work focuses on history, on the ways that cinema can be and has been involved in drawing historical connections. But the resources used in these films are different, as Godard draws on a complex temporality associated with the experience of theatrical projection to create new formal structures and analytic models.

Projection's work as a productive concept in these films operates on several levels. An obvious place to start is with representations of actual instances of projection, the kinds of things W. J. T. Mitchell calls "meta-pictures"—images that explicitly reflect on the status of their own media.[95] There is, for example, a moment in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* when Godard juxtaposes the title "Lanterna Magica" with a black-and-white clip of a projector beam fluttering above an audience sitting in the dark. The clip is from the penultimate scene in Dziga Vertov's *Man with a Movie Camera* (1929), when the film that we have seen being made is projected for a live audience. The narrative of *Man with a Movie Camera* both begins and ends in a theater; Vertov treats projection as the mechanism by which film finds its place in a public.

More interesting is the scene of projection toward the end of *Soigne ta droite.* Two middle-aged people sit on benches at the edge of a park, facing out toward the city before them; the benches are arranged as if in front of a screen. A voice-off says, "We're ready, sir," at which the man puts on a hat, stands up, turns around, and calls out: "Begin the projection!" He then blows on a whistle and goes over to sit with the woman. They look out and, after a moment's pause, Godard replays the opening credits of the film—"Gaumont / JLG Films / Xanadu Films / RTSR / présentent" and its title *Soigne ta droite*—then returns to the pair, the woman in an attitude of prayer and the man giving a military salute. It is surprising, or at least it should be, that *Soigne ta droite* contains a projection of the very film we've been watching. It does, of course, make explicit that what we're watching is a projection, and the audience embedded within the film confirms as much. But it also raises the question of what we were watching before the announced projection began. Was it something other than a film? Or is it that only now can we grasp what it means for *Soigne ta droite* to be a film? In that case, the work of the film is to bring us to a place where we can understand what it is we do when we watch a film.

But metapictures take us only so far. There is a tendency to treat moments in which cinema is explicitly the topic as the only times when the idea of film or filmmaking is at issue. In some ways, this is an assumption tied to the legacy of political modernism and its interest in breaking the illusionism of the screen.[96] But there are other ways to think about reflexivity in Godard's films. Rather than "pointing the camera at a mirror," Godard takes up ideas of cinema within the fabric of his films—both explicitly and implicitly—and deploys them to various ends, a process that generates ideas within and about cinema.

This form of reflexivity emerges as the scene from *Soigne ta droite* continues. We go to a darkened projection booth, a light in the background and the projector in silhouette; a man struggles to load the reel. A voice-over says, "For the night musters its forces one last time to defeat the light. But the light will stab the night in the back," and Godard cuts to a shot from behind the projector. A projectionist enters, pauses, and then starts the film. The voice-over repeats, "But the light will stab the night in the back," followed by a cut to a shot of the sun setting over the water, seen through a partly open window. In this image, projection is fairly explicitly connected to the trope of light. We could say that the sun takes the place of the projector beam as a source of (illuminating) light or that what's projected is simply the beam of light.

Godard is evoking here some of the most basic symbolism in Western civilization: light giving form and order to the world, cutting it out from darkness. The imagery is explicitly biblical: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And

God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness" (Genesis 1:1–4). Godard appears to be suggesting that film, insofar as it projects, brings a world into being; projection, that is, gives form and order to the darkness (of the world, of the theater).[97] Then does the light of the projector beam play the role of God?

This context suggests two metaphorical extensions of the trope of light. The first is recognizably moral. Biblical rhetoric of light and darkness carries with it the moral opposition of good versus evil, an ordered world against one fallen into disorder. But Godard says that the light "will stab the night in the back." Is projection then somehow a betrayer? (*King Lear,* after all, repeatedly proclaims itself "a picture shot in the back.") How should we understand the moral valence of light?[98] Some help comes from a surprising place. At various points in *Soigne ta droite,* a character called "the Average Frenchman" inserts himself into conversations by loudly demanding, "What were Goethe's last words?" Each time he asks this question, it goes unanswered; the conversation around him continues unabated, and the Average Frenchman invariably and irritably exclaims, "Ça suffit!" The answer to his question, of course, is *"mehr Licht!"*—"more light!" But why isn't this ever given in the film? Godard may simply think that everyone knows it, and so it's unnecessary to state; conversely, no one may know the answer anymore, a loss of culture. More probably, it's a somewhat obscure allusion to a brief story in Thomas Bernhard's *The Voice Impersonator:*

> A man from Augsburg was committed to the Augsburg insane asylum for the sole reason that all his life he had claimed at every opportunity that Goethe's last words had been *mehr nicht!* (no more!) rather than *mehr Licht!* Over the years this had gotten so much on the nerves of the people who had to deal with him, that they had plotted to have this Augsburg citizen, who remained so unfortunately obsessed by his claim, committed to an insane asylum. Six physicians reportedly refused to commit the unfortunate man; the seventh ordered him to be committed without delay. This physician, I read in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung,* has been awarded the Goethe Medal of the City of Frankfurt for his action.[99]

Recognizing this allusion via the equivalence of *"mehr nicht"* and *"ça suffit"* helps explain the presence of the Average Frenchman, since *Soigne ta droite* comes after films such as *Prénom Carmen* and *King Lear,* in which the trope of insanity functions as an allegory for the (artistic) escape from the world. Does this mean that the difference between light and dark is the line of sanity (personal or political)? That only the projection of film keeps us sane in the encroaching night? If so, then the death of cinema, like that of God, should be cause for general concern.

Goethe also provides a way into the second metaphoric extension of light: its function as an allegory for cinema itself, for the beam of the projector that lights up the screen. Godard began his 1966 tribute to Langlois by noting: "At school I

learned that Goethe on his death-bed called for more light. It was therefore only logical that some years later Auguste and Louis [Lumière] should invent what we know today as the cinema, and that they should have first demonstrated it in Paris, since that city had long borne their name."[100] In *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* Godard explicitly cites Goethe's *Theory of Colors* as a model for thinking about cinema. As Caution crosses a bridge in his journey to Weimar to visit Goethe's house, moving in both space (from Berlin to Weimar) and time (from the late twentieth to the late eighteenth century), we hear a woman say in voice-over: "One thing was irrefutably clear to Goethe: no lightness can come out of darkness—just as more and more shadows do not produce light." The phrase is from Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Colour,* in which he dwells on Goethe's lack of interest in the physical explanation of colors (which preoccupied Newton).[101] Such explanations, Wittgenstein argues, could neither prove nor disprove what, for Goethe, was a phenomenological question: What is color?[102] I take Godard to be interested in this model by way of his own emphasis on projection: the physical production of an image, however accomplished, is irrelevant to the kind of experience it allows.

In such moments, Godard establishes a general connection between projection and light that is central to his thinking in these years. In an interview in which he describes the difference between film and television in terms of projection, he remarks:

> The camera . . . [has] to be in front of light. . . . You go to where the light is coming from. Like in the Bible. The shepherds were going in the direction of the star. And then the characters are found in the shade with the light behind them. . . . The laws of this have been established by Newton, Einstein, and others: there is a correspondence between light and matter, and light is matter. And energy. So when I go in front of the light—go towards it—it is because it brings me energy. That's all.[103]

In filming, light is in the front; in projection, light comes from behind. On this picture, the light that shines toward the camera, and hence also toward the viewer, is the mirror image of the projector beam. Cinema is a medium whose entire system revolves around the presence of light.

8. A MOVING IMAGE OF ETERNITY

Across *Soigne ta droite, Nouvelle vague,* and *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* Godard provides an extraordinary catalogue of different kinds of light. Daylight, sunset, artificial light, projected light, reflected light, refracted light, rippling light, and even gun flashes all appear at various points. Rather than working through the significance of each type of light, as if it were a theme or topic, I want to look at their contributions to the formal structure of the films in which they appear. Since we have already seen that light functions for Godard as a metaphoric ex-

tension of projection—of cinema itself—this should help us get a grasp on how that idea develops Godard's aesthetic resources.

Let's start with the repeated image in *Soigne ta droite* of the sun streaming through a window in a house by a beach. In these shots, the camera is located behind French doors opening out onto a balcony, the rail of which forms a horizontal line two-fifths of the way up the screen. In the near background is a beach, behind that a lake. When the shot is taken in the evening, the sun is visible low over the horizon; when it is taken at midday, a brilliant light suffuses the scene. Godard varies the form of this shot, sometimes moving the camera closer to or farther away from the windows, sometimes moving it to one side in order to look out from an angle; a couple of shots are filmed at a low angle through the windows, exclusively framing the sky. Sometimes the windows open and then bang shut; sometimes a young girl is looking in. Often these elements occur in combination. Several dozen of these shots occur throughout the film (see, for example, figure 11).

It's tempting to talk about the shots of light as moments when an undercurrent of religion, mysticism, or metaphysics rises to the surface. We already saw this register in the film's allusion to the opening lines of Genesis; elsewhere, a voice-over suggests a similar reading. The first time we see a window with light streaming through, we hear, "The Man's been waiting for ages"; later, "Hail to thee, ancient ocean," "So, in the evenings, someone whispers in my room. Is it the wind or my ancestors?" and "What happens next is from long ago." Godard even makes it explicit: "Westerners, among others, believe there's a room, life, and another room, the beyond. Death is the door leading from one to the other. But why make a tragedy out of the door?" But thinking that the language of metaphysics or mysticism entails a metaphysical or mystical reading effectively isolates the shots of light from the film as a whole, treating them as symbols, as having an intrinsic meaning. I think these shots do a different kind of work. It's not that Godard eschews such a register altogether; rather, he makes use of it in an effort to get away from (merely) historical forms of time.[104]

One place to begin a reconsideration of the shots of light in *Soigne ta droite* is by paying attention to the variety of time-related words contained in the voice-overs cited above. Take the statement, repeated several times in the film, "What happens next is from long ago" *(temps ancien)*. It seems like a puzzle: How can something that is to happen in the future be from a time in the past? In some respects, this sounds like a description of narrative itself, in which the "Once upon a time" promises a future recounting of past events. But something more radical is going on. Godard, as I understand him, is using a specific language to access a register of time that is obscured in and by everyday experience. Although we generally inhabit a historical and linear temporality—one thing after another—the voice-over in *Soigne ta droite* suggests a mode of temporality in which normal causal connections among events are effectively abolished.

Part of this has to do with the juxtaposition of these time words with images of nature—the beach and the waves, the sunlight over the water, and so forth—that Godard frequently places outside the normal flow of events. In Godard's films of the early 1980s, such as *Prénom Carmen* and *Je vous salue, Marie,* such images suggested endless repetition and the mode of the sublime. In *Soigne ta droite,* they are used to evoke a sense of time of the sort Mircea Eliade (and, following him, Paul Ricoeur) describes as *mythic:* the "abolition of profane time, of duration, of 'history'."[105] In myth, an act becomes real and gains meaning by being released from history, seen as repeating an event that occurred "before" time. History as a linear, progressive movement does not exist; what matters is discerning the repetition of a prior story. In Ricoeur's words, myth is "not a false explanation by means of images and fables, but a traditional narration which relates to events that happened at the beginning of time and which has the purpose of providing grounds for the ritual actions of men of today and, in a general manner, establishing all the forms of action and thought by which man understands himself to be in his world."[106] Or, as Hermann Broch—one of Godard's favorite authors in this period—puts it, myth generates a "phantasmagoria of timelessness."[107]

With his interest in nonlinear temporal experience, Godard joins, or reinvents for himself, a distinct French tradition. Sartre's *La nausée* opens by contrasting the "day-to-day" recording of events with the experience of the pure physicality of objects—a stone, utensils, even another person's face.[108] Lévi-Strauss explores the ways in which the "atemporal matrix structure" of myth is inserted into a historical setting; in *Tristes tropiques,* he details his experience of the contrast between the onward motion of time and the feeling of eternity.[109] This tradition also emerges in Ricoeur's work on narrative and time, starting with his interest in Augustine and the "internal hierarchization" of "the very interest of time."[110] Gérard Genette talks about the way literary works create an internal "pseudo-time" that operates independently of normal passages of time.[111] And Deleuze creates a variety of concepts and metaphors for new temporal modes in postwar cinema: "forking paths," "crystals of time," "sheets of the past," and so on.[112]

Godard's contribution to this lineage is the insight that cinema, because it is based on projection, has a special attunement to nonstandard models of temporality. "What happens next is from long ago," after all, might describe the basic temporality of cinema: the images we're about to see were made at a prior time; that which will be our future is taken from the past. To be sure, literature, painting, and theater are all able to manipulate the presentation of time. Godard's claim seems to be that, in cinema, alternative temporalities are not merely a function of artistic construction but are built into the apparatus itself. Unlike photography, in which there is a governing assumption that what we see is an image of a past time, cinema generates an experience of presentness.[113] No matter when the film was actually shot or what period of time it purports to show, it feels to us like something hap-

pening in the now: in the cinema, we see a world coming into being. Godard evokes this experience in the final voice-over of *Soigne ta droite:* "And now, very softly at first, as if not to alarm him, the whispering the man had heard long ago, oh so long ago, long before he existed . . . that whispering began again." Read as a reflection on cinema, these lines suggest that temporal distance is eliminated in the viewing of a film; everything comes into the present. (This is the experience of projection that Godard evokes in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* when he says that a film made before he was alive *[Nosferatu]* feels, when projected, as if it were taking place in the present.) What Godard finds so attractive is cinema's ability to produce a malleable order of past, present, and future—both that these temporalities can combine in multiple ways and that this combination is simply part of what cinema does.

A different movement away from historical time occurs in *Nouvelle vague,* as Godard explores the temporality of natural cycles. In chapter 2, I argued that a contrast between temporal orders associated with the historical and the natural—namely, the linear and the cyclical—drives the film's central thematic and narrative concerns. In particular, the ambiguities of a cyclical temporality create a situation in which the dangers of repetition—the struggles between Richard/ Roger and Elena—can be broken only by a further disruption of linear time. *Nouvelle vague* repeatedly calls this form of break a "miracle."

Godard's interest in nonstandard temporal models develops differently in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* The opening voice-over of that film announces, "Can one tell the story of time, time in itself, as such and in itself? No, in truth that would be a mad enterprise—a tale in which it would be said, 'Time was passing, it was running out, time was following its course,' and so on. No one of sound mind would ever take it for a narrative. It would be almost as if someone had the idea of holding a single note or a single chord for an hour, and wanted to pass that off as music." In chapter 1, I said that the idea of a "story of time," the telling of the story of time in time, suggests a contradiction in a broader philosophical project. But the idea of "time itself" also fits the models of nonlinear temporality in *Soigne ta droite* and *Nouvelle vague:* time divorced from history, outside a succession of events.[114] Are the efforts of the two previous films, then, "mad endeavors"?

Perhaps they are, but in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* Godard uses them in the service of explicitly historical reflections. One instance of this project takes place before Caution departs for Weimar, when he is found sifting through souvenirs of the Soviet occupation being sold on a street in Berlin. As he picks up a book, a woman comes up and tells him that it's hers: she owns it because it was found in the "Dora" concentration camp, which she says is her name. Godard composes their encounter in a standard two-shot, with Dora on the left facing the camera and Caution on the right, slightly behind and looking at her; the vendor is tidying his wares in the background (figure 31). Godard shows an intertitle (in French), "O Sorrow, How My Years Have Vanished!" over which Dora remarks

FIGURE 31. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*

FIGURE 32. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*

(in German), "But that was yesterday," and then he cuts almost 180 degrees to a shot in which Caution is on the left of the frame, but Dora, now on the right, is still facing the camera (figure 32). It's a startling shift, since, according to standard continuity rules, she ought to be facing *away* from the camera; the spatial arrangements simply do not cohere. Dora has also changed from the ragged clothing of a refugee to fancier dress. She says, "Yesterday, my name was Dora, but today I'm already Lotte Kestner, and I have to work with Mr. Goethe."

The discontinuities are thematic as well as formal. We might expect Godard to position Lotte Kestner as the predecessor of Freud's Dora; this would suggest an argument about German literature being constitutively defined by the repression of female desire, Freud making explicit what was present all along. But Godard inverts the expected temporal order: "*Yesterday,* my name was Dora," the twentieth-century case history precedes the eighteenth-century novel. Perhaps, then, she is not the woman of Goethe's time but the main character of Thomas Mann's *Lotte in Weimar,* written in the 1940s and with knowledge of Dora and Freud.[115] (It's this book, after all, that Dora claims as her own and that Kestner is holding after the cut.) Dora represents the idea of an unfinished story, as she resists Freud's interpretation and breaks off analysis. Now she turns up in Godard's film in the guise of Mann's character, as if to reveal her fate after she was, in Freud's words (quoted by Caution later in the film), "reclaimed once more by the realities of life."[116]

The reference to Mann should give us pause. In a film concerned with the place of the past in the present, Mann is another figure who turns to Goethe and national history as a way to understand a time of crisis and radical upheaval. Godard is fond of the phrase, taken from Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun,* "The past is never dead. It's not even past." Rather than the standard sense of being doomed (paraphrasing Santayana) to repeat the past unless we remember it, this motto operates through the kind of identity found in the idea of projection: the past relates to the

present by being brought *into* (returning in and as) the present. Dora/Lotte Kestner is one example of this, but other moments in the film suggest a similar position, as when Caution, following his tour through Goethe's house, declares, "I am Faust, and I am your double." What Godard provides is a narrativized version of the idea of projection and the feeling of simultaneous presence it carries: Caution is Faust, Dora is Lotte Kestner. Rather than making this kind of connection between films, as in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* Godard places it sequentially within a film.

The temporal logic of projection underpins a number of sequences in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro:* Caution's journey is not so much through disparate spaces in a particular time (1990) as it is through disparate times in a particular space (Germany). Godard makes this explicit when Caution enters Weimar. After the scene at the monument to Pushkin, we see Kestner walking toward a wooden bridge over a small stream; Caution enters the shot a few paces behind her and follows her across the bridge. As Caution nears the other side, Godard cuts to a shot of the bridge from the other bank, a jump in time as much as in space: Kestner is now wearing a white dress in the formal attire of the eighteenth century, whereas before she was dressed in clothes appropriate to the twentieth century. We also move back in diegetic time: Kestner is now back on the bridge, and Caution has only just started across. Godard cuts between times as easily, and with as much comprehensibility, as he does between spaces.

9. OFF-SCREEN TIME

The work Godard does with varying models of temporality is not for the sake of discovering new formal possibilities, or at least it's not for that reason alone. The stakes involved in this aesthetic project are also political, central to the larger ambitions of historical understanding that persist across his films and videos in these years and central to cinema's role in that effort.

This may appear to be a peculiar project, since alternate modes of temporality— and myth in particular—have often been part of a conservative politics, a reactionary response to what is seen to be a morally decayed culture. Spengler, for example, used the contemporaneity of different ages as a centerpiece of his historiographic method in *The Decline of the West,* and Godard cites this work several times. But there is a left-wing variant to this project as well. Benjamin may be the most famous example, especially in some of his more despairing writings of the 1930s, in which he turns to myth as a counter to the increased dominance of fascism, a way of resisting *its* claim to transhistorical justification. Eisenstein, too, as Masha Salazkina argues, drew on myth to furnish a kind of "revolutionary [and utopian] temporality."[117] It's a balancing act. If myth and other forms of ahistorical temporality offer possibilities for critical thinking, they also carry risks, both in themselves and in their availability to various social, cultural, and

political movements. Godard seems alive to this danger. Indeed, when Godard employs alternative temporalities in *Soigne ta droite* and *Nouvelle vague,* he retains a degree of distance by using phrases that carry a distinct moral ambiguity: light will "stab the night in the back"; it's "the deception of March."[118]

In *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* Godard uses ahistorical and cyclical temporalities to help his analysis of twentieth-century German (and European) history, despite—or because of—their compromised history.[119] One element of his project is an attempt to situate these temporalities within a historical framework, to see how and why they emerged when they did. But Godard is even more interested in a productive relation: the links he creates between historical events often require alternative temporalities to become comprehensible as a form of historical analysis.

In the last "variation" of *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* "The Decline of the West," Caution finally arrives in West Berlin and is driven through streets lit by neon and window advertisements. The first shot of the sequence is from inside the car: it's nighttime and snowing, and the lights of businesses are visible through the windshield. Diegetic sounds are heard—the thump of wipers, the sound of a police siren—after which Godard introduces discordant music and an intertitle, "Finis Germaniae." Diegetic sounds return, and Godard cuts to a shot of Caution in the back seat of the car; the camera, now positioned in the front seat, frames him in silhouette against the rear window. The muted sound of a crowd is audible, and Caution turns to look to his right, his face slightly illuminated by light coming from that direction. Godard cuts to a shot of Caution's view, with people on a sidewalk hurrying along. Another car enters the frame and passes the camera; as it does so, Godard cuts to a clip from Lang's *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse* (1933), in which Dr. Baum drives frantically along a road with the specter of Dr. Mabuse hovering over him. (Toward the end of the clip, Godard begins to vary the speed of its playback.) He then cuts back to the previous shot as Caution passes stores and groups of shoppers.

The intercutting of shots of contemporary West Berlin with clips from Weimar cinema persists throughout the final section of *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro.* It explicitly evokes Siegfried Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler,* which linked the course of Weimar cinema to the rise of the Nazi regime. Kracauer argued that these films "were in fact true expressions of contemporaneous German life. . . . the evolution of the films of a nation [is] fully understandable only in relation to the actual psychological pattern of this nation."[120] Careful attention to Weimar cinema, he claimed, would have revealed and exposed the psychological condition of a nation that was shortly to allow, and even aid, Hitler's ascendancy.

If Godard favors this reading, it is not because of a postulated collective unconscious but as a consequence of cinematic projection. By placing the apparition of Mabuse into his film—a figure who stands in for Weimar in terms of what Kracauer described as the "magic spell" of the Nazis[121]—Godard identifies the tempo-

rally disparate worlds. This allows him to show the haunting of contemporary Germany by anxieties born in the 1920s: that capitalism is not irreconcilable with a "blood and soil" movement or with the worst excesses of religion and that history itself might operate in cycles. The past is brought into, made actual in, the present.

The despair over the contemporary situation also takes a less hyperbolic form. As he watches a couple enter a car dealership, Caution says, "Something the girl said about the light that is always left on made me think of another girl in '43." There is a cut to a shot of the woman in the car, playing with the steering wheel and the overhead light. The man asks, "What is it, Sophie?" and she responds, "This way the light stays on." Caution goes on to identify the girl in his memory as Sophie Scholl, who, as I noted earlier, organized the White Rose resistance movement with her brother Hans in Munich during World War II. Indeed, we will soon see an image of a rose, the same rose that is at the end of *Histoire(s) du cinéma*. Both siblings were killed by the Nazis. Is Godard suggesting that youth today, rather than resisting the historical tide, finds itself enchanted by commodities? Or is it that resistance emerges from just such banal contexts?[122]

But the light that stays on is also the light of the Enlightenment, the tradition the White Rose claimed as the basis for their resistance. And so we soon get a title proclaiming Kant's categorical imperative and then find ourselves at "Martin-Luther-Strasse" as Caution notes, "Even Phillips globes could no longer light the streets of Karl Grune with the brilliance of the lights of Karl Freund." Again, a juxtaposition of image and sound, corresponding to two different intellectual traditions, poses an interpretive problem: Was expressionism the continuation of the Enlightenment or its perversion? In this context, it's unsurprising that the filmmaker Godard turns to is Murnau. If Murnau had strong expressionist leanings, he was also adored by Bazin, thus straddling the divide between two historically opposed aesthetics of cinema. Indeed, Murnau has already made an appearance in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*, in a scene just before Caution arrived in the West. As he walked down a wooded path by a lake, a woman jogged past, breathing heavily, and Caution recited a line from *Nosferatu*: "And when I crossed the border, the phantoms came out to meet me." Through Murnau, Godard shows us a world in which the quotidian is replete with anxieties about unknown and nonrational forces.

Now Caution observes, "The phantoms had disappeared." Still, not everything is right. Walking through the streets, Caution remarks, "And yet"—there is a cut to a shot of a doorman helping two women out of a car—"the last man was still doing his duty." The idea of the "last man" here refers to a deep theme in Nietzsche and Heidegger, both of whom hover around this sequence.[123] More specifically, it refers to Murnau's *Der letzte Mann* (1924)—the English title, *The Last Laugh*, obscures the allusion—in which Emil Jannings plays the ill-fated doorman. And so, as the women walk out of the frame to the right and Caution, approaching from the background, turns to look at them (figure 33), Godard cuts

FIGURE 33. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*

FIGURE 34. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*

to a clip from Murnau's film. In it, two women exit a hotel and walk toward the camera, accompanied by Jannings (figure 34); there is a 180-degree cut (within Murnau's film) to a shot of Jannings helping them into a car, flirting slightly, and being scolded by their male companion, who quickly arrives in the shot.

It's not hard to come up with a reading for the sequence. The last man is "still doing his duty"; this isn't just out of a sense of obligation. Nietzsche says that routine work is what's left after meaning and hope have faded away: "The earth has become small, and on it hops the last man, who makes everything small. His race is as ineradicable as the flea-beetle; the last man lives longest. 'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink. . . . One still works, for work is a form of entertainment."[124] Godard, then, might be presenting two aspects of the Weimar era (and, by extension, contemporary Germany). If there are deep worries about irrational forces that threaten the fabric of society, there are also concerns over the growing monotony of life. These worries can be seen as interdependent. Heidegger argues that the turn toward a kind of mundane everyday, as exemplified in his picture of *das Man* ("the they"), is motivated by an inability to face up to more "authentic" questions like that of death. But such questions turn out to be inescapable, and the flight from them inevitably results in a circling back.[125]

These are difficult issues, the deep roots of contemporary anxieties, and Godard is picking up on and adapting them for an analysis of Germany after the fall of the Wall and to show the historical role of cinema in the national imagination. His work centers on an attempt to incorporate these anxieties and ambitions into the formal structure of his film. The placement of the clip from *Der letzte Mann* into *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* feels natural and seamless in part because of its thematic affinities with the rest of the sequence, but mainly because Godard employs one of the most familiar of all cinematic techniques, a point-of-view structure that "sutures" the shot into the world of the film. Caution looks off to the right, and Godard shows us what he sees. But what he "sees" is a film from the 1920s.[126]

This cut raises, or ought to raise, a question: *Where* is the world shown in the clip? The complexity of Godard's editing and his overt intellectual ambitions often makes such questions appear beside the point, but they're necessary for our ability to understand his films—and to grasp what's original in his work. The intuitive answer, I take it, is that what we see is located in a vaguely defined but clearly present "off-screen space" with respect to the initiating shot of Caution. This, too, is familiar. Critics as disparate as David Bordwell, Noël Burch, and Stephen Heath have argued that cinema works by managing off-screen space: it is evoked, concealed, and revealed—often by a relay of looks—in order to advance the narrative.[127] Indeed, one of the main techniques used by classical cinema is the point-of-view shot, in which the look of a character in an off-screen direction motivates a cut to what he or she sees.

Something strange, though, is going on in Godard's use of the off-screen, since the jump in time from 1990 to 1924 is much more prominent than the spatial displacement. In effect, Godard mimics the logic of off-screen space but substitutes *time* as the relevant variable. The appropriate question to ask of the clip from *Der letzte Mann,* then, is not "*Where* is it?" but rather "*When* is it?" It is located in what I want to call *off-screen time.*

Off-screen time is typically an unremarkable feature of a film: what's happening outside the frame is usually simultaneous with what's happening inside it. But this is not necessarily the case. Off-screen space occurs naturally, automatically, the film frame enclosing a fragment of a larger world that extends beyond its borders. Although we might think that off-screen time follows a similar pattern—the world off-screen is not just spatially contiguous but temporally simultaneous—I think there is a difference, and it has to do with how we perceive space and time in film. Bazin recognized this when he wrote, "The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from temporal contingencies" *(libéré des contingences temporelles).*[128] An object in a photograph is lifted out of the particular time in which it existed, out of its own place in history; the temporal context can later be filled in, whether by a caption under the photograph or its position within a film. The implication is that simultaneity is not a feature of the apparatus but an aesthetic construction.

Although it's a general feature of cinema, off-screen time becomes visible as an aesthetic variable in films that play with conventions of narrative logic. Luchino Visconti's *White Nights* (1957) and Michelangelo Antonioni's *The Passenger* (1975), for example, frequently include striking transitions between one time and another. Often these are acts of "looking" into the past, as when David Locke in *The Passenger* unexpectedly "sees" scenes from his earlier life in adjacent spaces. But both films also deploy multiple times within a single shot. Without cutting, the camera will leave a character, pan or track elsewhere, only to discover that character in a new scene taking place in a different time. In *White Nights,* this happens during

a conversation between Natalia and Mario on the bridge, when a circular and un-
broken pan reveals her encounter with the tenant in the same place at an earlier
date. In *The Passenger,* the camera moves away from Locke at a window, circles
around, and finds him back at the same window—but at an earlier time, now talk-
ing to Robertson. (A question: If a deep-space aesthetic incorporates multiple spa-
tial planes within the shot, can we say that Visconti and Antonioni exhibit a deep-
time aesthetic?)

Most uses of off-screen time, whether standard or not, justify temporal shifts
on psychological grounds. Flashbacks are exemplary of this, since the move to an
earlier time is motivated by a character's speech, thoughts, or memories. In *Out
of the Past* (Jacques Tourneur, 1947), when Jeff sits in a bar and says in voice-over,
"I knew she wouldn't come the first night. But I sat there, grinding it out," he is
speaking not just from a different space but from a different time as well. In *Once
upon a Time in America* (Sergio Leone, 1984), an eye-line cut after Noodles looks
through a hole in the wall reveals the room he looks at—but decades ago, from
the time of his childhood.[129]

The originality of *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* involves Godard's willingness to cut
between times without any psychological motivation.[130] Caution does not recall
Berlin of 1924 as it is shown in *Der letzte Mann,* nor does he summon those im-
ages from out of the past. The clips are simply there, placed into the world of the
film. Rather than residing in psychology, the justification for the experiments in
temporal expansion has to do with the historical affinities that are created by the
act of montage. When Godard says, "The cinema projected, and people saw that
the world was there," the implication is that, in Weimar films, a contemporary
audience could see their own world for the first time: it was there, on-screen, in
all its distortions and anxieties. In *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* a contemporary audi-
ence can register and judge the terms of this affinity. Godard's formal techniques
provide an experience of a world where Berlin of any time is available for the
present, and may even be in the present already.

All the same, the clips from Weimar cinema do not seamlessly fall into the
flow of the film or into the contemporary world. Godard emphasizes differences:
they are black and white rather than color, are filmed off a video monitor (and so
have a different visual texture from the rest of the film), and the speed of their
playback is stuttered, sped up and slowed down. We are forced, that is, to see the
clips as images of the past, from the past. If we are unable to see them in this way,
we miss the political valence they carry, the way they can matter to us in the
present.

Beyond this sequence, off-screen time turns out to be one of Godard's pri-
mary devices for managing the relations between present and past. The images of
nature in his films, for example, often feel like moments of discontinuity or rup-
ture. I argued earlier that they operate through precise iconographic roles, work-

ing to develop sets of associations and meanings that can be deployed for new ends. But Godard also creates a formal order around these images through the control of temporal variables.

During one of the recording sessions of Les Rita Mitsouko in *Soigne ta droite,* Godard begins to introduce discontinuous images and sounds. Following a shot of Catherine Ringer, bathed in light from an open bulb behind her, the voice-over remarks, "What happens next is from long ago," and Godard cuts to the familiar shot of the beach through a window, the sun low on the horizon. The sound of gulls found in many of Godard's films of these years is then heard, blending with the music, and we go back to the recording studio where the duo sit in semidarkness adjusting the controls on a machine. Godard again cuts to a shot through the windows, this time framed from below so that we see clouds in the sky; the sound of waves emerges and takes over the soundtrack, then we go back to the recording studio and the music returns. This alternation occurs twice more before the scene ends.

The formal structure of this scene implies basic questions: *Where* is the beach? *From where* does the voice-over issue? These are questions that Godard takes seriously, even when his answers are playful. In *Sauve qui peut (la vie),* characters repeatedly wonder aloud about the location of the (apparently nondiegetic) music, questions to which the final shot of the film gives an answer of sorts. After Paul is hit by a car, his wife and daughter walk off and suddenly pass in front of an orchestra playing the music we hear; Godard gives literal expression to the idea that music comes from another space. In *Soigne ta droite,* however, such questions don't go far. The film does not provide the means to answer them: it's never clear what the relation is, if any, between the rehearsal and the beach. In effect, Godard manages the contrast between places through alternating montage. In classical construction, alternation is used to move between dramatic locations, producing a pattern that weaves together different threads of action; if one location goes out of sight, it will reappear later on. In the sequence from *Soigne ta droite,* Godard shifts the logic of alternation from space to time. More specifically, the alternation is between two different *kinds* of time. The film goes from images of a concrete event (a rehearsal) to images of waves that, combined with the voice-over, are associated with a sense of timelessness.

Godard's films of this period are never wholly comfortable inside historical time; alternate temporalities are always lurking, briefly appearing and then submerging again. We might think of the shots of nature as a red thread woven into the fabric of the film: it disappears from time to time, but we know it's there, and we wait for it to reappear. This happens at the end of the sequence, when Godard cycles swiftly through a series of shots from earlier in *Soigne ta droite*—perhaps the clearest example that the temporal arc of the film is malleable. No longer having to proceed from beginning to end along a linear narrative path, he interweaves

the past and the present, the historical and the ahistorical. This strategy culminates in the repetition of the opening titles near the end of the film.

I don't think that Godard invents the idea of off-screen time in these films. As a functional concept—that is, as something used in films—it likely emerged with the development of systematic and rigorous uses of off-screen space in the 1910s (the complex intercutting among the four different eras in *Intolerance* [1916] is one example). But Godard uses off-screen time in new ways; it is one of the tools that affords him resources for making historical connections in and through cinema.

In this chapter, I have tried to show how Godard's late films and videos use the idea of projection as an aesthetic resource. *Soigne ta droite* reaches for a kind of temporal endlessness to find a source of creativity in the midst of historical despair. In *Nouvelle vague,* the problem is that natural cycles and historical linearity, on their own, carry risks; if Elena and Roger/Richard are eventually able to leave on equal terms, it is by acknowledging the existence of cycles while still being willing to enter the world of narrative and history. *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* faces the problem of an analysis of an intellectual tradition, and a nation, already shot through with myth. And *Histoire(s) du cinéma* situates projection as the foundation for its montage: the creation of historical and film-historical arguments through the juxtaposition of films and events that were hitherto unrelated.

At the same time, Godard repeatedly insists that projection, while central to the formal structure and intellectual ambitions of these works, is no longer alive. *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is made under the assumption that projection has ended as the dominant mode in which images are consumed, and so the kinds of work—cinematic, historiographic, critical—his films of these years set out to do is no longer possible. The demise of projection appears to mark a dead end for Godard's creative life: if he has recorded it, created a memento of the kind of experience it enabled, what, then, is to be done?

Cinema after the End of Cinema (Again)

The closing moments of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* have the feel of an elegy, of being at the end of something: the single rose, the solitary figure of Bacon's *Study for a Portrait of Van Gogh,* and the past tense of the final words ("I was that man"). In case we weren't sure to whom the sequence was referring, Godard includes a black-and-white photograph of his own face, weaving it in and out of the other images before slowly resolving on it. This final sequence suggests an end both to cinema itself and to Godard's career—and, more than anything else, his acceptance of that as a fact. It's as if, after an exhaustive reckoning of a century of cinema, he is at peace, no longer driven to make new work.

Of course, this wasn't the case. In 2001—three years after the broadcast of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* and five years after his previous film—Godard released *Éloge de l'amour,* a film that, for many, inaugurated a new period in his career. This period has carried across two additional films, multiple videos, and an installation at the Centre Pompidou.[1] The sense of a change or a break with the past partly involves the return of characters, fiction, and narrative in these works, but it also has to do with the way the end of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* seemed to demand a wholly new beginning if Godard was to continue to make films at all. Nonetheless, there are good reasons to be suspicious of the intuition that there was a truly "new" start. Godard rarely makes a full departure from his past; older works are not so much discarded as adapted and incorporated. When I used the term *series* in the introduction to describe the way he works through a set of concerns, interests, and topics across a number of films—a methodological precept that has guided this book—it was precisely to guard against beliefs in distinct periods, radical breaks, and clean beginnings.

Starting with *Éloge de l'amour* and continuing across the past decade, Godard has returned to and reworked aspects of both his feature films since the late 1980s and *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* In the case of the feature films, this has developed around an interest in nature and history, the relation between the individual and the political world, and the ability of cinema to create new kinds of experience and knowledge for a collective audience. For *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* it has involved the close ties of the history of cinema to a broader history and the belief that this relation is varied and complex, but it also involves a collection of formal techniques, especially superimposition, that carry their own associations: the possibility of *rapprochement,* for example, and the creation of historical and film-historical judgments. Godard's films and videos of the twenty-first century bring these concerns together while developing them in new directions. He continues to negotiate problems of politics and history, all the while investigating the role that cinema—as an idea and as an art—plays in this project: it may be caught up in these problems, but it contains the resources needed for coming to terms with them.

To do these more recent films and videos full justice would require another book, paying the same kind of attention to the intricacies of their construction and the way their broader ambitions emerge through those very details. Such a project would also emphasize many of the arguments that I've been drawing out of the work of the late 1980s and 1990s, not least because the new films and videos draw so heavily on it. These films and videos help us see what was important in the prior work precisely by demonstrating how it can be developed, extended, and transformed. In this way Godard has always been one of the best readers of his own work, which often manifests itself not in prose but in audio-visual form. In what follows, I'll set out the terms of a study that might emerge in relation to these films and videos, showing how they continue to work through and reshape longstanding questions of history and cinema, image and viewer, media and aesthetics.

Although Godard began making *Éloge de l'amour* in the late 1990s,[2] the struggle that formed the basis for his work after *Histoire(s) du cinéma* took place in several videos released around the turn of the century. Of particular importance is a short video from 2000, *De l'origine du XXIe siècle.* Originally commissioned by the Cannes Film Festival to mark cinema's transition into a new century, Godard took it as an occasion for a renewed investigation into cinema's history, although with a project substantively different from *Histoire(s) du cinéma.*

As always, we have to get into the details to figure out how this happens. *De l'origine* begins with a clip from *Hélas pour moi* that shows a country road winding around several trees on the left part of the frame, fields stretching out to the right and in the background. A man in a striped shirt and shorts is playing a violin at a bend in the road; Godard prints "L'or" (gold) on the frame, and a young

FIGURE 35. *De l'origine du XXIème siècle* (2000)

man in a suit walks down the road toward the camera—a combination that suggests he is off to seek his fortune. But then Godard changes the title to "L'origine," and a woman enters the scene on a bicycle, riding forward from behind the trees. She cheerily says, "Hello, Ludovic! Are you going off to war?" He replies in the affirmative, and Godard cuts to a blank screen, then to a second clip from *Hélas pour moi:* waves ripple the surface of a lake, the setting sun lending a golden color to the water, yet superimposed beneath it is a shot of a woman's hand touching her genitals, an image of startling explicitness (figure 35). Godard then cuts to brief clips showing the setting sun, pornography, and black-and-white footage of gun flashes. Over these images a woman's scream is heard, though it's not clear whether from fear or sexual pleasure, and then the sound of guns. There is another black screen, on which is printed: *"pour moi / du XXIe siècle."* The sequence ends with a slightly slowed-down shot of a bus driving at night, framed in an iris; as it passes out of the frame into the right foreground, we can see people huddled within, perhaps refugees, staring out through the windows.

A straightforward opposition initially seems to be at work here: a world outside history, defined by pastoral reveries and sexual fantasies, is contrasted with the cataclysmic effects of war, indicated by the final clip of refugees. Or perhaps

it's that, along with nature, art and culture—represented by the music and the man playing the violin—exist in a world isolated from violence and atrocities, safe from the compromises and necessities that an engagement with history entails. But the temptations of such oppositions should give us pause; as I've argued, one of the central ambitions of Godard's films since the late 1980s is to show how closely nature (and art and culture) is tied up with history. In them, nature is repeatedly framed by or shot through with historical factors, generating a dynamic used to analyze the terms of each.

Starting in the late 1990s, Godard began to bring these concerns into his video work as well. In *The Old Place,* several beautiful shots of flowers appear as emblems of natural respite, complementing a discussion about the desire to escape the difficulties of the world. A subsequent shot, however, locates the flowers in a small patch of grass by the side of a major highway. *Dans le noir du temps* and *Liberté et patrie* (2002) contain similar gestures. In *De l'origine,* the young man in the first shot is already moving toward war, violence already a part of the pastoral vision around him. And although the second clip taken from *Hélas pour moi* clearly alludes, by way of image and text, to Courbet's *L'origine du monde* (1866), Godard works against the fantasy of pure or absolute origins. The creation at issue is not metaphysical but historical: it is the chaotic time of the late twentieth century that's the source of the world, the origin of the twenty-first century—or at least it is, as Godard puts it, *"pour moi."*

The rest of *De l'origine* is more explicitly structured by the program laid out in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Godard starts in 1990 and goes back to 1900 in fifteen-year jumps, accompanied by a minimalist piano composition by Hans Otte, taking up the history of the twentieth century, the history of cinema, and the way these two histories have (or could have) interacted with one another. Unlike *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* though, *De l'origine* takes up these histories from a primarily *French* perspective, an inflection that changes not only the content of the analysis but also its implications for Godard's own practice. To be sure, other national cinemas are present—a clip from *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980) is used to give an indication of the eeriness of the 1970s—but the overall focus is decidedly French, with emphasis on clips from the Algerian war and the Popular Front. As a result, the video inevitably emphasizes Godard's place within this history. The entire content of the entry for 1960, for example, is the shot of Jean Seberg at the end of *À bout de souffle,* as she runs her finger over her lips in imitation of Jean-Paul Belmondo (who was imitating Humphrey Bogart). As Bamchade Pourvali points out, *De l'origine* effectively conducts a tour of that film, using clips that show the Place de la Concorde, the Champs-Élysées, Montparnasse, and other locations.[3]

The end of *De l'origine* explicitly links concerns about history, both personal and national, to the history of cinema. As the date ticks from 1915 to 1900, Go-

dard cuts to a clip from the beginning of Max Ophuls's *Le plaisir* (1952), in which a man enters a nightclub and dances with frenetic energy until he collapses. Several seconds into the clip, the piano stops, and we hear "The Night They Invented Champagne" from *Gigi* (Vincente Minnelli, 1958). At over a minute in length, far and away the longest in the video, the clip from *Le plaisir* brings together several historical contexts. First, because Ophuls's film is an adaptation of three stories by Maupassant and because it is coupled with the song from *Gigi,* the clip evokes the aura of fin-de-siècle Paris, where (for Godard) both the history of the twentieth century and the history of cinema began. Second, the date of the film's production brings with it the resonance of postwar Paris: indeed, in 1965 Godard listed *Le plaisir* as the best French film "since the Liberation."[4] Third, Ophuls's biography gives him a complex place within the tradition of national cinemas: his career began in Germany, developed in exile in the United States (and elsewhere), and came to full flourishing in France. Godard's claim seems to be that with *Le plaisir,* his first European film since World War II, Ophuls comes home: not to his real home, but to his cinematic one. To an extent, then, the placement of the clip from *Le plaisir* at the end of *De l'origine* signals Godard's own desire to do the same. After *Histoire(s) du cinéma*'s elegy for the end of cinema, he is thinking of returning to Paris, and so to cinema as well.

The clip from *Le plaisir* presents a familiar difficulty in thinking about Godard's late work. If it is immediately evocative and affecting, not least because it triggers a memory of the original film, it is less clear how we are to understand its role in *De l'origine*. Which of the contexts associated with it are relevant? To what extent does it fit with, or even create, the larger project of the video? The answers to such questions, as I've tried to argue, cannot be given in advance by any particular method or logic. Instead, they are based on the interpretation we provide and our ability to make a compelling case for a reading. But it is equally important for the purposes of Godard's montage that this method is not a two-stage model, treating history as somehow distinct from cinema—isolated terms linked by a separate intelligence. The historical contexts are not separable from the film that evokes them; they exist already as standing possibilities within a given clip, to be brought out by the specific form of Godard's montage.

As *De l'origine* continues, Godard brings additional associations into the clip from *Le plaisir*. When the man collapses, the people at the nightclub discover that he is wearing a mask, and underneath the youthful appearance is an older man trying to recapture his debonair and debauched youth. Read as an image of a historical epoch, the clip suggests that fin-de-siècle Paris, though it provides excitement and gaiety, has gone wrong at a deep level: there is something deadly about its activities, something its inhabitants can no longer bear. (Godard also inserts dialogue from later in *Le plaisir*: "Isn't this perfect happiness?" "Come on, you have to admit it's all pretty sad." "But, my dear fellow, happiness isn't enjoyable"

[le bonheur n'est pas gai].) It suggests as well that the beginnings of the twentieth century, and so the beginnings of cinema as well, were fatally flawed and that French cinema was corrupted at the moment that it was born.

Godard elaborates this argument in three short clips that follow: all are black and white and have sufficient decay to associate them with the early years of cinema. The first shows several children playing on a beach by the sea, running through the waves and adding onto a mound of sand they are constructing. Godard cuts to a medium shot from behind a woman, perhaps a schoolteacher, writing *"Vive la France"* on a blackboard. As she finishes, she turns toward the left and, looking roughly in the direction of the camera, smiles. Godard cuts to an extreme long shot of a horseman alone in the desert, the sun low over the horizon in the distance—as if it were a reverse shot showing what the woman sees. Over the horseman, the French flag flutters in the foreground, but Godard has added two stationary blots of red and blue to complete the flag, startling colors on the faded black-and-white image and replete with overtones of French nationalism and colonialism.

In the first two shots, Godard set up an iconography of pedagogy and its effects, an illustration of the individual becoming linked to the nation. The children are free: unconstrained by the social world, they happily play together and build something new. But the next shot shows their socialization, the way schools turn them into national subjects.[5] These are the children who will be fighting wars throughout the next fifty years, the children who will grow up to be soldiers in Algeria. The logic of *De l'origine* implies that the same holds true for cinema. From the freedom of its early beginnings, it grows into and is incorporated by national traditions—the words the schoolteacher writes and the French flag make that explicit—thereby losing some of this early potential. Godard is also saying that this compromised history is unavoidable. If in the end, because in the beginning, cinema is and was French, then only from within this context can the possibilities *and* failures of cinema be understood. The final image of *De l'origine,* after the shot of the horseman and the flag, emphasizes the privileged position of French cinema. On a black background, a block of gray text appears, listing without punctuation the video's credits; over this, Godard superimposes "JLG" in red, an overt echo of the red from the French flag in the preceding shot. He thus declares his own position within a national tradition, announcing that—for the purposes of cinema at least—he is French rather than Swiss. This means that he cannot claim neutrality, that he is morally compromised by the French tradition, but also that he is part of the authentic legacy of cinema.

This reassessment forms the basis for Godard's return to feature filmmaking with *Éloge de l'amour.* Not coincidentally, *Éloge de l'amour* is his first film set in Paris since the 1960s, confirming the identification of France with cinema in *De l'origine.* It's as if Godard needed to return to the origins of cinema—defined in

different ways by the Lumière brothers and the Cinémathèque Française—in order to start making films again. (Perhaps it's his own version of the axiom from *Parsifal:* "Only the spear that caused the wound can heal it.") If *De l'origine* shows that the fate of cinema was compromised by the corruption at its origins, *Éloge de l'amour* works to create a foundation for a new century of cinema.

Godard takes up this project by turning to the moral and political complexity of French history and cinema. The film presents a viewer with a basic structural puzzle: the first part of the film tells the second part of the story in gorgeous black-and-white 35mm film; the second part of the film tells the first part of the story in garish, almost neo-Fauvist digital video. This means that the present is given in the format of the past (35mm), and the past has the most up-to-date format (digital video). Godard seems to be willfully contradicting the meaning of the formats, almost a gesture of dissatisfaction with the dominance of the new. This would fit one of the common readings of *Éloge de l'amour,* namely, that it is a film suffused with nostalgia, repeatedly moving away from the concerns of the present to lose itself in memories: of the war, resistance, and collaboration, of the *nouvelle vague,* and of European culture as a whole.

This is a dangerous way of thinking about Godard's work, since it implies that various features have intrinsic meanings—and that they can be taken to stand in for the meaning of the work as a whole. It may be a seductive way of thinking, since it allows us more readily to make sense of complex features of the films and videos, but I've argued throughout that it leads critics to false conclusions. In particular, they have inferred from images of nature and beauty that Godard's films of the 1980s and 1990s are indifferent to politics and therefore aestheticist or even theological in their ambitions. As with the images of nature, once we look at the context into which the various formats are placed and the use Godard makes of them, a very different kind of reading emerges. The sense of paradox, for example, simply disappears if we think about *Éloge de l'amour* as being in overt conversation with *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* It's in the second part of the film, after all, that Godard deploys the full battery of techniques he developed in *Histoire(s):* manipulations of color (in the first shot of that part, for example, Godard has turned the ocean orange, the beach blue, and the sky yellow); the stuttering of video playback; and, most important, nonnarrativized superimpositions. What this suggests is that, regardless of the actual dating of the technology, the second part of *Éloge de l'amour* uses the format that, *for Godard,* defines an engagement with the past: video is his preferred technology for thinking about history (and the history of cinema). In this context, celluloid is firmly associated with the present world.

To a large extent, *Éloge de l'amour* is concerned with managing the legacy of the French past: the kind of stories that are going to be told or allowed to be told about history. Spielberg stands in for one version of this, with his penchant for fictional

narrative reconstruction that Godard loathes.[6] Digital video offers one alternative, in which superimpositions create connections between historical events: the family's deliberation over the terms of the contract, for example, is superimposed over a shot of Sartre's *Situations III,* his narrative of Paris under the occupation. Celluloid offers a different possibility, as the first part of the film employs techniques from the feature films of the late 1980s and 1990s: Godard shows specific locations and then works to bring out their historical resonance. Sound plays a prominent role here. When Edgar and Berthe talk by a canal about the disappearance of historical memory, the soundtrack of Jean Vigo's *L'Atalante* (1934) is heard, evoking the legacy of the utopian (and failed) political promises of the film and, more generally, the cultural politics of the 1930s. Later, Edgar arrives at a station marked "Drancy Avenir"—Drancy was the site of an internment camp for Jews about to be sent to concentration camps—and wonders, shortly afterward, who the person was who "had the brilliant idea to speak of the future at Drancy."

The significance of the past, especially its possible uses for the present, is emphasized in one of the film's last scenes. Edgar is on a train returning to Paris, and Godard superimposes a shot from behind him with a stunning image of the sea at sunset, the sun behind a peninsula in the distance. As Godard zooms back to wider landscapes in short bursts, Edgar speculates (in voice-over) that he is able to think about something only by thinking about something else, and then says, "For example, I see a landscape that is new to me, but it's new to me because I compare it in thought to another landscape, older than that one, which I already knew." At a basic level, he's reiterating a familiar story about the necessity of relationality for any form of understanding. But there's also a sense that this "new landscape," especially in a shot that shows the sea to the west, is America, the New World. This relationality does not go in one direction: America may define itself in relation to other nations—what Berthe describes as "stealing [their] stories"—but it also functions as the horizon for thinking about France (two children circulate a petition to have *The Matrix* dubbed into Breton). Again, meaning is not inherent in the images or concepts that the film employs: images of nature do not have a set and given meaning, nor does digital video or the idea of America. Godard uses them as part of a larger ambition to show us how to look at the past in order to understand and inhabit the new worlds that arise before us.

The very end of the film has Edgar leaving the train in Paris and being swallowed up by the crowd at the station (*"reconquise par la vie,"* as Godard quotes Freud in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*). Although by this point we know it all ends badly, that Edgar winds up as a "disappointment," these images still contain a powerful sense of openness and hope. It's hard, as well, not to read the end of the film as referring to Godard himself, to his move from his video studio in Rolle back to Paris and the cinema. Once he's reckoned with that, he's free to go on to new things. Indeed, *Éloge de l'amour* concludes Godard's investment in France

as the primary site for history and cinema; he now turns elsewhere, to new locations and to new groupings of histories and problems.

We see this in *Notre musique,* whose middle section—the longest and most humanly intricate part of the film—is structured around a "global literary encounter" held in Sarajevo. None of the protagonists has a single national or ethnic identity: they are French-Swiss, French-Israeli, Russian-Israeli, Palestinian-Egyptian, and, most spectacularly, a translator who was born in Egypt but has lived in Israel, Russia, and France, for the last of which he also served in the Foreign Legion. One of the questions that hovers around the film is how we are to make sense of this world of complex and competing identities. *Notre musique* responds in two main ways. The first is at the level of content, as characters look to other contexts in order to find solutions for their own problems. Judith Lerner, whose movements through Sarajevo and Mostar form one of the film's guiding lines, explicitly says that she has come to the event to find a model for cohabitation that could be applied to the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis.

The second response is at the level of form, and marks *Notre musique*'s most significant work. Its central terms are given by the French ambassador in response to Judith's request to stage a face-to-face encounter with the son of a family he saved from the Gestapo. Adapting lines Godard first used in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* he says, "The dream of the individual is to be two; the dream of the state is to be one *[seul],*" identifying their author as a German Catholic woman (Sophie Scholl) killed by the Nazis in 1943. Throughout *Notre musique,* Godard explores the possibilities of what it means to "be two": invoking a Levinas-inspired social theory, for example, he imagines various guises in which there might be an "authentic" meeting of individuals. Judith's proposed conversation is another example; so is the hope uttered by one of the Native Americans for the possibility of meeting "face to face in the same time, in the same land."

We have to understand the ambition to "be two" with some care. One might easily think that the belief in the value of the face, and in facing one another, that Levinas articulates is the means to achieve this. Godard seems to endorse such thinking, but *Notre musique* suggests that it happens only under certain conditions. "Being two" is not a guarantee of success: not in politics and also not in cinema. Godard goes to some lengths to show that this principle is part of the logic he described in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* as *"rapprochement"*: bringing two things together, holding them up against one another, and then judging them. *Rapprochement* is contingent on the ability to see some "rightness" in the pairings—contingent, that is, on both the things being judged and the person making the judgment.

Both *Éloge de l'amour* and *Notre musique* exhibit prominent instances in which a principle of judgment is made explicit, moments that serve as forms of instruction for how to see Godard's own work. In *Éloge de l'amour,* the art dealer

FIGURE 36. *Notre musique* (2004)

is shown two paintings and asked to identify them; his assistant holds up one, then the other—a version of the flickering superimpositions of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* rendered here as narrative—to allow him to judge stylistic differences. In *Notre musique,* this principle forms the centerpiece of Godard's lecture on "text and image." He hands out photographs—actually, production stills—of Cary Grant and Rosalind Russell from *His Girl Friday* (Howard Hawks, 1940) and uses them to demonstrate shot/reverse-shot editing (figure 36). Although this type of editing is "the basic element of film grammar," Godard argues that *His Girl Friday* fails because it shows "the same thing twice. That's because the director is incapable of seeing the difference between a man and a woman." Hawks fails, in other words, to create a genuine image, to bring together elements that are "distant and right." Yet, while Godard's ostensible topic involves heterosexual love and gender difference, he extracts a political lesson as well, arguing that the ability to create and recognize such images is essential for a wide range of conflicts: Jews and Muslims, Israel and Palestine, Bosnia and Serbia. He is trying to understand history and politics by way of the formal resources of cinema.

In Godard's most recent film, *Film socialisme,* he again takes up the intersection of film form, personal stories, and national histories. Although the film fea-

tures an extraordinary range of formats—from 35mm to digital video, from Internet clips to cell phone video—not until its third part does Godard explicitly focus on the kind of interaction between cinema and history that shapes his previous work. There, he takes up the Mediterranean as an entity in its own right, as the location of what he labels "Nos humanités" and the crux of civilization for *Annales* historians like Braudel. *Film socialisme* travels through a list of sites, moving counterclockwise around the sea: Egypt, Palestine, Odessa, Greece, Naples, and Barcelona; Godard treats them as places that have, or could have, the resources to resist the dominant tide of culture, images of hope in the midst of a compromised world. His goal is to make these resources available, to liberate art and history from their artificial constraints, and to do so by means of cinema. "The socialism of the film," Godard has said, "is the undermining of the idea of property, beginning with that of artworks."[7] His own appropriation of material, taken from sources as diverse as YouTube and Agnès Varda, forms an example of this practice, an ambition to "build" images without harming their initial components. The function of cinema—and, Godard suggests, that of newer media as well—is to create new images for acts of historical and political understanding, at once national and international.

None of this comes close to exhausting the full ambitions of Godard's films from the past decade, not even concerning these particular topics. Rather, I have tried to use this brief discussion to bring out the continuing importance of the set of issues, concerns, and questions that have been the focus of this book. If Godard declared (his) cinema dead in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* his subsequent films and videos give the lie to that statement. But these works do not start anew, from a "degree zero"; they use, adapt, and transform existing resources to come to terms with a range of new conditions. For Godard, cinema is—it has to be if it is going to retain any importance—responsive to changes in the historical world, to the technologies of image production and viewing, and to the histories of cinema itself.

What we see in Godard's work since *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is a continued attempt to think through the intersection of cinema and history. More specifically, we see him using the resources of cinema to derive models for thinking about history, as if a sustained investigation into the various ways films and videos can be constructed will reveal something about the way all human creations are put together—and it's up to him to figure out what that is. Still drawing on the history of cinema, but also creating new directions for its future, Godard continues his effort to discover and invent the full possibilities of cinema.

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NOTES

PREFACE

1. Hal Hartley, "In Images We Trust: Hal Hartley Chats with Jean-Luc Godard," *Filmmaker* 3, no. 1 (Fall 1994): 14–18, 55–56.

2. Alain Bergala, Serge Daney, and Serge Toubiana, "Le chemin vers la parole," in *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard,* ed. Alain Bergala, 2 vols. (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1998), 1:501. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

3. Thomas Mann, *Essays,* trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Vintage Books, 1947), 288.

INTRODUCTION

1. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema?* vol. 1, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 9–16, 12; translation modified.

2. See Jeffrey Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards: Making History in Avant-Garde Film* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 77.

3. Also see Jean-Luc Godard, "Speech delivered at the Cinémathèque Française on the occasion of the Louis Lumière Retrospective in January 1966: Thanks to Henri Langlois," in *Godard on Godard,* ed. and trans. Tom Milne (New York: Da Capo Press, 1972), 234–37.

4. Where existing translations of Godard's films and videos are available, I have followed them, whether in subtitles or the transcript of *Histoire(s) du cinéma* released by ECM records (trans. John Howe, ECM Records, 1706–10, 1999). I have modified translations where necessary.

5. "Interview with Jean-Luc Godard," in *Godard on Godard,* ed. Milne, 171–96, 192.

6. Vincent Canby, "Nature's Splendor and Aphorisms in Godard's Latest," *New York Times,* 29 September 1990. For examples in academic literature, see Wheeler Winston Dixon, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 195ff.; and David Sterritt, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard: Seeing the Invisible* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 244.

7. See Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Godard in the Nineties," *Film Comment* 34, no. 5 (1998): 52–63.

8. Colin MacCabe, *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at Seventy* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003); Richard Brody, *Everything Is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008); Antoine de Baecque, *Godard, biographie* (Paris: Grasset & Fasquelle, 2010). Two major edited collections on Godard are Michael Temple and James Williams, eds., *The Cinema Alone: Essays on the Work of Jean-Luc Godard* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000); and Michael Temple, James Williams, and Michael Witt, eds., *For Ever Godard* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2004). For book-length studies, see Jacques Aumont, *Amnésies: Fictions du cinéma d'après Jean-Luc Godard* (Paris: POL, 1999); and Céline Scemama, *Histoire(s) du cinéma de Jean-Luc Godard: La force faible d'un art* (Paris: Harmattan, 2006). Important articles include Kaja Silverman, "The Dream of the Nineteenth Century," *Camera Obscura* 17, no. 3 (2002): 1–29; Jacques Rancière, "The Saint and the Heiress: À propos of Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma,*" trans. T. S. Murphy, *Discourse* 24, no. 1 (2002): 113–19; Christopher Pavsek, "What Has Come to Pass for Cinema in Late Godard," *Discourse* 28, no. 1 (2006): 166–95; and Richard Neer, "Godard Counts," *Critical Inquiry* 34, no. 1 (2007): 135–71.

9. Scemama's score is located at http://cri-image.univ-paris1.fr/celine/celine.html.

10. "Jean-Luc Godard in Conversation with Colin MacCabe," in *Screening Europe: Image and Identity in Contemporary European Cinema,* ed. Duncan Petrie (London: BFI Publishing, 1992), 97–105, 100.

11. Arthur Danto provides the most extensive version of this history: see *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace: A Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 90–114; and *The Philosophical Disenfranchisement of Art* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

12. Mehrnaz Saeed-Vafa and Jonathan Rosenbaum, *Abbas Kiarostami* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 82.

13. For one example of such criticism, see Yosefa Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995).

14. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987), Ak 215. References are to the page numbers in volume 5 of the Akademie edition.

15. Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* Ak 213–16.

16. On these principles, see Peter de Bolla, *Art Matters* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). Within Kant's writings, for example, they lead to topics such as form and purpose, nature and art, aesthetic ideas and artistic genius.

17. Friedrich Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man,* trans. Elizabeth Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), 153.

18. See Friedrich Schlegel, "Ideas," in *Lucinde and the Fragments,* trans. Peter Firchow (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971), §69. People in the opposing camp are

"harmonious bores" (Friedrich Schlegel, "Critical Fragments," in *Lucinde and the Fragments,* §108). On Godard's link to this romantic tradition, see Aumont, *Amnésies;* and Nicole Brenez, "Jean-Luc Godard, *Witz* et invention formelle (notes préparatoires sur les rapports entre critique et pouvoir symbolique)," *CiNéMAS,* 25, no. 2–3 (Spring 2005): 15–43.

19. "I conceive of Kant as the first real Modernist" (Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," in *The Collected Essays and Criticism,* vol. 4: *Modernism with a Vengeance, 1957–1969,* ed. John O'Brian [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993], 85–93, 85).

20. See Michael Witt, "Shapeshifter: Godard as Multimedia Installation Artist," *New Left Review* 29 (2004): 73–89.

21. André Bazin, "In Defense of Mixed Cinema," in *What Is Cinema?* vol. 1, 53–75, 69.

22. Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* Ak 229.

23. See, among others, Eva Schaper, *Studies in Kant's Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979), 78–98; and Martin Gammon, "*Parerga* and *Pulchritudo adherens:* A Reading of the Third Moment of the 'Analytic of the Beautiful,'" *Kant-Studien* 90 (1999): 148–67.

24. Although the term *impure aesthetics* is not new, it is generally used to indicate a connection to the world, not to the more complex account given here. See Robert Penn Warren, "Pure and Impure Poetry," *Kenyon Review* 5, no. 2 (Spring 1942): 228–54; and Hugh Grady, "Shakespeare and Impure Aesthetics: The Case of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 59, no. 3 (2008): 274–302.

25. "Poetry," Robert Penn Warren writes, "wants to be pure, but poems do not. . . . Realism, wit, intellectual complication—these are the enemies of the garden purity" (Warren, "Pure and Impure Poetry," 229, 231).

26. See Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

27. For a discussion of this collaboration, see Laurent Jullier, "JLG/ECM," in *For Ever Godard,* ed. Temple, Williams, and Witt, 272–87.

28. Jean-Luc Godard, "Histoire(s) du cinéma: À propos de cinéma et d'histoire," in *Godard par Godard,* 2:401–5.

29. Jean-Luc Godard and Youssef Ishaghapour, *Cinema: The Archaeology of Film and the Memory of a Century,* trans. John Howe (Oxford: Berg, 2005), 50.

30. "Godard Makes (Hi)stories: Interview with Serge Daney," in *Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image*, 1974–1991, ed. Raymond Bellour with Mary Lea Bandy (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 158–67, 162.

31. See, for example, Jean-Luc Godard, "Le regard s'est perdu," in *Godard par Godard,* 2:123.

32. Godard, "Histoire(s) du cinéma: À propos de cinéma et d'histoire," 402.

33. I discuss these debates more in chapter 4.

34. MacCabe, for example, describes *Le mépris* (*Contempt,* 1963) as "the greatest work of art produced in post-war Europe" (Colin MacCabe, "Le Mépris / Il disprezzo / Contempt," *Sight and Sound* 6, no. 9 [September 1996]: 55–56). Such an assumption underlies Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki's emphasis on a select number of films in *Speaking about Godard* (New York: New York University Press, 1998).

35. See, for example, Dixon, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard;* Sterritt, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard;* and Douglas Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005).

36. MacCabe, *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at Seventy,* 256, 294; Sterritt, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard,* 222.

37. Dixon, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard,* 179–80.

38. Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard,* 184–89.

39. I also mean to allude to the role of seriality in the modernist musical tradition, embodied by Schoenberg, Webern, and Berg, among others. Also see Stanley Cavell, *The World Viewed,* enlarged edition (New York: Viking Press, 1979), 115–18.

40. Jean-Luc Godard, "Let's Talk about Pierrot," in *Godard on Godard,* ed. Milne, 215–34, 223.

41. Quoted in Neer, "Godard Counts," 135.

42. Philippe Dubois, "Video Thinks What Cinema Creates: Notes on Jean-Luc Godard's Work in Video and Television," in *Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image,* ed. Bellour, 169–85. 174f.

43. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image,* trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 185.

44. "Interview with Jean-Luc Godard," in *Godard on Godard,* ed. Milne, 171–96, 171. For a more extensive discussion of this affinity, see Rick Warner, "Research in the Form of a Spectacle: Godard and the Cinematic Essay," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pittsburgh, 2010.

45. Michel de Montaigne, "Of Books," in *The Complete Works,* trans. Donald M. Frame (New York: Everyman's Library, 2003), 359–72, 359.

46. Timothy Murray, however, has made a case for the larger importance of *King Lear,* in *Digital Baroque: New Media Art and Cinematic Folds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 85–110.

47. Torlato-Favrini's name comes from a character in *The Barefoot Contessa* (Joseph Mankiewicz, 1954); Lennox's name is adapted from Raymond Chandler's *The Long Goodbye.*

48. G. W. F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History,* trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), 29.

49. For different positions, see, among others, Stanley Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Hollywood Comedy of Remarriage* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Steven Mulhall, *On Film* (London: Routledge, 2002); Rupert Read and Jerry Goodenough, eds., *Film as Philosophy: Essays on Cinema after Wittgenstein and Cavell* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Daniel Frampton, *Filmosophy* (London: Wallflower Press, 2006); and Murray Smith and Thomas Wartenberg, eds., *Thinking through Cinema: Film as Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).

50. For a further discussion of these issues, see Stanley Cavell, "A Matter of Meaning It," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 213–37.

51. Fredric Jameson, "High-Tech Collectives in Late Godard," in *The Geopolitical Aesthetic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 158–85, 164.

52. The account Jameson gives is of course more complicated. While he argues that *Passion* is a postmodern, almost postaesthetic work, he sees its companion video piece, *Scénario du film "Passion"* (1982), as holding on to more traditional, modernist aesthetic values.

CHAPTER 1: THE WORK OF AESTHETICS

1. Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci,* 97.

2. Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci,* 98.

3. Tom Gunning, "The Cinema of Attractions," *Wide Angle* 8, no. 3–4 (1986): 63–70.

4. See, for example, Miriam Hansen, "Early Cinema, Late Cinema: Transformations of the Public Sphere," in *Viewing Positions: Ways of Seeing Film,* ed. Linda Williams (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 134–52.

5. See Charlie Keil and Shelley Stamp, eds., *American Cinema's Transitional Era: Audiences, Institutions, Practices* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

6. David Wark Griffith, *The Rise and Fall of Free Speech in America* (Los Angeles, 1916), unpaginated.

7. Anton Kaes, "The Debate about Cinema: Charting a Controversy (1909–1929)," *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 7–33, 9.

8. Richard Abel, *The Ciné Goes to Town: French Cinema, 1896–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 246–77.

9. Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Motion Pictures* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 7.

10. Vachel Lindsay, *The Art of the Moving Picture* (New York: Modern Library, 2000), 30.

11. Hugo Münsterberg, *The Film: A Psychological Study* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970).

12. Béla Bálazs, *Theory of the Film* (North Stratford, NH: Ayer Company Publishers, 1972), 24.

13. Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957), 199–230.

14. Dudley Andrew, *Film in the Aura of Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 4.

15. Haidee Wasson, *Museum Movies: The Museum of Modern Art and the Birth of Art Cinema* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); P. Adams Sitney, ed., *The Essential Cinema* (New York: Anthology Film Archives, 1975), v.

16. For related (though substantively different) accounts of this shift, see Carl Plantinga, "Film Theory and Aesthetics: Notes on a Schism," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 51, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 445–54; and Rosalind Galt, *Pretty: Film and the Decorative Image* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

17. François Truffaut, "A Certain Tendency in French Cinema," in *Movies and Methods,* ed. Bill Nichols (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 224–37.

18. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (1975), in *Visual and Other Pleasures,* 2nd ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 14–27.

19. Dudley Andrew, *Concepts in Film Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 10.

20. D. N. Rodowick, *The Crisis of Political Modernism: Criticism and Ideology in Contemporary Film Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

21. In this vein, Mulvey has suggested that "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" was a response to her earlier cinephilia (see Mulvey, "Introduction to the Second Edition," in *Visual and Other Pleasures,* ix–xxvi).

22. See Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, "Towards a Third Cinema: Notes and Experiences for the Development of a Cinema of Liberation in the Third World," in *New Latin American Cinema,* vol. 1, ed. Michael Martin (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1997), 33–58.

23. "Second Interview with Godard," in Jean Collet, *Jean-Luc Godard,* trans. Ciba Vaughan (New York: Crown Publishers, 1970), 104.

24. See Colin MacCabe, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 146.

25. See Rosalind Galt and Karl Schoonover, eds., *Global Art Cinema: New Theories and Histories* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

26. For versions of this argument, see Robert Stam, "The Lake, the Trees," *Film Comment* 27, no. 1 (1991): 63–66; Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci;* Dixon, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard,* 192; Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 221; and Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, *Forms of Being: Cinema, Aesthetics, Subjectivity* (London: BFI, 2004), 1–10.

27. MacCabe, *Godard: Images, Sounds, Politics,* 153.

28. See Dixon, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard,* 195–97; Sterritt, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard,* 244; Richard Brody, "An Exile in Paradise," *New Yorker,* 20 November 2000, 62–76; and MacCabe, *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at Seventy,* 280.

29. Quoted in Jean Michel Frodon and Danièle Heymann, "*Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* de Jean-Luc Godard: La solitude de l'histoire," *Le Monde,* 5 September 1991.

30. The quotation goes unattributed in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* but elsewhere Godard ascribes it to Sophie Scholl, who, along with her brother Hans, founded the White Rose movement in Munich to organize anti-Nazi resistance.

31. Jan Valtin, *Out of the Night* (1941; Oakland, CA: Nabat Press, 2004), 623.

32. See Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 82–83.

33. On the German response to the first Gulf War, see Anson Rabinbach, "German Intellectuals and the Gulf War," *Dissent* (Fall 1991): 459–64.

34. This may be why Godard's only explicit reference to Fassbinder in *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* is a clip from *Lili Marleen* (1980), a film overtly concerned with the inability to have a private life during times of political upheaval.

35. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History,* 28; translation modified to match the French in the film.

36. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker,* trans. Charles Butterworth (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1992), 31.

37. Our attachment to the world is soon evoked and found wanting when the gardener observes, "We've had no time to discover, like a lamp just lighted, the chestnut tree

in blossom or a few splashes of bright ochre strewn among the jade-green shoots of wheat."

38. The gesture recalls the opening images of *Une femme mariée.*

39. The rhetoric of the crystal comes from Stendhal's *Love,* trans. Gilbert Sale and Suzanne Sale (London: Penguin Books, 1957).

40. Godard returns to a contrast between a pastoral image and a violent sound in the "Paradise" section of *Notre musique,* when a rope audibly whips through the air.

41. Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* Ak 207, 217.

42. Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Device," in *Theory of Prose,* trans. Benjamin Sher (Normal, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1991), 1–14, 6.

43. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time,* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1962), 98, 103.

44. This is basically the argument Heidegger makes in "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Basic Writings,* ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993), 139–212.

45. This is a markedly different use of cars from what is found in Godard's earlier work, whether as part of an iconography of commodities in the 1960s or as indicators of a kind of modern or technological sublime in the 1980s. (See chapter 2 below.) Nor is it an image unique to Godard. However, a film like *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Norman Jewison, 1968), which also employs out-of-focus shots of cars at night, does not have a more general interest in perception.

46. For a discussion of this conversation, see Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 202f.

47. Godard marks the importance of this effect with a similar camera movement later in the film, also over water. There, the camera goes left, then right, thus reversing the movements from the earlier shot, but no vertigo is produced. First, stillness before movement does not generate the same effect that movement-stillness-movement does in the earlier instance. Second, the speed of the camera moving over the water is too slow to produce the effect; even at the end of the shot, where the camera comes to a halt, it happens almost gently, and then it just rests rather than switching directions to produce a new effect. The failure of this later sequence to generate the sense of vertigo marks a sharp contrast with the first, not only illuminating the difficulty of producing the effect but also emphasizing Godard's continuing efforts to access and work with an experiential dimension of film viewing.

48. Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain,* trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (New York: Modern Library, 1992), 560; translation modified to match the French in the film.

49. Godard says, "Pass that off as music." Does this leave open whether holding a note or chord, done seriously, would count as music? Is the claim about a kind of fraudulence?

50. The source of these lines emphasizes this reading. Mann uses the discussion of time to characterize Hans Castorp's sinking in an abyss of sorts, a homogeneous flow that removes him from the historical world.

51. G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* trans. T. M. Knox (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 13.

52. G. W. F. Hegel, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art,* 2 vols., trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1:55.

53. Hegel, *Aesthetics,* 1:11.

54. Art therefore turns inward, toward an investigation of its own conditions of being: "The *philosophy* of art is therefore a greater need in our day than it was in days when art by itself as art yielded full satisfaction. Art invites us to intellectual consideration, and that not for the purpose of creating art again, but for knowing philosophically what art is" (Hegel, *Aesthetics,* 1:11).

55. See Robert Pippin, "What Was Abstract Art? (From the Point of View of Hegel)," *Critical Inquiry* 29, no. 1 (2002): 1–24.

56. The clip is clearly a later fictional reenactment, but I have not been able to identify the source.

57. See Michael Witt, "Going Through the Motions: Unconscious Optics and Corporal Resistance in Miéville and Godard's *France/tour/detour/deux/enfants,*" in *Gender and French Cinema,* ed. Alex Hughes and James Williams (New York: Berg, 2001).

58. Of course Godard had used material from other films before. Many of his films from the 1960s show characters watching movies in a theater, and *Letter to Jane* (1972) relentlessly examines a photograph of Jane Fonda taken in North Vietnam. What is different about *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro* is both the manipulation of the image off the video monitor and the way Godard dispenses with diegetic motivation for its inclusion.

59. Mann, *The Magic Mountain,* 560–61; translation modified.

60. A similar manipulation of dancing takes place in Godard's handling of a clip from *Bonjour Tristesse* (Otto Preminger, 1958) in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 1B.

61. On the physical quality of this manipulation, see Dubois, "Video Thinks What Cinema Creates," 177; and Alan Wright, "Elizabeth Taylor at Auschwitz: JLG and the Real Object of Montage," in *The Cinema Alone,* ed. Temple and Williams, 51–60, 58.

62. Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *National Interest* (Summer 1989). Morrey also argues that Godard is responding to Fukuyama (Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard,* 196).

63. This resembles Adorno's charge that Hegel attempts a false reconciliation of contradictory phenomena rather than staying with the negative moment of the dialectic (Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies,* trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993]).

64. See, for example, Hegel's discussion of the way poverty and institutional authority interact to produce a break in civil society, eventually leading to the subsequent reconciliation in the higher sphere of ethical life and the state (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* §§231–56).

65. I do not want to enter the debate about whether one ought to adopt the Hegelian position on historical understanding or claim instead that this break cannot be assimilated to any narrative continuity. Moishe Postone, for example, argues that both positions have serious flaws: the first fails to do justice to the specificity of the Nazi regime, and the second makes it too distinctive an event (Moishe Postone, "The Holocaust and the Trajectory of the Twentieth Century," in *Catastrophe and Meaning: The Holocaust and the Twentieth Century,* ed. Moishe Postone and Eric Santner [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003], 81–114).

66. Frank Stern, "The 'Jewish Question' in the 'German Question,' 1945–1990: Reflections in Light of November 9th, 1989," *New German Critique* 52 (Winter 1991): 155–72, 159. Also see Andreas Huyssen, "After the Wall: The Failure of German Intellectuals," *New*

German Critique 52 (Winter 1991): 109–43. The opposing position was that, while German nationalism certainly had a morally vicious history, historical parallels could be overstated. The militaristic nationalism of Bismarck and Hitler were not part of the definition of the German nation but rather a misappropriation of that idea (see, for example, Karl Heinz Bohrer, "Why We Are Not a Nation—and Why We Should Become One," *New German Critique* 52 [Winter 1991]: 72–83).

67. Nora Alter also uses the Hegelian idea of a "break" to connect Godard's treatment of history and film, but she is more interested in the way a historical rupture (e.g., World War II) causes individuals to be deprived of their "past 'raison d'être'" (Nora Alter, "Theses on Godard's *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro*," *iris* 29 [Spring 2000]: 117–32, 123). Also see Fredric Jameson, "'End of Art' or 'End of History'?" in *The Cultural Turn* (New York: Verso, 1998), 73–92.

68. Quoted in Paul de Man, "Aesthetic Formalization: Kleist's *Über das Marionettentheater*," in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 263–90, 263.

69. That is, the period of and leading up to the Third Reich. The images are from that period, about that period, or, as with the clip from *Metropolis,* anticipate that period. In the last case, we are on the terrain of Kracauer's *From Caligari to Hitler.*

70. Quoted in Rosenbaum, "Godard in the Nineties," 55. Godard makes a similar remark in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 3A, which I discuss in chapter 4.

71. See Jameson, "High-Tech Collectives in Late Godard"; Jessica Maerz, "Godard's *King Lear*: Referents Provided upon Request," *Literature/Film Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2004): 108–14; and MacCabe, *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at Seventy,* 307. For Deleuze in particular, see Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards,* 69–81; and Timothy Murray's claim: "It is almost uncanny how much Godard's *King Lear* exemplifies Deleuze's arguments about the cinema of Godard" (Murray, *Digital Baroque,* 103).

72. Things are somewhat different for German thinkers, since Godard has extensively quoted Wittgenstein, Benjamin, and Heidegger since the mid-1960s. Still, critical work on Godard that links him to this tradition similarly assumes an affinity based on perceived similarities. Monica Dall'Asta describes Godard's stuttering playback of video as "a sort of ideal filmic translation of Benjamin's 'Messianic cessation of happening'" (Monica Dall'Asta, "The [Im]possible History," in *For Ever Godard,* ed. Temple, Williams, and Witt, 350–63, 356). And Silverman sometimes slides between the two names: "Godard reconstitutes [the phrase 'good night'] as a signifier for that state of somnolence that Benjamin associates with the nineteenth century by embedding it in a lengthy nocturnal montage" (Silverman, "The Dream of the Nineteenth Century," 22). Missing here are differences: Godard's concern with the history of the twentieth century rather than the nineteenth, the way he places himself at the center of the work of discovering and arranging fragments (whereas Benjamin hides his authorial presence), and so on. Also see Junji Hori, "Godard's Two Historiographies," in *For Ever Godard,* ed. Temple, Williams, and Witt, 334–49; and Alessia Ricciardi, "Cinema Regained: Godard between Proust and Benjamin," *Modernism-Modernity* 8, no. 4 (2001): 643–61.

73. Michel Ciment and Stéphane Goudet, "Entretien Jean-Luc Godard," *Positif* 456 (February 1999): 49–57, 55. Chris Darke notes that in the 1960s "Godard expressed a surprisingly

straightforward hostility towards the structuralist application to cinema of linguistic models of meaning that were being developed by Barthes, Christian Metz and Pier Paolo Pasolini" (Chris Darke, *Alphaville* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005], 72).

74. Jean-Louis Leutrat, "The Power of Language: Notes on *Puissance de la parole, Le dernier mot,* and *On s'est tous defile,*" in *The Cinema Alone,* ed. Temple and Williams, 179–88, 180.

75. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum Press, 1973), 361–65.

76. Theodor W. Adorno, "Commitment," in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader,* ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1994), 300–318, 312.

77. Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* ed. and trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 37–40.

78. See Gérard Wajcman, "De la croyance photographique," *Les Temps Modernes* 613 (2001): 47–83.

79. Libby Saxton argues that, paradoxically, *Shoah*'s own images have entered our cultural imaginary, thereby showing "how much of *Shoah*'s anamnesic power comes—despite Lanzmann's claims—from the archive, from the concrete referential images supplied by intertexts which play in our memory but are refused to our eyes as we watch the film" (Libby Saxton, "Anamnesis and Bearing Witness: Godard/Lanzmann," in *For Ever Godard,* ed. Temple, Williams, and Witt, 364–79, 379).

80. See Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All: Four Photographs from Auschwitz,* trans. Shane Lillis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 157; and Rancière, "The Saint and the Heiress," 115. Saxton notes that Godard sometimes collapses Adorno and Lanzmann into the same position (Saxton, "Anamnesis and Bearing Witness," 365).

81. For versions of these arguments, see Godard and Ishaghapour, *Cinema,* 70ff., 80ff., 94, 102.

82. I discuss these arguments in more depth in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 2: NATURE AND ITS DISCONTENTS

1. Stam, "The Lake, the Trees," 64; Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci,* 96.

2. Novalis, *The Novices of Sais,* trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Archipelago Books, 2005), 31. Also see Pierre Hadot, *The Veil of Isis: An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature,* trans. Michael Chase (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

3. Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci,* 89. Similar arguments are in MacCabe, *Godard: Portrait of the Artist at Seventy;* Sterritt, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard;* and Dixon, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard,* as well.

4. On this topic, see T. J. Clark, "Should Benjamin Have Read Marx?" *boundary 2,* 30, no. 1 (2003): 31–49.

5. *Passion, Je vous salue, Marie,* and *Nouvelle vague,* or the crucifixion, the annunciation, and the resurrection (Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci,* 89, 96).

6. Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* Ak 306–7.

7. Hegel, *Aesthetics,* 1:116, 2.

8. Hegel, *Aesthetics,* 1:134.

9. Hegel, *Aesthetics,* 1:152.

10. Hegel, *Aesthetics,* 1:9.

11. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* 61.

12. The shot evokes the opening of *Alphaville,* in which cars move through galactic space (actually a highway outside Paris).

13. I discuss Godard's interest in active backgrounds in "The Place of Nature in Godard's Late Films," *Critical Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 1–24.

14. Yasujiro Ozu uses shots of waves to similar ends in *Late Spring* (1949) and *Early Summer* (1951).

15. Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* Ak 258.

16. Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* Ak 261.

17. See, for example, Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe,* trans. R. E. Latham (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), II.1029–36, IV.169–73.

18. Marc Cerisuelo, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Bourges, France: Lherminier, 1989), 208.

19. Cerisuelo, *Jean-Luc Godard,* 207–31.

20. Jean-François Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime,* trans. Elizabeth Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 54, 55. On the "formlessness" of the sublime, see 78.

21. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute,* trans. Georges van den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 61–65.

22. I use *representational* to separate music from this history.

23. Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* Ak 256. Kant repeatedly says that it is only "an object (of nature) which can provoke an experience of the sublime" (Ak 268, 270–71), although he makes an exception for some architectural edifices. Note that the empiricist aesthetics of someone like Burke allows artworks to generate the sublime; see the discussion of Milton in Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1958), 61–62, 174–75.

24. Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime,* 153.

25. Lyotard, *The Differend,* 77. Lyotard is paraphrasing Kant here.

26. Cerisuelo, *Jean-Luc Godard,* 225.

27. Virginia Woolf, *The Waves* (London: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1931), 72. Godard quotes from Woolf's novel in *King Lear.*

28. Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 171.

29. The move from sky to earth parallels a discussion in Chris Marker's *Une journée d'Andrei Arsenevitch* (1999). Marker says that American films (especially Westerns) frame the heroes against the sky in order to show their individuality and isolation, while Tarkovsky shoots his characters from above, pressing them down into the earth and emphasizing their connection to the material world.

30. Comte de Lautréamont, *Les chants de Maldoror,* trans. Guy Wernham (New York: New Directions, 1965), 17–26.

31. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1953), §§38, 107.

32. See Elaine Scarry, *On Beauty and Being Just* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Peg Zeglin Brand, ed., "Beauty Matters: A Symposium," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57, no. 1 (1999): 1–25; and Alexander Nehemas, "The Return of the Beautiful: Morality, Pleasure, and the Value of Uncertainty," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 58, no. 4 (2000): 393–400.

33. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Duino Elegies* (1923), in *Ahead of All Parting: The Selected Poetry and Prose of Rainer Maria Rilke,* ed. and trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Modern Library, 1995), 329–401, 331.

34. Rilke, *Duino Elegies,* 385.

35. T. J. Clark, "Painting at Ground Level," in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values,* vol. 24 (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2004), 133–35. Clark further develops this position in *The Sight of Death: An Experiment in Art Writing* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

36. Clark, "Painting at Ground Level," 135.

37. Godard says that he drew on Lewis's *Smorgasbord* (1983) in the airplane scenes (Jean-Luc Godard, "L'art de [dé]montrer," in *Godard par Godard,* 2:128–39, 130). Also see Godard, "Dictionary of French Film-makers" and *"Hollywood or Bust,"* in *Godard on Godard,* 47–48, 57–59; and Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard,* 187ff.

38. On this topic, see Gilberto Perez, *The Material Ghost: Films and Their Medium* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 92–122.

39. Samuel Beckett, *Ill Seen Ill Said* (New York: Grove Press, 1981).

40. Samuel Beckett, *Watt* (New York: Grove Press, 1970), 203–4.

41. James Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson,* ed. Bergen Davis (New York: Modern Library, 1952), 129.

42. Compare this with Jacques Dutronc playing a washed-up filmmaker named "Paul Godard" in *Sauve qui peut (la vie)*. There, the ambiguity of Godard's presence is lessened by having another actor in place of his own bodily person.

43. David Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994), xiv. Kant, by contrast, argues that a degree of culture is needed for the sublime to be experienced at all (Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* Ak 265).

44. Lyotard, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime,* 69; cf. 182–83.

45. Bersani and Dutoit describe this as "a *non-interpretive* way of relating" (Bersani and Dutoit, *Forms of Being,* 57). In *Blue of Noon,* Bataille sounds a similar note: "At first she had knelt on the flagstones, then lain face down, stretching her arms crosswise. It meant absolutely nothing to her. She didn't understand why she had done it" (Georges Bataille, *Blue of Noon,* trans. Harry Matthews [London: Marion Boyars, 1986], 111).

46. Michel Foucault, "The Order of Discourse," in *Untying the Text,* ed. Robert Young (Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 48–78, 51.

47. A complex accusation, for at least two reasons. First, their conversation is conducted in flawless French: the Individual makes a joke out of the accusation by describing his "Belgian" tendencies to say the wrong things in the wrong places. Second, the accusation could be understood as directed by Godard at himself, a Swiss filmmaker accused (by the Situationists, among others) of passing himself off as a French Maoist.

48. See Neer, "Godard Counts," 141–47.

49. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Dirty Hands,* in *No Exit and Three Other Plays,* trans. Lionel Abel (New York: Vintage International, 1989), 125–241, 218.

50. My understanding of the problem of dirty hands is indebted to Michael Walzer, "Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1973): 160–80. The debate goes back to St. Paul and Augustine's worry about Christian soldiers being required to kill, receiving its modern formulation in Machiavelli's attempts to teach a "good man" how to do bad things in the name of political power and in Weber's injunction that people with absolute ethical convictions should not go into politics.

51. For the French response to Koestler, see Martine Poulain, "A Cold War Best-Seller: The Reaction to Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* in France from 1945 to 1950," in *Arthur Koestler's "Darkness at Noon,"* ed. Harold Bloom (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2004), 223–34.

52. Merleau-Ponty's discussion of Koestler makes the legacy of collaboration explicit (Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror: The Communist Problem,* trans. John O'Neill [New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2000], xvii). Cf. Richard Crossman, ed., *The God That Failed* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 34.

53. Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon,* trans. Daphne Hardy (London: Jonathan Cape, 1940), 48. This passage is discussed in Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror,* 17.

54. Merleau-Ponty, *Humanism and Terror,* xxxiv–xxxv, xxxiii.

55. Albert Camus, *The Just Assassins,* in *Caligula and Three Other Plays,* trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Vintage Books, 1958), 233–302, 266.

56. See Walzer, "Political Action." Walzer develops this conception of politics further in "Deliberation, and What Else?" in *Deliberative Politics: Essays on Democracy and Disagreement,* ed. Stephen Macedo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 58–69.

57. Jean Domarchi, Jacques Doniol-Valcroze, Jean-Luc Godard, Pierre Kast, Jacques Rivette, and Eric Rohmer, "Hiroshima, notre amour," in *Cahiers du Cinéma, the 1950s: Neo-Realism, Hollywood, New Wave,* ed. Jim Hillier (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 59–70, 62.

58. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Search for a Method* (New York: Vintage Books, 1963), 43–44.

59. Bersani and Dutoit, *Forms of Being,* esp. 57–70.

60. Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 197.

61. Canby, "Nature's Splendor and Aphorisms in Godard's Latest." For less dismissive readings that have a similar view of nature, see Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci,* 96ff.; and Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 202.

62. Stam emphasizes this reading of nature in the film (Stam, "The Lake, the Trees," 64). Also see Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 206.

63. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of Eternal Return,* trans. Willard Trask (London: Routledge, 1955), 112, 52.

64. Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard,* 175. Morrey does not discuss this emphasis further.

65. Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 199.

66. Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays,* trans. William Lovitt (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1977), 115–54.

67. The structure of this shot recalls the supermarket scene in *Tout va bien* (1972): the camera, slowly tracking left and right, picks up events at several locations.

68. See Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 203–4. A classical Hollywood film, as Godard would know, generally stages its climax to resolve action and romance plots simultaneously. Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946), for example, creates political and financial redemption through the context of George's love of Mary (and his discovery of the importance of his own life); conversely, in *American Madness* (1932), Dickson's faith in his wife is restored only when members of the public have returned their faith in him and his bank.

69. Silverman and Farocki argue that *Nouvelle vague* is generally concerned with questions of reciprocity in business as well as in love (Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 204). The film, they claim, winds up proposing an alternative economy based on libidinal investment: "In the court of love, debts are not paid, but canceled" (221). For a development of this interpretation across Godard's late work, see Kaja Silverman "The Author as Receiver," *October* 96 (2001): 17–34.

70. See Paul Alpers, *What Is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Perez also discusses *Nouvelle vague* in the context of the pastoral (Perez, *The Material Ghost,* 363–66).

71. Godard returns to this idea in *Éloge de l'amour,* in which a prostitute is substituted for a copy of Balzac's *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes.*

72. Typically, this means a vision of the world as a harmony between people and nature, a kind of golden age that has long since passed. But it can also be psychologically based, a longing for the simplicity and ease of childhood. Friedrich Schiller links the two forms of nostalgia in "On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry," in *Essays,* ed. Walter Hinderer and Daniel O. Dahlstrom (New York: Continuum, 1993), 179–260.

73. At its strongest, the criticism is that the pastoral systematically erodes our abilities to recognize, engage, and solve the complex problems that confront us in modern life. There is also a worry that the pastoral, by creating an image of a reconciled society, generates an ideal that is impossible to attain and which for that reason seems especially attractive. Hence the tendency for such idylls to be located in the distant past or future: science fiction is one example (H. G. Wells's *Things to Come*), but so is Marx's picture of communism in the *Communist Manifesto.*

74. Godard's perspective is similar to Weber's claim that people without the "vocation" for politics "would have done better in simply cultivating plain brotherliness in personal relations" (Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,* ed. and trans. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills [New York: Oxford University Press, 1946], 77–128, 128).

75. Loshitzky, *The Radical Faces of Godard and Bertolucci,* 98.

76. Think of the land of milk and honey, the big rock candy mountain, and so on.

77. For the work that goes into gardens, see William Mitchell, Charles Moore, and William Turnbull Jr., *The Poetics of Gardens* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).

78. Godard's opening gesture, showing that two worlds we take to be distinct are in fact interwoven, evokes the beginning of Chris Marker's *Letter from Siberia* (1958). After a series of shots of the kind of nature we associate with the territory (empty plains, frozen

landscape, dark forests), Marker suddenly introduces shots of an electrical line and men working on telephone poles.

79. Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 200.

80. Quoted in de Baecque, *Godard, biographie,* 681.

81. I discuss the idea of landscape more extensively in chapter 3.

82. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* 64.

83. Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* §16.

84. Terrence Malick's *The New World* (2005) contains a similar subversion of the pastoral. There, reconciliation occurs not in America's untouched nature but in the wholly artificial world of England's formal gardens.

85. Robert Laffont, ed., *Les évadés des ténèbres* (Paris: Bouquins, 1989).

86. Stam writes that this woman, "forever being reprimanded and slapped, stands in for all the oppressed once foregrounded in Godard's films" (Stam, "The Lake, the Trees," 65).

87. Gilberto Perez, "Self-Illuminated," *London Review of Books,* 1 April 2004, 3–6, 6.

88. Hegel introduced the concept: "The system of right is the realm of freedom made actual, the world of mind brought forth out of itself like a second nature" (Hegel, *Philosophy of Right,* §4).

89. Steven Vogel, *Against Nature: The Concept of Nature in Critical Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 7. See also Theodor W. Adorno, "The Idea of Natural-History," *Telos* 60 (Summer 1984): 111–24.

90. Karl Marx, "Private Property and Communism," in *The Marx-Engels Reader,* 2nd ed., ed. Robert Tucker (New York: W. W. Norton, 1978), 81–93, 85. This view operates around a kind of syllogism: since human beings are a part of nature, whatever they do is also part of nature, and so the modifications that humans have wrought in nature are themselves natural. See Steven Vogel, "Marx and Alienation from Nature," *Social Theory and Practice* 14, no. 3 (Fall 1988): 367–87, 377.

91. Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 291, 37.

92. The references to Lucretius shouldn't be surprising, since he has a prominent place in twentieth-century French intellectual life, starting with Bergson and continuing with Michel Serres, Deleuze, and others.

93. Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe,* V.973–81.

94. Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe,* V.324ff.

95. Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe,* I.272–84.

96. Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio,* trans. W. S. Merwin (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), canto III, ll. 4–6.

97. This feels like an allusion to the end of Orson Welles's *Mr. Arkadin* (1955), in which the British suitor gets into the car with Raina after her father's death; pushing her gently into the passenger's seat, he says, "I'll do the driving." Does this undermine Elena's claim to reciprocity?

98. Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 225.

99. David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, 2004), 74.

100. This is essentially Kierkegaard's argument in *On Authority and Revelation.*

101. "Then I could feel the terror begin to ease / that churned in my heart's lake all through the night. / As one still panting, ashore from dangerous seas, / looks back at the deep he has escaped, my thought / returned, still fleeing, to regard that grim defile / that never left any alive who stayed in it" (Dante Alighieri, *Inferno,* trans. Robert Pinsky [New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1994], canto I, ll. 16–21).

102. This is a reference to Orpheus and Eurydice, though with gender roles reversed.

103. Quoted in MacCabe, *Godard: Portrait of an Artist at Seventy,* 290.

104. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 182ff.

105. Cavell, *Pursuits of Happiness,* 49.

106. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* 63.

107. The phrase is from Werner Pirchner, a German composer whose work is part of *Nouvelle vague*'s soundtrack.

108. This is one reason writers such as More and Marx locate their utopian societies after a major break in history.

CHAPTER 3: POLITICS BY OTHER MEANS

1. Johann Winckelmann, "Essay on the Beautiful in Art," in *Writings on Art,* ed. David Irwin (London: Phaidon, 1972), 89.

2. Caution's line sounds like a discourse on female stardom—the way the culture industry makes women into objects for (male) worship—but the woman with the hard hat is not what we expect to follow.

3. Christopher Pavsek has pointed out to me that Godard repeatedly presents distant locations of Berlin as though they were adjacent: Caution, in effect, moves through an impossible geography.

4. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust,* trans. Walter Arndt and ed. Cyrus Hamlin (New York: W. W. Norton, 1976), ll. 11124, 11092–94.

5. Rainer Maria Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet,* trans. Stephen Mitchell (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 91. Rilke's own line concludes, "for us to act, *just once,* with beauty and courage"; I discuss the importance of this difference later in the chapter.

6. Nora Alter notes that the Trabi stands in marked contrast to Zelten's black Mercedes, illustrating basic differences between East and West (Alter, "Theses on Godard's *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,*" 120–21).

7. Morrey suggests that the knight also refers back to Dürer's *Knight, Death, and the Devil* (1513) as an allegory for German national identity (Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard,* 199–200). Another possible allusion is Albrecht Altdorfer's *St. George and the Dragon* (1510).

8. Although Quixote begins with *perhaps (vielleicht).*

9. A line from the *Dies Irae,* it's also the title of a poem by Baudelaire in *Les fleurs du mal.*

10. The reference is to Heidegger's first postwar work; see below.

11. Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard,* 200.

12. Vladimir Nabokov, *Lectures on Don Quixote,* ed. Fredson Bowers (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 4–5, 22. Also see Thomas Mann, "Voyage with Don Quixote," in *Essays,* 325–69.

13. Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards,* 71–72.

14. Deleuze, *Cinema 2,* xi.

15. For an alternate account of neorealism, see Noa Steimatsky, *Italian Locations: Rehabiting the Past in Postwar Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

16. David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006), 178.

17. Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature,* 2.

18. Tacitus, "Germania," in *Agricola/Germany,* trans. A.R. Birley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 35–62, 39. This account is fraught with a history of nationalist and racist claims, especially from the Nazi period.

19. W.G. Sebald, *After Nature,* trans. Michael Hamburger (New York: Modern Library, 2003), 37.

20. See Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 75–134.

21. Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature,* 297.

22. Goethe, *Faust,* ll. 11565–68, 11579–80.

23. Nabokov, *Lectures on Don Quixote,* 96.

24. Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards,* 78.

25. Rosalind Galt, *The New European Cinema: Redrawing the Map* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 27.

26. Martin Warnke, *Political Landscape: The Art History of Nature,* trans. David McLintock (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 10.

27. Warnke, *Political Landscape,* 145.

28. See Nora Alter, "Mourning, Sound, and Vision: Jean-Luc Godard's *JLG/JLG,*" *Camera Obscura* 15, no. 2 (2000): 75–103, 80.

29. Caution recites the first stanza: "Morgenrot, Morgenrot,/ Leuchtest mir zum frühen Tod? / Bald wird die Trompete blasen, / Dann muß ich mein Leben lassen" (Dawn's light, dawn's light, / Shall you bring my early death? / Soon the trumpets will resound, / And then I will leave my life).

30. Jan Valtin, for example, recalls Nazi soldiers enthusiastically singing the song to cover his screams while they beat him (Valtin, *Out of the Night,* 515).

31. The connection to *Nevsky* nonetheless makes the militarism feel fragile. Godard uses a clip from the battle on the ice and juxtaposes it with Caution standing on a frozen pond; indeed, he moves onto the ice to recite the *Volkslied.*

32. Another line from the *Dies Irae.* Godard planned to use it as a title for an episode of *Histoire(s) du cinéma;* though he dropped the idea, references to it crop up in the video series.

33. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* 64f.

34. Bertolt Brecht, "In Dark Times," in *Poems, 1913–1956,* ed. John Willett and Ralph Manheim (New York: Routledge, 1987), 274.

35. See W.J.T. Mitchell, ed., *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

36. The violist is Kim Kashkashian, an American of Armenian descent (who speaks German here)—a case of Godard's interest in personal histories that cross national boundaries.

37. Dziga Vertov, "The Council of Three," in *Kino-Eye: The Writings of Dziga Vertov,* ed. Annette Michelson and trans. Kevin O'Brien (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 14–21, 16–17.

38. See Alexander Kluge, "Film and the Public Sphere," trans. Thomas Y. Levin and Miriam B. Hansen, *New German Critique* 24–25 (Fall/Winter 1981–82): 206–20, 217ff.

39. Goethe, *Faust,* l. 10124.

40. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History,* 29.

41. The speech suggests an interest in historical periods: Does Godard mean that a narrator in 1963 (the year of Munk's film) is in a different position from that of 1945? Or is it Godard's own position with respect to 1963, a reading that suggests the current narrator lacks a community of like-minded artists?

42. Godard, "Lettre à Louis Seguin sur *Allemagne neuf zéro,*" in *Jean-Luc Godard: Documents,* ed. Nicole Brenez (Paris: Centre Georges Pompidou, 2006), 340.

43. See Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards,* 74. For the more general claim, see Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* 361–65.

44. On this tension, see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics* (New York: Free Press, 1977), 54f.

45. See Klaus Theweleit, *Deutschlandfilme: Filmdenken und Gewalt: Godard— Hitchcock—Pasolini* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld Verlag, 2003), 20.

46. Benjamin writes, "The fairy tale tells of the earliest arrangements that mankind made to shake off the nightmare which myth had placed on its chest. . . . The liberating magic which the fairy tale has at its disposal does not bring nature into play in a mythical way, but points to its complicity with liberated man" (Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in *Selected Writings,* vol. 3: *1935–1938,* ed. Marcus Bullock, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002], 143–66, 157).

47. Steven Vogel has suggested that such a world amounts to a kind of "dark enlightenment," a negation of the basic principles of individual and reflective rationality (Vogel, *Against Nature,* 62).

48. Franz Kafka, *The Castle,* trans. Willa and Edwin Muir (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), 125; translation modified. The odd plural in the final sentence is in the German: "Die Blicke des Beobachters konnten sich nicht festhalten und glitten ab." I am grateful to Bill Martin for drawing my attention to this curious grammatical structure.

49. Gustave Flaubert, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony,* trans. Lafcadio Hearn (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 188.

50. Flaubert, *The Temptation of Saint Anthony,* 190.

51. Athanasius, *The Coptic Life of Anthony,* trans. Tim Vivian (San Francisco: International Scholars Publications, 1995), 56, 60.

52. See Ruth Mellinkoff, *The Devil at Isenheim: Reflections of Popular Belief in Grünewald's Altarpiece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988).

53. Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote,* trans. J. M. Cohen (London: Penguin Books, 1950), 68.

54. See, for example, the handwritten modifications Godard performs on a text by Malraux, in Jean-Luc Godard, "Textes pour servir aux Histoire(s) du cinéma," in *Godard par Godard,* 2:183–84.

55. Rilke, *Letters to a Young Poet,* 91.

56. For the history of Welles's production, see Jonathan Rosenbaum, "When Will—and How Can—We Finish Orson Welles's *Don Quixote?*" in *Discovering Orson Welles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 296–307.

57. I am relying here on Jess Franco's controversial editing of Welles's footage.

58. Pliny used natural history to describe a synchronic state, the unchanging and eternal realm of nature, rather than its diachronic transformation (see Horst Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine,* trans. Allison Brown [Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1995], 7–8).

59. See Beatrice Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin's Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings, and Angels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 51, 54; Robert Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

60. F. W. J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature,* trans. Errol E. Harris and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

61. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* 64.

62. This account is present in Adorno's earlier work, which is more deeply indebted to Benjamin. On Adorno's shifting conception of natural history, see Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin's Other History,* 81.

63. Quoted in Anson Rabinbach, "Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse: Benjamin, Bloch and Modern German Jewish Messianism," *New German Critique* 34 (1985): 78–124, 118. See Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin's Other History,* 96.

64. Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* ed. Rolf Tiedemann and trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), W7,4; see also W8a,5.

65. Adorno, "The Idea of Natural-History," 118. See also Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or the Persistence of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 1990), 94.

66. Quoted in Rabinbach, "Between Enlightenment and Apocalypse," 84.

67. The title of Heidegger's volume was translated into English as *Off the Beaten Track.*

68. For this reading, see Alter, "Theses on Godard's *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,*" 120.

69. Godard wants us to pick up on this reference, printing the German name, "Topographie des terrors."

CHAPTER 4: CINEMA WITHOUT PHOTOGRAPHY

1. Gavin Smith, "Jean-Luc Godard," in *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews,* ed. David Sterritt (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1998), 179–93, 189.

2. Smith, "Jean-Luc Godard," 188.

3. For similar arguments, see Jacques Aumont, *The Image,* trans. Claire Pajackowska (London: BFI, 1997); and James Lastra, "From the Captured Moment to the Cinematic Image: A Transformation in Pictorial Order," in *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography,* ed. Dudley Andrew (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 263–91.

4. To an extent, this way of thinking continues Godard's engagement with natural history. If nature develops according to a logic of its own—parallel to, yet nonetheless

interacting with, human history—we might characterize this account of cinema as amounting to a "natural history of the cinematographic image."

5. Studies of cinema and painting generally take three directions. One says that cinema should be viewed with the same seriousness with which paintings are encountered in museums. A second concerns the use of art within films, when paintings are commented on or treated as models for cinematic form. A third involves a search for cinematic precursors in the history of painting, for genres or styles that anticipate major aspects of film history. These accounts are represented, respectively, by Andrew, *Film in the Aura of Art;* Angela Dalle Vacche, *Cinema and Painting: How Art Is Used in Film* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996); and Anne Hollander, *Moving Pictures* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989).

6. This is the first appearance of a quote that recurs throughout Godard's late work (Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard,* 145).

7. Silverman and Farocki, *Speaking about Godard,* 173.

8. Walter Benjamin, "Letter from Paris (2): Painting and Photography," in *Selected Writings,* vol. 3, 236–48, 240–41.

9. For a similar argument, see Peter Galassi, *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981), 28.

10. Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 280.

11. For a more extensive treatment of Godard's relation to Faure, see Michael Temple, "Big Rhythm and the Power of Metamorphosis," in *The Cinema Alone,* ed. Temple and Williams, 77–96.

12. Daniel Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin: Ontology and Realist Aesthetics," *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Spring 2006): 443–81.

13. Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," 13–14.

14. Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," 14.

15. See Peter Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema,* 4th ed. (London: BFI, 1998), 79–106.

16. Bazin, "Theater and Cinema," in *What Is Cinema?* vol. 1, 108.

17. See Wollen, *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema,* 87–89; and Noël Carroll, "Towards an Ontology of the Moving Image," in *Philosophy and Film,* ed. Cynthia Freeland and Thomas Wartenberg (New York: Routledge, 1995), 68–85, 68.

18. MacCabe, *Godard: A Portrait of the Artist at Seventy,* 62–63. Also see Diane Stevenson, "Godard & Bazin," *Film International* 30 (November 2007): 32–40.

19. For one contemporaneous example of this rhetoric, see Timothy Binkley, "The Quickening of Galatea: Virtual Creation without Tools or Media," *Art Journal* 49, no. 3 (1990): 233–40.

20. It's worth noting that an early cinematic exhibition practice involved placing a still image on screen and then, to the delight of the audience, slowly cranking the projector to bring it to life.

21. Aumont, *Amnésies,* 241.

22. Godard, "Speech delivered at the Cinémathèque Française," 235.

23. Cora Diamond, "Wittgenstein, Mathematics, and Ethics: Resisting the Attractions of Realism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein,* ed. Hans Sluga (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 226–61, 239, 244.

24. This assumption is the basis for Silverman's discussion of the archive of nineteenth-century phenomena that Godard employs (Silverman, "The Dream of the Nineteenth Century," 5ff.).

25. Charles Baudelaire, "Le voyage," in *The Complete Verse,* trans. Francis Sarfe (London: Anvil Press, 1986), 242; translation modified. Also see Godard and Ishaghapour, *Cinema,* 56.

26. Neer, "Godard Counts," 154ff.

27. Hori also recognizes this (Hori, "Godard's Two Historiographies," 335).

28. Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography,* 5th ed. (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982), 7.

29. Philip Rosen, *Change Mummified: Cinema, Historicity, Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001*), 168.

30. Bill Nichols, "History, Myth, and Narrative in Documentary," *Film Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Fall 1987): 9–20, 18.

31. For some of these metahistorical issues, see Hayden White, "The Modernist Event," in *Figural Realism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 66–86.

32. Godard is quoting Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, ed. G. H. von Wright, trans. Peter Winch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 32e. See also Jean-Luc Godard, "Jean-Luc Godard rencontre Régis Debray," in *Godard par Godard,* 2:429.

33. The story about *Kane* may refer to a tale told by Welles himself in *F for Fake* (1974). See Bernard Eisenschitz and Charles Tesson, "Une machine à montrer l'invisible," *Cahiers du cinéma* 529 (November 1998): 52–57, 55.

34. And why costume dramas or historical films, with their criteria of historical authenticity, cannot be models for *Histoire(s) du cinéma.*

35. James Williams has provided an extended reading of the sequence, focusing on Godard's account of art as a resistance to European culture; although I cover similar topics, my focus is on a different set of issues. See James Williams, "European Culture and Artistic Resistance in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,* Chapter 3A, *La monnaie de l'absolu,*" in *The Cinema Alone,* ed. Temple and Williams, 113–40.

36. Quoted in Williams, "European Culture and Artistic Resistance in *Histoire(s) du cinéma,*" 129. At the end of the episode, for example, Godard uses *"une forme qui pense"* to link the success of neorealism to a tradition of painting. I discuss this sequence below.

37. Quoted in András Kovács, *Screening Modernism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 16.

38. Similar discussions are also in *Notre musique* and *The Old Place*, and in Nana's conversation with the philosopher (Brice Parain) in *Vivre sa vie.*

39. He praises, for example, Samira Makhmalbaf's *Apple* (1998) (Jean-Luc Godard, *The Future(s) of Film,* trans. John O'Toole [Bern: Verlag Gachnang and Springer AG, 2002]*, 25).

40. Jacques Rancière: "The Saint and the Heiress"; "Godard, Hitchcock, and the Cinematographic Image," in *For Ever Godard,* ed. Temple, Williams, and Witt, 214–31; "A Fable without a Moral: Godard, Cinema, (Hi)stories," in *Film Fables,* trans. Emiliano Battista (Oxford: Berg, 2006), 171–88; and "Sentence, Image, History," in *The Future of the Image,* trans. Gregory Elliot (London: Verso, 2007), 33–68.

41. Rancière, "Godard, Hitchcock, and the Cinematographic Image," 224.

42. An allusion to Paul Valéry, "Introduction to the Method of Leonardo da Vinci," in *Leonardo, Poe, Mallarmé,* trans. Malcolm Cowley and James R. Lawler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972).

43. Rancière, *Film Fables,* 172. As Rancière notes, this formulation is close to the idea of *photogénie* in French film culture of the 1920s.

44. Rancière, "Godard, Hitchcock, and the Cinematographic Image," 225.

45. For similar readings of this sequence, see Richard Neer, "Godard and the Essay," unpublished ms.; and Rick Warner, "Difficult Work in a Popular Medium: Godard on Hitchcock's Method," *Critical Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 63–84. Also see Daniel Morgan, "The Afterlife of Superimposition," in *Opening Bazin,* ed. Dudley Andrew and Hervé Joubert-Laurencin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 127–41.

46. Rancière, *Film Fables,* 172–73.

47. Another reading of Godard's claim is possible: when watching the film, we are absorbed into the narrative; it's only afterward, when we try to remember, that we recall only the details. On cinephilia and detail, see Paul Willemen, "Through the Glass Darkly: Cinephilia Reconsidered," in *Looks and Frictions* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1994), 223–57; and Christian Keathley, *Cinephilia and History, or The Wind in the Trees* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

48. It's not clear whether Godard himself could identify them. Discussing *Nouvelle vague* shortly after its release, he admitted, "Today, I don't really know where three-quarters of the citations come from" ("Conference de presse de Jean-Luc Godard [extraits]," *Cahiers du cinéma* 433 [1990]: 11).

49. Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 512.

50. Rancière, *The Future of the Image,* 53.

51. Rancière, *Film Fables,* 179.

52. It's also true that this fact about *The Band Wagon* wouldn't matter here without the juxtaposition of Murnau's film.

53. Later in the episode, Godard returns to the ethical rhetoric, suggesting that early films are in black and white because "morality was still strong."

54. See, among others, Jean-Luc Douin, "Godard et la question juive" and "Polémique autour d'une phrase," in *Le Monde,* 11 November 2009; Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 558–60, 621–24; and Maurice Darmon, *La question juive de Jean-Luc Godard: Filmer après Auschwitz* (Paris: Le temps qu'il fait, 2011).

55. Quoted in Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 511.

56. As Didi-Huberman puts it, the logic behind this position is that, because "the images are not 'the whole truth' . . . they are 'inadequate' to their object" (Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All,* 69).

57. For Lanzmann's polemic against images, see, among many others, Gertrud Koch, "The Aesthetic Transformation of the Image of the Unimaginable: Notes on Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah,*" *October* 48 (1989): 15–24; and Miriam Hansen, "*Schindler's List* Is Not *Shoah:* The Second Commandment, Popular Modernism, and Public Memory," *Critical Inquiry* 22 (Winter 1996): 292–312.

58. For a useful summary, see Saxton, "Anamnesis and Bearing Witness: Godard/Lanzmann."

59. Wright, "Elizabeth Taylor at Auschwitz," 55, 54.

60. See, for example, Sergei Eisenstein, "Beyond the Shot," in *Selected Works,* vol. 1, ed. and trans. Richard Taylor (London: BFI, 1988), 138–50.

61. Deleuze, *Cinema 2,* 181.

62. On the idea of a user's manual embedded in Godard's films, see Pavsek, "What Has Come to Pass for Cinema in Late Godard," 179.

63. Didi-Huberman, *Images in Spite of All,* 146.

64. André Bazin, "William Wyler, or the Jansenist of Directing," in *Bazin at Work,* ed. Bert Cardullo and trans. Alain Piette and Bert Cardullo (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1–22, 5.

65. Rancière argues that a viewer might feel that "if Stevens had spent the war as an announcer in New York or a parachutist in Burma, this would have ever so slightly altered the way Elizabeth Taylor . . . portrayed the beautiful heiress overjoyed by her idyll with the young Rastignac played by Montgomery Clift" (Rancière, "The Saint and the Heiress," 113).

66. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (1960; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 306.

67. Morrey suggests that there is in fact no real meaning: "I suspect [the sentences] are used more for their rich sonority than for their semantic profundity" (Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard,* 145).

68. Sieyès wrote, "What is the Third Estate? Everything. What has it been until now in the political order? Nothing. What does it want? To be something." Marx would draw on these lines to describe the situation of the proletariat.

69. See Theweleit, *Deutschlandfilme,* 7–10.

70. Immediately after *The Birds,* Godard cuts to a detail from Goya's *Judith and Holofernes* (1820–23), then to the sequence on Manet described above. It's an arrangement of images and references that suggests that Goya's painting functions not as an allegorical scene but as commentary on a historical trauma.

71. This is similar to the editing patterns in Alain Resnais's *Guernica* (1950).

72. André Bazin, "Accidental Beauty," in *Science Is Fiction: The Films of Jean Painlevé,* ed. Andy Masaki Mellows, Marina McDougall, and Brigitte Berg (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 147.

73. André Malraux, "Sketch for a Psychology of the Moving Pictures," in *Reflections on Art,* ed. Susanne K. Langer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1958).

74. See Yuri Tsivian, "New Notes on Russian Film Culture between 1908 and 1919," in *The Silent Film Reader,* ed. Lee Grieveson and Peter Krämer (New York: Routledge, 2004), 339–48.

75. Michael Witt, "'Qu'était-ce que le cinéma, Jean-Luc Godard?' An Analysis of the Cinema(s) at Work in and around Godard's *Histoire(s) du cinéma,*" in *France in Focus: Film and National Identity,* ed. Elizabeth Ezra and Sue Harris (New York: Berg, 2000), 26, 32.

76. "Jean-Luc Godard in Conversation with Colin MacCabe," 98.

77. Witt, "'Qu'était-ce que le cinéma, Jean-Luc Godard?'" 35. American's lack of history is also a topic in *Éloge de l'amour.*

78. Louis Aragon, "What Is Art, Jean-Luc Godard?" in *Focus on Godard,* ed. Royal S. Brown (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1972), 135–36.

79. For example, see Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility, Third Version," in *Selected Writings,* vol. 4: *1938–1940,* ed. Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 251–83; and Standish Lawder, *The Cubist Cinema* (New York: New York University Press, 1975).

80. See David Trotter, *Cinema and Modernism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

81. The classic statement is T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot,* ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Harcourt, 1975), 37–44.

82. Quoted in Harry Levin, *Contexts of Criticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1957), 63–64. Also see Stanley Edgar Hyman, *The Armed Vision: A Study in the Methods of Modern Literary Criticism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 57f.

83. Rancière, *Film Fables,* 180.

84. Gabriel Rockhill has argued that the idea of tradition is also present in Godard's early work (Gabriel Rockhill, "Modernism as a Misnomer: Godard's Archeology of the Image," *Journal of French Philosophy* 18, no. 2 [2010]: 107–29).

85. See Peter Wollen, "The Two Avant-Gardes," in *Readings and Writings* (London: NLB, 1982).

86. Hollis Frampton, "The Withering Away of the State of the Art," in *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters: The Writings of Hollis Frampton,* ed. Bruce Jenkins (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 261–68, 263.

87. Most of Godard's references to Frampton are along these lines (see Godard, *Godard par Godard,* 2:445).

88. Hollis Frampton, "The Invention without a Future," in *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters,* 171–82, 180.

89. Frampton, "The Invention without a Future," 181.

90. Hollis Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film: Commonplace Notes and Hypotheses," in *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters,* 131–39, 136. Frampton continues: "Such works may not exist, and then it is his duty to make them. Or they may exist already, somewhere outside the intentional precincts of art. . . . And then he must remake them."

91. The "Magellan Cycle," Frampton's planned 369-day series of films, was to be the concrete instantiation of that project. He intended to incorporate cinema's main features—time and nature; the sense of an artistic past; work on and with new media; and so on—to create "a *Principia Cinematica,* presumably in three fat volumes entitled, in order: I. Preliminary Definitions; II. Principles of Sequence; III. Principles of Simultaneity" (Hollis Frampton, "The Invention without a Future," in *On Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters,* 181).

92. This particular formulation is taken from *Je vous salue, Sarajevo.*

93. See Williams, "European Culture and Artistic Resistance in *Histoire(s) du cinéma.*" Godard's statement recalls Adorno's polemics against "identitarian thinking" in *Negative Dialectics,* in which he argues that the radical particularity of the world is subsumed under the unifying domain of conceptual (and political) predication. In this guise, art is one of the areas that preserves the "non-identical," those pieces of reality that exceed the concepts applied to the world.

94. As in Martin Scorsese's *My Voyage to Italy* (1999).

95. See Cesare Zavattini, "Some Ideas on the Cinema," in *Film: A Montage of Theories,* ed. Richard MacCann (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1966), 216–28.

96. André Bazin, "Bicycle Thief," in *What Is Cinema?* vol. 2, 47–60, 60.

97. I've argued that it represents only his understanding of De Sica's work and that other directors call forth different critical models (Morgan, "Rethinking Bazin," 461–69).

98. André Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality," in *What Is Cinema?* vol. 2, 16–40, 29–30.

99. On this topic, see Steimatsky, *Italian Locations.*

100. Bazin, "Bicycle Thief," 66.

101. Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality," 17.

102. Bazin, "An Aesthetic of Reality," 19, 20.

103. Quoted in Witt, "'Qu'était-ce que le cinéma, Jean-Luc Godard?'" 36.

104. France may not have developed a genuine cinema, but it did produce criticism. In the same way that he constructs lists of filmmakers, Godard creates lists of critics. In episode 2A, he says, "Diderot, Baudelaire, Malraux. ['And me' is printed on the screen.] I put Truffaut immediately after them. There's a direct line here: Baudelaire talking about Edgar Allan Poe is equivalent to Malraux talking about Faulkner is equivalent to Truffaut talking about Edgar Ulmer or Hawks." (Elsewhere, he adds Bazin and Daney.) Godard here creates a tradition for *Histoire(s) du cinéma* as a work of criticism.

CHAPTER 5: WHAT PROJECTION DOES

1. Susan Sontag, "The Decay of Cinema," *New York Times,* 25 February 1996; Paolo Cherchi Usai, *The Death of Cinema: History, Cultural Memory, and the Digital Dark Age* (London: BFI, 2001); Laura Mulvey, *Death 24x a Second* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).

2. See Michael Witt, "The Death(s) of Cinema according to Godard," *Screen* 40, no. 3 (1999): 331–46, 331.

3. "Interview with Jean-Luc Godard," 173.

4. Jean-Luc Godard, "Jean-Luc Godard: La curiosité du sujet: Entretien avec Dominique Païni et Guy Scarpetta," *Art Press,* special issue 4 (December 1984–February 1985): 4–18, 14.

5. See Jacques Aumont, "The Fall of the Gods: Jean-Luc Godard's *Le mépris* (1963)," in *French Film: Texts and Contexts,* ed. Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau (London: Routledge, 2000), 174–88, 178.

6. Godard remarks, "Hegel speaks of the end of history. But he believes that history exists . . . and I believe it too" (Ciment and Goudet, "Entretien Jean-Luc Godard," 50).

7. For the history of this tendency, see Elaine Scarry, ed., *Fins de Siècle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

8. See Witt, "The Death(s) of Cinema according to Godard," 333–36. Although Witt does not include the end of the studio system.

9. Brief discussions of projection can be found in Christa Blümlinger, "Procession and Projection: Notes on a Figure in the Work of Jean-Luc Godard," in *For Ever Godard,* ed. Temple, Williams, and Witt, 178–87; Serge Daney, "From Projector to Parade," *Film*

Comment 38, no. 4 (2002): 36–39; and Dominique Païni, "Should We Put an End to Projection?" *October* 110 (2004): 23–48. More emphasis is given in Witt, "The Death(s) of Cinema according to Godard," 342–43; Peter Wollen, *Paris Hollywood: Writings on Film* (London: Verso, 2002), 90; Murray, *Digital Baroque;* and Scemama, *Histoire(s) du cinéma de Jean-Luc Godard,* 24–27.

10. The sequence from 2B, for example, traces the intersection of sex and death in cinema, particularly as organized around the figure of the female star, and leads into another familiar topic: the men who make these images and the interplay between creativity and destructiveness in their actions.

11. See Sterritt, *The Films of Jean-Luc Godard,* 262.

12. Godard and Ishaghapour, *Cinema,* 32.

13. "Le chemin vers la parole," in *Godard par Godard,* 1:504.

14. Quoted in Jonathan Rosenbaum, "Godard in the Age of Video," *Chicago Reader,* 17 November 1995. Tati had a similarly motivated distrust of television (see David Bellos, *Jacques Tati: His Life and Art* [London: Harvill Press, 1999], 203).

15. See Deleuze, "Three Questions about *Six fois deux*"; Michael Witt, "Altered Motion and Corporal Resistance in *France/tour/détour/deux/enfants,*" in *For Ever Godard,* ed. Temple, Williams, and Witt, 200–213.

16. Jean-Luc Godard, "Préface de *Cinémémoire* de Pierre Braunberger," in *Godard par Godard,* 2:209–10.

17. Quoted in Murray, *Digital Baroque,* 106. Chris Marker assented to this description: "The DVD technology is obviously superb, but it isn't always cinema. Godard nailed it once and for all: at the cinema, you raise your eyes to the screen; in front of the television, you lower them" (Chris Marker, "Marker Direct," *Film Comment* 39, no. 3 [May/June 2003]: 38–41, 39).

18. Godard and Ishaghapour, *Cinema,* 46.

19. Ciment and Goudet, "Entretien Jean-Luc Godard," 52.

20. Quoted in Murray, *Digital Baroque,* 106.

21. See Cavell, *The World Viewed;* Jean-Louis Baudry, "Ideological Effects of the Basic Cinematographic Apparatus," in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology,* ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 286–98; Frampton, "For a Metahistory of Film" and "A Lecture," in *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters;* Michael O'Pray, *Film, Form and Phantasy: Adrian Stokes and Film Aesthetics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 37–43; Edward Branigan, *Projecting a Camera* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Mary Ann Doane, "The Location of the Image: Cinematic Projection and Scale in Modernity," in *The Art of Projection,* ed. Stan Douglas and Christopher Eamon (Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2009); and Dudley Andrew, *What Cinema Is!* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

22. Jean-Luc Godard, "L'art à partir de la vie: Nouvel entretien avec Jean-Luc Godard par Alain Bergala," in *Godard par Godard,* 1:9–24, 16.

23. *Soft and Hard* (1985).

24. Godard, "Préface de *Cinémémoire* de Pierre Braunberger," 210.

25. Godard, "Godard Makes (Hi)stories," 159.

26. "Dossier JLG Films," in *Jean-Luc Godard: Son +Image*, ed. Bellour with Bandy 116–21, 117. Also spoken in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 2A.

27. *Les enfants jouent à la Russie* (1993).

28. Hartley, "In Images We Trust," 18; ellipsis in original.

29. Jean-Luc Godard, "Le cinéma n'a pas su remplir son rôle," in *Godard par Godard,* 2:335–43, 335.

30. Ciment and Goudet, "Entretien Jean-Luc Godard," 52.

31. Godard, *The Future(s) of Film,* 29.

32. Godard, *The Future(s) of Film,* 74.

33. Following a similar logic, William Kentridge titled a series of his short animated films *Drawings for Projection.*

34. Also see Raymond Bellour, "(Not) Just an Other Filmmaker," in *Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image*, ed. Bellour with Bandy, 215–30, 215.

35. A similar experience is described in Roland Barthes, "Leaving the Movie Theater," in *The Rustle of Language,* trans. Richard Howard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 345–49.

36. Quoted in Frodon and Heymann, "*Allemagne année 90,* de Jean-Luc Godard."

37. Godard, "Jean-Luc Godard: La curiosité du sujet," 6.

38. Godard, "Godard Makes (Hi)stories," 160. Godard here draws on a French treatment of moviegoing as a liberatory experience oriented toward future creative activity (see André Breton, "As in a Wood," in *The Shadow and Its Shadow,* 3rd ed., ed. and trans. Paul Hammond [San Francisco: City Lights, 2000]: 72–77). Also see the discussion of projection and imprisonment in Adolfo Bioy-Casares, *A Plan for Escape,* trans. Suzanne Jill Levine (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1975), 106ff.

39. Laurent Mannoni, *The Great Art of Light and Shadow: Archeology of the Cinema,* trans. and ed. Richard Crangle (Exeter, U.K.: University of Exeter Press, 2000).

40. Several times since the 1990s, Godard has claimed Diderot as the first film critic. He may have had in mind a discussion of Fragonard that recounts Plato's allegory of the cave to talk about paintings at a salon. Brushing aside philosophers' interest in truth, Diderot says, "Today we're talking painting and I prefer to describe some of those [images] I saw on the great screen" (Denis Diderot, "Fragonard—Salon of 1765," in *Selected Writings on Art and Literature,* trans. Geoffrey Bremner [London: Penguin Books, 1994], 219–29).

41. "We poets are condemned to dream / Amid the dark and stilly night, / And superstitious portents seem / To follow close and share our plight" (Alexander Pushkin, "Portents," in *Selected Lyric Poetry,* trans. James Falen [Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2009], 138). I am grateful to Robert Bird for identifying the poem.

42. Thomas Mann, *Lotte in Weimar: The Beloved Returns,* trans. H. T. Lowe-Porter (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1940), 180, 185.

43. Godard's method may be unusual, but it is not unique. Collingwood argues that understanding a historical figure requires us to suppose that we *are* this person, a form of imaginative identification (R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History,* rev. ed. [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994], 295ff.).

44. The attribution is in fact murky.

45. G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), §808.

46. André Malraux, *The Voices of Silence,* trans. Stuart Gilbert (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1956).

47. See Philippe-Alain Michaud, *Aby Warburg and the Image in Motion,* trans. Sophie Hawkes (New York: Zone Books, 2004).

48. Élie Faure, "The Art of Cineplastics," in *Film: An Anthology,* ed. Daniel Talbot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 3–14, 11–12. Faure's thought experiment draws on imagery from Camille Flammarion, *Lumen,* trans. Brian Stableford (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2002), 108, 116.

49. Paul Celan, "In One," in *Selected Poems,* trans. Michael Hamburger (London: Penguin Books, 1996), 211.

50. Raymond Geuss, "Celan's Meridian," *boundary 2* 33, no. 3 (2006): 201–26.

51. Paul Celan, "The Meridian," in *Collected Prose,* trans. Rosemarie Waldrop (Manchester, U.K.: Carcanet, 1986), 37–55, 54–5; ellipsis and emphasis in original.

52. Geuss, "Celan's Meridian," 214.

53. Also see Rosenbaum, "Godard in the Nineties."

54. Godard, "Histoire(s) du cinéma: À propos de cinéma et d'histoire," 402.

55. Domarchi et al., "Hiroshima, notre amour," 64.

56. Quoted in Richard Roud, *A Passion for Films: Henri Langlois and the Cinémathèque Française* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), xxvii; my emphasis.

57. For a similar argument about the Anthology Film Archives, see Annette Michelson, "Gnosis and Iconoclasm: A Case Study of Cinephilia," *October* 83 (Winter 1998): 3–18.

58. Quoted in Roud, *A Passion for Films,* 180.

59. The necessity of the audience may in fact be Godard's deepest affinity with Celan (see Geuss, "Celan's Meridian," 209).

60. Wheeler Winston Dixon, "In Praise of Godard's *In Praise of Love,*" *Film Criticism* 27, no. 3 (Spring 2003): 22. See also Jacques Aumont, "The Medium," in *Jean-Luc Godard: Son + Image*, ed. Bellour with Bandy, 205–13, 211; and Colin MacCabe, *The Eloquence of the Vulgar* (London: BFI, 1999), 154.

61. Quoted in Stuart Liebman, "Why Kluge?" *October* 46 (1988): 5–22, 14.

62. For the theory of the public sphere behind this model, see Alexander Kluge and Oscar Negt, *Public Sphere and Experience,* trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

63. Hartley, "In Images We Trust," 18.

64. Witt, "The Death(s) of Cinema according to Godard," 342–43.

65. For a good summary of psychoanalytic accounts of projection, see André Green, "Projection," in *On Private Madness* (London: Hogarth Press and Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1986), 84–103.

66. Melanie Klein, "Notes on Some Schizoid Mechanisms" (1946), in *The Selected Melanie Klein,* ed. Juliet Mitchell (New York: Free Press, 1986), 175–200.

67. Godard, "Jean-Luc Godard: La curiosité du sujet," 14.

68. Chris Marker is another figure who has shifted between media more willingly than Godard.

69. Bazin, "In Defense of Rossellini," 99.

70. De Baecque notes that Godard's initial formulation of the project described it as a "personal history of cinema" (de Baecque, *Godard, biographie,* 676).

71. Wollen, *Paris Hollywood,* 74.

72. Made by Bergman himself in the spirit of early trick films. Also see Godard, "Bergmanorama," in *Godard on Godard,* 75–80.

73. For the idea of a "first viewer," see Michael Fried, *Courbet's Realism;* and Michael Fried, *The Moment of Caravaggio* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). Frampton articulates a similar model: "The spectator is the protagonist when the work is done. I am the surrogate protagonist for the making of the work; I have to be" (Hollis Frampton, "Talking about *Magellan:* An Interview," in *On the Camera Arts and Consecutive Matters,* 232–52, 234).

74. "What counts above all is that an intersubjective critical space is created that actively encourages the process of memory, and forces us also to consider the importance and value of *our* filmic memories" (James Williams, "*Histoire[s] du cinéma,*" *Film Quarterly* 61, no. 3 [2008]: 10–16, 12).

75. Kant, *Critique of Judgment,* Ak 214.

76. Jean-Luc Godard and Pauline Kael, "The Economics of Film Criticism: A Debate," in *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews,* ed. Sterritt, 107–27, 120.

77. On evidence and aesthetic judgment, see Stanley Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy," in *Must We Mean What We Say?* 73–96. On this topic in Godard, also see Neer, "Godard Counts," 151ff.

78. This sequence contains an implicit superimposition of its own, with Carlotta's life placed onto Madeleine's.

79. André Bazin, "*The Man Who Knew Too Much—*1956," in *The Cinema of Cruelty: From Buñuel to Hitchcock,* ed. François Truffaut and trans. Sabine d'Estrée (New York: Seaver Books, 1982), 165–70, 166.

80. Godard, "*The Wrong Man,*" in *Godard on Godard,* 49.

81. In his early review, Godard describes as a "miracle" the scene he includes in *Histoire(s) du cinéma* (Godard, "*The Wrong Man,*" 53).

82. The transfer of guilt is the basic thesis of Eric Rohmer and Claude Chabrol's *Hitchcock: The First Forty-four Films,* trans. Stanley Hochman (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1979). Warner argues that the form of Godard's sequence mirrors their claims (Warner, "Difficult Work in a Popular Medium," 65–72).

83. See Marcia Landy, "Just an Image: Godard, Cinema, and Philosophy," *Critical Quarterly* 43, no. 3 (2001): 9–31; Michael Witt, "L'image selon Godard: Théorie et pratique de l'image dans l'oeuvre de Godard des années 70 à 90," in *Godard et le métier d'artiste,* ed. Gilles Delavaud, Jean-Pierre Esquenazi, and Marie-Françoise Grange (Paris: Harmattan, 2001), 19–32.

84. Godard quotes this definition several times, including in *JLG/JLG* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma* 4B.

85. Robert Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer,* trans. Jonathan Griffin (Los Angeles: Green Integer, 1997), 51.

86. See Smith, "Jean-Luc Godard," 190, as well as the last minutes of *Dans le noir du temps* (2002), which link the idea of the image to a sequence from *Ivan the Terrible, Part II* (1946/1958).

87. For one attempt, see Michael Witt, "Montage, My Beautiful Care, or Histories of the Cinematograph," in *The Cinema Alone,* ed. Temple and Williams, 33–50, 36–40.

88. Godard likely learned about this period of Eisenstein's career from Jacques Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein,* trans. Lee Hildreth, Constance Penley, and Andrew Ross (1979; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

89. Sergei Eisenstein, *Selected Works,* vol. 2: *Towards a Theory of Montage (1937–1940),* ed. Michael Glenny and Richard Taylor (London: BFI Publishing, 1991), 4, 26.

90. Eisenstein, *Selected Works,* 2:22–23. Also see Yuri Tsivian, *Ivan the Terrible* (London: BFI Publishing, 2002), 42f.

91. Smith, "Jean-Luc Godard," 190; emphasis added.

92. Jean-Luc Godard, "Le montage, la solitude et la liberté," in *Godard par Godard,* 2:242–48, 247.

93. Georges Duhamel, quoted in Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility (Third Version)," 267.

94. See Thomas Elsaesser, "The New Film History as Media Archeology," *CiNéMAS* 14, no. 2–3 (2004): 75–117.

95. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 32–85.

96. See Robert Stam, *Reflexivity in Film and Literature from Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985).

97. Darke also associates Godard's interest in light with the opening of Genesis (Darke, *Alphaville,* 39).

98. It's worth remembering that a "stab in the back" was how the German military described what it saw as a political capitulation at the end of World War I. The phrase was also used by the Nazis in anti-Jewish propaganda.

99. Quoted in Karl Guthke, *Last Words: Variations on a Theme in Cultural History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 89.

100. Godard, "Speech delivered at the Cinémathèque Française," 234.

101. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour,* ed. G. E. M. Anscombe and trans. Linda McAlister and Margarete Schättle (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), §I.72.

102. "Phenomenological analysis (as e.g. Goethe would have it) is analysis of concepts and can neither agree with nor contradict physics" (Wittgenstein, *Remarks on Colour,* §II.16). See also §§I.70, III.125, and III.206.

103. Hartley, "In Images We Trust," 18. See also Manohla Dargis, "Godard's Metaphysics of the Movies," *New York Times,* 21 November 2004; and Darke, *Alphaville,* 38–81.

104. A range of filmmakers from the 1960s, including Pasolini, Fellini, Garrel, and Paradjanov, were also interested in alternatives to straightforward historical time (see Kovács, *Screening Modernism,* 175–91).

105. Eliade, *The Myth of Eternal Return,* 35. Eliade's account of myth is not without its flaws or critics, but it was influential and popular in postwar circles, and Godard was likely familiar with it.

106. Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil,* trans. Emerson Buchanan (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), 5.

107. Hermann Broch, *The Death of Virgil,* trans. Jean Starr Untermeyer (New York: Vintage, 1945), 43.

108. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea,* trans. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions, 1964), 1ff.

109. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques,* trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), esp. 62–69, 73–80.

110. Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative,* vol. 1, trans. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 5–30.

111. Gérard Genette, "Discours du récit," in *Narrative Discourse,* trans. Jane Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1980).

112. See Deleuze's *Cinema 2,* chs. 4–5. This is the deep affinity between Godard and Deleuze: each provides a way of *creatively* thinking about the possible interactions of cinema and time.

113. See, for example, Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 76ff.

114. Again, Godard's use of this quote draws on its original context: Mann's description of Hans Castorp's transformed experience of time in *The Magic Mountain.*

115. See Thomas Mann, "Freud and the Future," in *Essays,* ed. Lowe-Porter, 303–24.

116. Sigmund Freud, *Dora: An Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), 112.

117. Masha Salazkina, *In Excess: Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 160f. A similar motive is behind Godard's interest in Broch's *The Death of Virgil,* a work that reaches toward a kind of natural mythology in the context of political despair: Virgil is a poet of the earth, a source of creativity outside historical worries of personal, artistic, and social decay.

118. The rhetoric of deception has a prominent place in these films. In *Allemagne 90 neuf zéro,* we hear this remark (in French): "According to Lichtenberg, what's extraordinary about the German language is that one finds more ways of expressing deception than in any other language. And most of them have an air of triumph." And then (in German), "It may be because the language is considered so difficult."

119. Similarly, Freud used the picture of different versions of Rome built on top of one another to describe the workings of the unconscious in *Civilization and Its Discontents.*

120. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film,* revised and expanded ed., ed. Leonardo Quaresima (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 5.

121. Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler,* 249.

122. For a more extensive discussion of this scene, see Brenez, "Jean-Luc Godard, *Witz* et invention formelle," 34–38.

123. As Pavsek notes, we can see Caution as playing this role, the "Last Spy" standing in for the "Last Man" (Pavsek, "What Has Come to Pass for Cinema in Late Godard," 174).

124. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* in *The Portable Nietzsche,* ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), 129–30.

125. Heidegger, *Being and Time,* 477.

126. See Skoller, *Shadows, Specters, Shards,* 78: "Godard has elided prewar and postwar Germany in a single cut."

127. Stephen Heath, "Narrative Space," in *Questions of Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1981), 19–75; Noël Burch, "*Nana,* or the Two Kinds of Space," in *Theory of Film Practice,* trans. Helen Lane (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press,

1981), 17–31; David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

128. Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," 14; translation modified.

129. I do not mean that the entire film takes place in off-screen time; the device works as a transition.

130. For a literary antecedent, see Raymond Queneau, *The Blue Flowers,* trans. Barbara Wright (New York: New Directions, 1985).

CHAPTER 6: CINEMA AFTER THE END OF CINEMA (AGAIN)

1. See de Baecque, *Godard, biographie,* 769ff.

2. Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* 588.

3. Bamchade Pourvali, *Godard neuf zéro: Les films des années 90 de Jean-Luc Godard* (Biarritz: Séguier Archimbaud, 2006), 100.

4. Godard, "The Six Best Films since the Liberation," in *Godard on Godard,* 210.

5. This topic was central to the TV series Godard made in the 1970s.

6. See Godard's letter to Armond White, in *Godard par Godard,* 2:344.

7. Jean-Luc Godard, "Le droit d'auteur? Un auteur n'a que des devoirs," *Les Inrockuptibles,* May 2010. At the end of the film, Godard prints two statements: "When the law isn't just, justice comes before the law" and, following an FBI copyright warning, "No comment."